



Seeding of assorted indigenous tree seeds by villagers in Tana River Delta. PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

Overcoming the Covid Storm!

The risk of getting Covid-19 is still very high. The more infectious variant is with us.

Despite these dangers we hope our members remain safe and well, engaged and cheerful. We remain careful – wearing masks, washing hands and working from home when we can. Membership activities are taking place with caution.

1. The 'Lungs for Kenya' Charity Golf Tournament is scheduled to take place on 23rd July 2021 at the Karen Country Club. Book your slot to participate by contacting Gloria Waswa, Membership and Marketing Manager at nkmembership@naturekenya.org or telephone 0726 134029.
2. Wednesday Morning and Third Sunday Bird walks have resumed. See back page for details.
3. The Nature Kenya office is closed. However, membership can be renewed online <http://naturekenya.org/support/membership/> or via M-pesa. Books, honey, etc. may be

purchased online or with M-pesa (Paybill 100300, Account write in your purchase) and collected on Mondays or by arrangement. Ring the bell at the entrance of the office behind the galleries.

4. Members will continue to receive an electronic version of the Nature Net
5. The EANHS/NMK Library will be opened from 1st of July 2021. Museum galleries and sites are open to the public under Ministry of Health guidelines (as at end June 2021).

Nature Kenya conservation efforts continue locally and nationally:

In June, Nature Kenya continued actions to save species, conserve sites, encourage ecological sustainability and empower people. Key highlights include a new approach for forest landscape restoration in the Tana River Delta. Kenya targets to restore 5 million hectares of degraded landscapes. Traditional restoration approaches

are based on raising trees in tree nurseries. While this still works, each tree has to be planted one by one. This is expensive and time consuming.

Nature Kenya is piloting a new approach in the Tana Delta. This involves mobilizing communities to form Village Natural Resources and Land Use Committees (VNRLUC) at 55 villages, formation of five Community Forest Associations (CFAs) and four Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs). These groups have been trained in seed collection and together collected 5,000 kgs of seeds of a wide range of indigenous trees. When seeded in the rainy season, this may translate into 5,000 acres of land being restored.

Landscape restoration is not just about tree growing; it's also keeping bushland areas as bush and grassland areas grassy. In the Tana Delta, 1,300 kgs of grass seed were supplied to pastoralist communities to restore livestock grazing areas.

In Mt. Kenya, CFAs located in Hombe, Kangaita, Chehe and

Nanyuki planted 140,000 trees. These CFAs in Mt. Kenya have become so good in tree growing that their skills are being sought by communities from other sites in Kenya. In June, 37 local community members including five chiefs visited Mt. Kenya CFAs and were able to learn the art of tree growing for restoration and also as a business.

In Taita Hills, Arabuko-Sokoke and Dakatcha forests, 90 local community members were trained in ecosystem-based adaptation.

In Sabaki River Mouth and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, 33 members of the Sabaki River Conservation and Development Organization (SARICODO) and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA) and CFAs were trained as forest scouts, have been uniformed, and are ready to patrol and protect forests.

In Mbititu and Mumoni Key Biodiversity Areas, a participatory biodiversity assessment was conducted and local community members including 16 SSG members were trained in bird monitoring.

In Yala Swamp, community sensitization meetings were held in 22 villages and Village Natural Resource and Land Use Committees (VNRLUC) formed to support the conservation of a designated Indigenous and Community Conservation Area (ICCA) in Yala Swamp.

Please support us as we work towards a greener future!

For clarifications or to report your observations on species and sites, kindly contact us through email: office@naturekenya.org or telephone: 020 3537568, 0780 149200, 0751 624312, 0771 343138

Dr. Paul Matiku,
Executive Director, Nature Kenya
– the East Africa Natural History Society

LUNGS FOR KENYA

11TH CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

DATE: 23RD JULY 2021 | VENUE: KAREN COUNTRY CLUB | TIME: 8:00AM

MAIN SPONSOR: KSH. 1,000,000 - 3,000,000	GOLD SPONSOR: KSH. 500,000
SILVER SPONSOR: KSH. 250,000	BRONZE SPONSOR: KSH. 100,000
HOLE SPONSOR: KSH. 50,000	
INDIVIDUAL PLAYER: KSH. 2,500 (NK MEMBER), KSH. 3,000 (NON MEMBER) TEAM ENTRY KSH. 10,000	

To register contact Gloria: nkmembership@naturekenya.org or telephone 0726134029

ACTION

Guardians of the Mount Kenya forest ecosystem

BY CAROLINE CHEBET

The Mount Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (Mt Kebio) is one of the Site Support Groups (SSGs) of Nature Kenya in the Central region. The SSG works with local communities alongside conservation authorities to conserve the critical Mount Kenya forest ecosystem.

Rampant cases of deforestation, the disappearance of rare species like the Kenyan Jewel damselfly, Abbot's Starling and Mountain Bongos, coupled with increased cases of charcoal burning and solid waste pollution led to the formation of the SSG by porters and tour guides in 1999.

Currently, the group operates from the Mount Kenya Eco-resource centre in Naro Moru town at the base of the mountain. The Eco-resource centre was constructed in 2002 by Nature Kenya through funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The centre serves to encourage the appreciation of the Mount Kenya forest ecosystem and its biodiversity by offering an integrated environmental education program. It hosts a conference hall alongside a library and an artefact shop where learners, researchers and tourists can access materials on conservation.



Gerald Waita, a tour guide and member of Mt Kebio SSG.
PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

The SSG also uses the facility as a venue for public awareness creation. School children, college students and other groups visit the centre to learn more about the critical Mount Kenya forest ecosystem. Souvenirs made by SSG members are also sold at the centre.

Besides advocating for the conservation of the Mount Kenya forest ecosystem, the SSG has also integrated outreach programmes to schools.

"The aim is to let the learners know of the challenges stemming from destructive activities. We want children in schools around the Mt. Kenya area to learn and conserve this ecosystem. Children get to learn about the devastating effects of activities such as illegal logging and charcoal burning. Teaching children the values of conservation at a tender age is the best way to ensure the sustainability of this valuable ecosystem," says Mr Alex Karuri, secretary of the SSG.

Alice King'ori, a senior teacher at Kiboya Primary School in Kieni East notes that the integrated educational programmes offered within the eco-resource centre are helping to boost learners' understanding of conservation.

"This initiative is excellent because when learners visit the library, they get to access a lot of conservation-themed materials. They are also taken through lessons, and they get to learn of rare species found within these forests," Ms King'ori says.

One can also spend a night camping around the eco-resource centre by hiring tents owned by the SSG and enjoy guided nature hikes offered by tour guides who double up as SSG members.

Nature Kenya has supported the training of SSG members on bird identification. The training has enhanced the guides' bird identification skills enabling them to lead bird enthusiasts, researchers and visitors to bird-rich areas. 🐦

Planning to visit the Mount Kenya Eco-resource Centre? Kindly get in touch with Gerald on 0722172285 or Alex 0702104488.

NATURE NEWS



HONoured Six members of site support groups working with Nature Kenya have been appointed Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Honorary Wardens. The six individuals from the Friends of Nature Bogoria (FoNB), Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group (DWCG), Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers (ASFADA) Association and Yala Ecosystem Site Support Group (YESSG) were appointed by the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife – Najib Balala through a Kenya Gazette notice published in 19th May 2021. The six are James Koima Kimaru, Jackson Komen and Evans Kandie from FoNB, Patrick Changawa Kitsao (left in above photo) from DWCG, Salim Said Mwayogwe from ASFADA and Ibrahim Ogolla from YESSG. The Honorary Wardens are expected to engage communities and create awareness on wildlife conservation, monitor species and ecosystems, among other duties. Nature Kenya is currently working with 26 SSGs in 26 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). Site support groups are community-based organizations of local volunteers working for conservation and sustainable development in and around KBAs.



EXCHANGE VISIT Representatives of four Community Forest Associations (CFAs) including five Chiefs, together with Directors of Environment for Lamu and Tana River County during an exchange visit to Mt. Kenya Forest Ecosystem held Mid June 2021 for lesson learning on restoration. The visit was sponsored by Nature Kenya through TRI Tana Project funded by GEF/UN Environment. The team visited Hombe, Gathiuru and Njukiri CFAs and crowned it all with discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Environment Hon. Keriako Tobiko (in hat) and Chief Conservator of Forests Mr. Julius Kamau (far right).

For updates visit

www.naturekenya.org

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NATURE BUZZ

Dressing to amaze

BY RICHARD KIPNG'ENO



Male Pin-tailed Whydah. PHOTO: P. USHER

Choosing a soul mate is not an easy task. Many things are factored in, with the potential mate required to meet a set of minimums for consideration. Even if it means traversing rough terrains, climbing hills or descending steep valleys and slopes, the mission of pursuing a soul mate largely depends on a strategy invested in preparation.

Courtship behaviour in birds is one of the most fascinating. Both males and females may be choosy about their mates. Usually, it is the males who attempt to attract females by showcasing prowess in displays. They do so by wearing striking and attractive plumage and even singing out fine tunes to lure their potential mates.

If positive, females reciprocate by firmly standing ground and not moving away. If not interested, they fly off.

Females need to ensure they pair with quality and strong males. The females keenly look at several details before arriving at a decision. Males in good shape and have attained the right breeding plumage are often better placed to win over females. The intensity and frequency of displays give more attraction to the female. Males with previous mating success or experience often edge out new entrants.

The quality of the territory defended by males also determines the decision of the female. A neatly constructed nest in the best location wins the heart of many females to call it home. 🐦



Male Straw-tailed Whydah. PHOTO: P. USHER

NGONG ROAD FOREST BIRDWALK



Participants walk through a trail at Ngong Road forest during a Sunday birdwalk held in June. Golden-breasted Bunting (above) seen during the birdwalk. PHOTOS: M. SURAT

July Evening Sky

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Planets July '21

Venus is the bright light in the western sky above the sunset. Still rising, Venus appears to pass by Mars, faint now, in early and mid-July. Then Venus seems to approach and then pass the star Regulus, bright heart of the constellation Leo the Lion, from mid to end month. The slim crescent moon is near Venus and Mars on July 12, and near Regulus on July 13.

Golden Saturn and bright Jupiter rise in the east during the evening and seem to move across the sky at night, being high in the west at dawn. (In fact it is our Earth that rotates towards the east.) The full moon is near Saturn on July 24-25, and near Jupiter on July 25-26.

At dawn, little Mercury is low over the sunrise in the first half of July.

July stars

In the north, the star Arcturus is a sparkling, golden-orange light. Below Arcturus is the constellation of the Plough or Big Dipper. Look for a line of three bright stars, with four stars forming a box shape at the end – like a big spoon.

The constellation of Scorpius, the Scorpion, rises in the southeast. Three bright stars form the scorpion's claws. Below them is the reddish star Antares, the Scorpion's fiery eye. The waxing moon is near Antares on July 20. Below Antares, a line of stars forms the scorpion's body, like a giant fishhook in the sky. Two stars close together are the sting in the scorpion's tail.

To the right of the Scorpion, in the south, are the two bright stars Alpha and Beta Centauri in the constellation of the Centaur. Next to them, the Southern Cross now leans to the west. (See June Nature Net).

Moon July '21

July 1 – last quarter (a half moon overhead at dawn). July 10 – new moon. July 17 – first quarter (a half moon overhead at sunset). July 24 – full moon.

Meteor showers

Each year the Earth passes through areas containing dust from old comets. When bits of dust or rock fall into the Earth's atmosphere, they burn up, creating a trail of light. These are meteors, also called "shooting stars" or "burning spears".

Two meteor showers – the Southern delta Aquarids and the alpha Capricornids – take place from mid July to mid-August. This year they both peak on July 28-29. Best viewing is from a dark location after midnight – and with a clear sky!

July Sun

The Earth's orbit around the sun is not a perfect circle. In July the Earth is a little further from the sun, so it is the cold season near the equator. 🌞

Breaking News

Astronomers recently observed a huge comet, coming from the Oort Cloud on the outer edge of our solar system. This large but faraway comet has been named 2014 UN271. Astronomers say it will travel to near the orbit of the planet Saturn in the year 2031 and then head back.



WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We value your readership and would love to know how best to avail the newsletter to you. If you have any preferences on how you would like to receive the Nature Net, kindly let us know. Send your feedback to: communication@naturekenya.org

Birding Updates

The **KWS National Wildlife Census** is combining with the **July waterbird counts** this month. If you are experienced at bird identification and counting and would like to take part, send your name, contacts, location and dates available to:

Ireene Madindou <ilhanmadindou@gmail.com> Mobile: **+254 (0)725 632607**

Or Richard Kipng'eno <news@naturekenya.org> Phone 0780-149200

Wednesday Morning Birdwalks and **Sunday Birdwatch** are on, subject to Ministry of Health guidelines. No loaning of binoculars, no sharing of binoculars and guidebooks and no pooled transport. Please do not ask for lifts. Masks are a must and you may carry your own sanitizer.

Birders Please Note! Participants are meeting on site. The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks will take place at the Nairobi National Museum, meet at 8 am in the open space in front of the entrance to the museum galleries, near the Fisheries gate.

July 18 Sunday Bird Watch – Ngong Road Forest (Miotoni Block, Section 1). Meet at 8:30 am at the Southern Bypass Gate. (There's a Sanctuary fee of Ksh. 100 for citizens.)

Directions: Coming from the city centre, take Ngong Road towards Southern Bypass. Turn towards Kikuyu. The Sanctuary gate is on the Karen side, immediately after the turn off. It is a day trip; please bring water and lunch.

Bird Ringing at Nairobi National Museum grounds usually takes place on Tuesday mornings. Ringing in Karen may be arranged on July 30-31. Please confirm with Titus Imboma <imbomati911@gmail.com> Phone 0721-649452.

Mombasa Birdwalks are held the 3rd Saturday of each month. July walk will be Forest Trail, Bamburi, meet at ticket office at 3pm

<<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>>

Contacts: Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540

or Kelvin Mazera <klvnrua@yahoo.com> / 0720-928783

Did you see Madagascar Pond Heron (migrant from Madagascar), Black Cuckoo-shrike or Violet-backed Starling (Afro-tropical migrants) in June?

Send your records to:

Kenya Bird Map <<http://kenya.birdmap.africa/>>

If you have questions re KBM, write to <kenyabirdmap@naturekenya.org>

And stay updated with the birding scene in Kenya by signing in to the new Kenyabirdsnet platform on Google Groups at: <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/kenyabirdsnet>

After signing in you will be able to post your records through the following email address:

kenyabirdsnet@googlegroups.com

Online birding:

- Wings Over Kenya Facebook page
- Ndege Wetu (blog series on the birds of Kenya) <<http://www.shotsbyshema.com/category/ndege-wetu/>>
- "The Safari Naturalist" on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCajjLtyL9G6mJ20Ajw1RLxA>
- "The Safari Naturalist" blog website: <https://www.thesafarinaturalist.com/virtual-birding-tours/>
- BirdLife International and eBird



Black Cuckoo-shrike PHOTO P. USHER

Yes! Start my NatureKenya membership

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MEMBERSHIP TYPES

Ksh Per Year	
Full	2,000
Sponsor	6,000
Family	2,800
Student	1,200
Schools, Clubs	1,500
Corporates	20,000 -30,000



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- Select 'Pay Bill'
- Enter business number **100300**
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- Enter the amount, enter your PIN
- Confirm details & press OK

For details on associated groups such as Youth Committee, Succulenta, and Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, City Park or Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, contact **office@naturekenya.org**