



Friends of Nature Bogoria participating in bird monitoring. PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

Guardians of Lake Bogoria

BY CAROLINE CHEBET

Lake Bogoria may be on the bucket list for many travellers in search of flamingoes, and now it has an active group of Friends.

Friends of Nature Bogoria is a community-based organisation that started in 1996 and was officially registered in 2003. It has grown to become one of the vibrant Nature Kenya Site Support Groups (SSGs) in the Rift Valley, with research and monitoring activities keeping track of the health of the Bogoria ecosystem.

"In 1996, we realised there were a lot of changes within the Bogoria ecosystem. We realised that Greater Kudus were becoming rare, yet this is their area of concentration within the county. We also realised there was need to monitor waterfowls," notes Patrick Kurere, the group's coordinator and manager.

Friends of Nature Bogoria has participated in the annual waterfowl counts since 2002 and maintains a waterfowl database that tracks trends in Lake Bogoria. The group is also actively engaged in monitoring the Greater Kudu, its distribution and threats to its survival.

Their vibrant activities have enabled them to attract funding to expand their research and monitoring activities within the ecosystem, which is a Ramsar site (a wetland of international importance), a World Heritage Site and an Important Bird Area – which now becomes a Key Biodiversity Area.

"Through funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Darwin Initiative, we have been able to conduct a kudu census and develop a kudu program. This program details the population and distribution of greater kudus within the catchment area," Mr Kurere said.

Lake Bogoria National Reserve warden James Kimaru, who doubles as the coordinator of

the group, says that they have expanded their programs to target schools, as well as training community tour guides.

As part of raising awareness on the conservation of the Greater Kudu, group members have been advocating the use of wooden carvings as an alternative to kudu horns used in traditional ceremonies.

"We are now trying to let the community know that they can carve replica horns out of wood instead of using kudu horns for ceremonies," says Raphael Kimosop.

The SSG oversees three community conservancies covering 10,000 hectares – Kiborgoch, Tuine and Irong – which are critical distribution sites of the Greater Kudu.

The group plans to expand their kudu research programme to incorporate tagging of at least three kudus. This will offer additional information on their breeding habits and sites within community-owned land.

Friends of Nature Bogoria were among the stakeholders that developed the Lake Bogoria Management plan. The SSG is also part of a team engaged in mapping sites for the Baringo County Geopark. The Geopark is the first of its kind in Kenya.

Other activities that the Friends are engaged in include bee-keeping, selling artefacts and souvenirs and offering professional tour guiding services.

"In the group, we make sure that everyone is active at doing something useful to the environment. While some have been doing value-addition to aloe products, others have been engaging in bee-keeping and even planting of hay," says Kimosop. 🐝

Climate-smart Agriculture boosting resilience in Tana Delta

BY JOHN MWACHARO
AND CAROLINE CHEBET

Green greets your eyes as you step into Kimanzi Ndavi's farm in Shaurimoyo, Kipini, Tana River Delta. Unlike neighbouring farms, the sesame crop in his piece of land appears unaffected by the drought ravaging many parts of the delta. In a few weeks, Ndavi will be harvesting his crop.

"Simsim (sesame) is not affected so much by drought," he says.

Ndavi is one of the 104 farmers from the Tana Delta who received sesame seeds from Nature Kenya. Five acres of his land are currently under sesame cultivation, and things are looking promising. Sesame, notes Ndavi, yields a better income compared to maize.

"A bag of simsim can fetch up to Ksh. 10,000. If you compare it with maize, simsim is more profitable. That is why I decided to venture into its farming," he adds.

Ndavi expects to harvest at least three tonnes of the crop out of the five acres.

Nature Kenya is promoting cultivation of oilseed crops such as sesame and sunflower in the Tana Delta under a climate-smart agriculture initiative. Climate-smart agriculture uses farming practices that improve farm productivity and profitability and enable farmers to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. This approach addresses the interlinked challenges of food security and climate change.

Under the climate-smart agriculture initiative, farmers receive improved crop seeds, training in crop husbandry and extension services. Crops identified for this initiative include green grams, cowpeas and maize.

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Kimanzi Ndavi at his simsim farm.
PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

Taking conservation action through resilience to Covid 19

The Covid 19 situation remains largely unchanged. We continue being vigilant – wearing masks, washing hands and working from home when we can.

Membership activities are taking place with caution:

1. Wednesday Morning and Third Sunday bird walks continue this month. See back page for details.
2. The October Big Day eBird birding challenge takes place on 9th October. Also see back page for details.
3. A virtual talk: Spider: Friend or Enemy? by Grace Kioko will take place on 22nd October.
4. 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 and collected on Mondays or by arrangement. Ring the bell at the entrance of the office behind the galleries.
5. Members will continue to receive an electronic version of the Nature Net.
6. The EANHS/NMK Library is open to the public. Museum galleries and sites are open to the public under Ministry of Health guidelines.

Nature Kenya's conservation work went on in September. Actions to save species, conserve habitats, encourage ecological sustainability and empower people were undertaken across various sites:

Species and Site Monitoring

Site Support Groups in Dakatcha Woodland, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Mt. Kenya Forest, Sabaki River estuary, Yala Swamp, Taita Hills, Tana River Delta, South Nandi forest and Mida Creek Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) conducted Common Bird Monitoring.

In Amboseli KBA, Nature Kenya trained 16 community volunteers on improved livestock herding practices. The training was aimed at reducing and mitigating human-wildlife conflicts.

In Arabuko-Sokoke, 21 newly-graduated community forest scouts were recruited to enhance forest surveillance in Jilore and Sokoke areas.

Habitat Restoration

The development of a geographic information system (GIS) to track habitat restoration progress in the Tana River Delta commenced. Once operational, community members will be trained on how to collect restoration GIS data and conduct mapping using smartphones. Data collected will be fed into a GIS-based geodatabase to generate real-time information for analysis.

Advocacy and Awareness Creation

In Kisumu, Friends of Dunga Swamp and the Ruma national park SSG submitted comments for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report for proposed sand harvesting at Sondu Miriu River Delta.

The Chebororwa Sekemiat Self-help Group and Cherangany Hills Community-based Organization submitted memoranda on Elgeyo Marakwet County Annual Development Plan 2022/2023 while Tana Delta Conservation Network submitted comments for the Tana River County Finance Bill 2021.

Livelihoods Improvement

Nature Kenya is piloting innovative approaches to build community resilience in drought-stricken areas around Key Biodiversity Areas. This includes promoting resilient community livelihoods like rearing of improved indigenous chicken and goat breeds, climate-smart agriculture and beekeeping, among others.

In Tana Delta, 285 chilli farmers have entered into contract farming with Equator Kenya Ltd. Two of them started harvesting the high-value crop, earning Ksh. 53,946 from 899 kilograms in September.

Despite the prevailing drought, farmers in the Delta have so far realized Ksh. 951,232 from the sale of maize, green grams and cowpeas under the same initiative.

With your support, we can empower more communities across Kenya to be resilient.

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



Nzilani Esther tends to her green gram crop.
PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET

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Sesame and sunflower have also been picked as high-value crops suitable for the Tana Delta landscape. The selected seed varieties for these crops are drought-resistant and fast maturing.

The climate-smart agriculture initiative is a component of the Community Resilience Building in Livelihood and Disaster Risk Management (REBUILD) project funded by the European Union.

Nzilani Esther, a farmer from Mapunga, Kisiwani area, is another beneficiary of the project.

"Apart from receiving improved crop seeds, we have also been taught how to time the rains and sow correctly," says Nzilani, who has planted two acres of green grams.

According to Boniface Musyoka, an agronomist working for Nature Kenya in Tana Delta, 1,570 farmers drawn from Kipini, Garsen and Tarasaa areas are actively engaged in climate-smart agriculture.

"A majority of the farmers we have engaged in our climate-smart agriculture initiative are women. The initiative seeks to build climate change resilience among communities in the Tana Delta," says Boniface.

Nature Kenya is also working closely with the Tana Delta Farmers' Cooperative in the climate-smart agriculture initiative. The cooperative manages the Ngao Farmers' Field School. This facility offers climate-smart agriculture, greenhouse technology and conservation agriculture training to farmers.

For updates visit
www.naturekenya.org

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NATURE BUZZ

Three more African raptors now listed Endangered

BY JOHN MWACHARO AND JAMES MUTUNGA ALL PHOTOS BY LORENZO BARELLI

Africa once again risks losing more of its birds of prey, including some iconic ones. Martial Eagles, Secretarybirds and Bateleurs are the latest African raptors uplisted to Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

The three recently joined the alarming growing list of threatened African raptors, which includes seven vulture species. Poisoning, either primary or secondary, is a common cause of the rapid decline of the raptor populations, as is the case with vultures. Other drivers linked to the decrease in numbers include electrocution and collision with power lines, habitat degradation and nest disturbance.



Martial eagles top the list as the largest eagles in Africa. These mighty eagles can weigh up to 6.5 kg and prey mostly on other birds, reptiles and even mammals. Martial eagles have incredible eyesight and are capable of spotting prey up to 6 km away! The current estimate of remaining Martial eagles remains unknown.



Easily identifiable by their conspicuously long legs and dramatic black crests of feathers on the back of their heads, **Secretarybirds** are endemic to Africa's savannas, grasslands, and shrublands. Unlike other birds of prey, Secretarybirds hunt on the ground instead of from the air. Their diet consists of small rodents, amphibians, and reptiles. BirdLife International puts the current population of Secretarybirds at between 6,700 to 67,000 individuals. Human induced threats and prolonged droughts top the list of threats facing this species whose adults do not have a natural predator.



Bateleurs are mid-sized eagles native to Africa and small parts of Arabia. These colourful raptors have bushy heads and very short tails. These, together with their white underwing coverts, make them unmistakable in flight. No data is available for the Bateleur's population.

Planets, Stars and Galaxies

BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Planets, Oct '21

Brilliant Venus shines in the west above the sunset; across the sky, bright Jupiter shines in the east. Saturn, less bright, is high in the southeast, almost overhead. Planets do not produce their own light; like the moon, they reflect the light of the sun. The moon is near Venus on Oct. 8, near Saturn on the 14th and near Jupiter on the 15th.

October Stars

The constellation of the Scorpion, with its bright reddish star Antares and long curved tail of stars, crawls towards the sunset. The planet Venus passes near Antares in mid-October. The slim crescent moon is near Venus on Oct. 8, near Antares on the 10th.

The constellation Sagittarius the Archer, part of it shaped like a teapot or basket, follows the Scorpion to the west. The moon appears very close to the star Nunki in Sagittarius on Oct. 12. Further left, high in the south, is the bright star Fomalhaut. Lower in the sky and a little further left in the southeast is the bright star Achernar.

Still further east is the constellation that the ancient Greeks called Pegasus, the Flying Horse. Four fairly bright stars form the corners of a giant square, the body of the horse. Below Pegasus, low in the northeast, is an M-shaped group of stars, the constellation Cassiopeia.

In the northwest, to the right of the sunset, the bright stars Altair, Deneb and Vega form a huge triangle. Vega is very bright and low in the sky. Deneb is east (right) of Vega. Altair is high above them and flanked by two smaller stars. Overhead, to the east of Altair, five small bright stars form a shape like a leaping dolphin.

Distant galaxies

Our sun and all the stars we see with the naked eye are part of the Milky Way galaxy. On clear dark evenings in October and November, we can see other, more distant galaxies.

In the south

Find a viewing point where you can see low in the south, on a cloudless, moonless evening. The bright star Fomalhaut is high in the south. Below Fomalhaut is an even brighter star, Achernar.

Below Achernar, low on the southern horizon, look for two pale areas like small round clouds. These are the Small and Large Magellanic Clouds. The two Magellanic Clouds are actually small galaxies, composed of millions of stars.

In the north

Turn around to find the bright white star Vega low in the northwest (to the right of the sunset). Higher in the north is the bright star Deneb, in the constellation Cygnus the flying swan. High above and to the right (east), four stars form the corners of a large square shape. This is the Great Square of Pegasus, the flying horse of the ancient Greeks.

Below Pegasus and east (right) of Deneb, is the constellation of Cassiopeia: Five bright stars forming a giant letter 'M'. Between the square of Pegasus and the M-shape of Cassiopeia, look for a blurred bright light. That bright, fuzzy spot is the Great Spiral Nebula M31, the Andromeda galaxy.

Moon, Oct '21

New moon, Oct. 6; near Venus on the 8th. First quarter, Oct. 13 (half-lit moon at sunset). Full moon, Oct. 20, rising in the east. Last quarter, Oct 28 (half-lit moon at dawn).

Birding Updates

October 2021 Wednesday morning birdwalks will take place at the Nairobi National Museum and Michuki Memorial Park. Meet at 8 am in the open space in front of the entrance to the museum galleries. Subject to Ministry of Health guidelines, no loaning of binoculars, no sharing of binoculars and guidebooks and no pooled transport. Masks are a must; you may carry your own sanitizer.

October 17th Sunday Bird Watch – Brackenhurst, Tigoni. Meet at the Brackenhurst Main Gate, at 8:30am. Directions: Drive on Limuru Road to Ruaka, take a right turn on Banana Hill Road and continue to Tigoni. Turn right at the two big white stones with signage, the gate is 1km ahead. Alternatively, take PSV number 106, 114 or 115 at the Khoja roundabout in Nairobi, alight at Brackenhurst entrance and walk to the gate. We will walk on the grounds, and in the restored forest, where there is an entrance fee of Ksh. 200 per adult and Ksh. 100 per child below 12 years.

Bird Ringing at Nairobi National Museum grounds usually takes place on Tuesday mornings. Ringing in Karen may be arranged on October 15th. Please confirm with Titus Imboma <imbomati911@gmail.com> Phone 0721-649452.

Mombasa Birdwalks are held the 3rd Saturday of each month. To check meeting time and place, check Facebook page: <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>> Or contact: Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540 or Kelvin Mazera <klvnrua@yahoo.com> / 0720-928783

Mark your calendars for October Big Day—**9 October 2021!**
<https://ebird.org/octoberbigday>

Big Days are a 24-hour opportunity to celebrate birds near and far. Wherever you are on 9 October, you can join the world of birding. By taking part in October Big Day you're also joining the second-ever Global Bird Weekend and celebrating World Migratory Bird Day. Be a part of the global team, and help set a new record for birding. You can bird from home and still participate in October Big Day!

In order to coordinate the birding effort in Kenya, if you plan to take part on 9 October 2021, please send your name, contacts and birding location to Richard Kipng'eno at <news@naturekenya.org> or to Pete Steward on WhatsApp +44 7473 957279.

Send your birding 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

TheCornellLab

**OCTOBER
BIG DAY** ✓
9 OCT 2021



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WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2021



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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