

# nature net

A newsletter of Nature Kenya-The EANHS

January 2023



Members of Mt. Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group conduct their monthly bird walk in Mt. Kenya Forest. Photo by M. Kiama

## Gearing up for 2023

By John Mwacharo

In 2022, Nature Kenya rolled out its Strategic Plan for the next decade. The 2022 – 2032 Strategic Plan refocuses Nature Kenya's conservation efforts under five pillars: Save Species & Sites, Foster Sustainability, Build Support, Act on Science and Consolidate Structures. The implementation of the new strategic plan will continue in 2023.

Work on saving species and conserving their habitats at various sites continues countrywide. Vulture conservation activities in the Maasai Mara, Mosiro, Amboseli and Kwenia landscapes are ongoing. Nature Kenya will engage 64 community volunteers to monitor vulture populations, look out for wildlife poisoning incidents and create awareness at these sites. Our site support groups (SSGs) at 26 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) will continue to play a critical role in biodiversity monitoring and habitat restoration.

The annual waterbird counts will take place in January-February 2023 at the Great Rift Valley lakes and other wetlands within the country, including Nairobi and its environs.

On March 31, we will hold our Lungs for Kenya charity golf tournament at the Karen Country Club. This year's tournament seeks to raise funds to catalyze the restoration of degraded forest landscapes in Mt. Kenya and the Aberdares. We encourage members to support this tournament by sponsoring, donating auction or raffle items or registering to play.

Engagement with partners to scale-up conservation actions continue. We will maintain existing partnerships with corporates and pursue new ones to further our work to restore degraded landscapes and empower local communities.

In 2023, Nature Kenya will continue to address drivers of biodiversity loss through policy reform, advocacy, promoting mainstreaming of biodiversity in economic decision-making processes and promoting nature-based solutions and models. Top on the agenda is blocking the controversial allocation of Yala Swamp for sugarcane growing by the National Land Commission (NLC). Working with like-minded organizations, we will use all channels

available to push for the sustainable use of Yala Swamp resources to benefit local communities and biodiversity.

Our advocacy team will keep tabs on calls for comments for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports, more so for development projects near ecologically sensitive areas. We kindly request members to submit comments whenever asked to do so.

Our weekly bird walks in Nairobi and Malindi will continue in 2023. Other membership engagement activities, such as monthly talks and Ask Our Nature Expert Q&A sessions, are also lined up for the year. Two Global Big Days will be held on May 13 and October 14. On these days, bird watchers worldwide will go out to enjoy birds and submit their observations through the eBird mobile app. We urge members to mark these days on their calendars and plan to participate in these engaging citizen-science events.

The road ahead is tough, and we look forward to your continued support to achieve the desired conservation impacts. Together, we can make our world better for us and future generations.

**Happy 2023!**



Dr Paul Matiku, Executive Director, Nature Kenya, speaking during a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) side event at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP 15 that was held in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada. Photo courtesy of P. Matiku

## LUNGS FOR KENYA

### 13<sup>TH</sup> CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

DATE: 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2023 | VENUE: KAREN COUNTRY CLUB | TIME: 8:00AM

PLATINUM SPONSOR: KSH. 1,000,000 | GOLD SPONSOR: KSH. 750,000  
 SILVER SPONSOR: KSH. 500,000 | BRONZE SPONSOR: KSH. 250,000 |  
 HOLE SPONSOR: KSH. 100,000 | INDIVIDUAL PLAYER: KSH. 2,500 (NK MEMBER),  
 KSH. 3,000 (NON MEMBER) | TEAM ENTRY KSH. 12,000

To register contact Angela: [nkmembership@naturekenya.org](mailto:nkmembership@naturekenya.org) or telephone 0739200216





## KBA in Focus: Mount Kenya Forest

■ By Joshua Sese

Soaring 5,199m above sea level, Mount Kenya is the highest peak in the country and the second highest in Africa. The mountain lies 140km northeast of Nairobi and is shared by five counties: Embu, Kirinyaga, Meru, Nyeri and Tharaka Nithi. Mount Kenya includes an altitudinal gradient consisting of rock, ice and snow on the highest peaks, bamboo, scrub and moorland at the middle altitude, and montane forest on the lowest slopes. The forest forms the Mount Kenya Key Biodiversity Area (KBA).

The KBA is a crucial carbon sink and water tower. Mount Kenya Forest is a source of two main rivers in Kenya: Ewaso Nyiro North and Tana. These rivers supply fresh water to more than 4 million people, irrigate 2 million hectares of croplands and generate 95 per cent of Kenya's hydroelectric power. Mount Kenya Forest is a haven for remarkable biodiversity, including some unique species like the Mountain Bongo, African Golden Cat, Giant Forest Hog, Mount Kenya Bush Viper, Kenya Dancing Jewel Damselfly and Abbott's Starling. Elephants, leopards, and bushbucks are among other wildlife found there.

Despite its priceless value, Mount Kenya Forest faces immense degradation due to illegal logging, overgrazing, poaching, encroachment, forest fires and climate change, among others. Weak forest governance and management, invasive species and overreliance on forest resources for livelihoods are also threats to the KBA.

Nature Kenya, with funding from partners such as Critical Ecosystem

Partnership Fund, Darwin Initiative, Kenya Breweries Limited, Safaricom, and World Land Trust, has been at the forefront in spearheading the Mount Kenya KBA restoration process. As a result, the 2019-2029 Mount Kenya Forest Restoration Strategy has been developed, 28 Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in the region have been trained and over 1,500 ha of degraded forestland restored. Diversification of livelihood options for forest-adjacent communities has also been enhanced through beekeeping, the establishment of commercial tree nurseries and eco-tourism. Nature Kenya is also promoting the adoption of fuel-efficient cookstoves. More than 1,000 households and five local schools have benefited from this initiative aimed at reducing demand for fuelwood from the forest.

Nature Kenya is working closely with upstream stakeholders, CFAs, and Site Support Groups (Ithugu SSG and Mt. Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group) to strengthen their capacity for watershed protection. The communities are encouraged to actively participate in activities such as tree planting, environmental awareness, policy influencing, advocacy and eco-tourism. So far, eight CFAs from Meru, three from Kirinyaga and two from Tharaka-Nithi counties have submitted priorities for incorporation into their respective counties' County Integrated Development Plans (CIDs). Furthermore, businesses relying on ecosystem products and services provided by Mount Kenya Forest are highly encouraged to support restoration activities in the KBA. 🌱

## Forest Restoration at Kieni



Staff from the Kenya Deposit Insurance Corporation (KDIC) join representatives from the Kijabe Environmental Volunteers Organization (KENVO), Kieni Community Forest Association, Kenya Forest Service and Nature Kenya in a tree planting activity at Kieni Forest. KDIC supported the growing of 5,000 trees in the forest in December 2022. Photo by J. Mutunga



The Privatization Commission also supported the growing of 1,200 trees in Kieni Forest in December 2022. Photo by A. Mecha

For updates visit  
[www.naturekenya.org](http://www.naturekenya.org)

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## Wonders of Nature



**Fish out of water:** These fish, probably *Barbus*, were caught on camera leaping up a stream in flood on the Sunday Birdwatch at Kakuzi near Thika. Photo by J. Gateru



**Staying afloat:** Monitor lizards are good swimmers. This one was seen in a stream at Kakuzi on the Sunday Birdwatch. Photo by J. Gateru



**The art of nest building:** A Spectacled Weaver carefully constructs its nest at Loresho. Photo by P. Usher

## Planets over sunset

By Fleur Ng'weno

The planet Venus, orbiting between the sun and the Earth, is the bright light over the sunset. Not far below at the start of January is the little planet Mercury, closer to the sun. Because planets reflect the sun's light, Venus and Mercury are quite bright. The big but far planet Jupiter is bright high overhead, and the planet Saturn, less bright, is between Venus and Jupiter. Mars, the 'red planet', is high in the east, glowing orange.

During January, Mercury sinks rapidly into the sunset, re-appearing in the sunrise at mid-month. Venus rises as Saturn sinks; they pass each other on January 22. On the 23rd, look for Venus, Saturn and the thin crescent moon together in the west.

Jupiter moves steadily westwards, followed by Mars. The waxing gibbous moon is near Mars on January 3, and again on the 30th and 31st. The moon is near Jupiter on Jan 25 and 26.

### January stars

In mid-December, the Earth travels through an area of dust and rocks in space. Some of these particles may fall into the earth's atmosphere and burn up. We call them meteors or "shooting stars" (although they are not stars). Look for the Geminids meteor shower on a dark, clear night between midnight and dawn from Dec 7 to 17, especially early on the 14th.

### Planets, Dec 2021

On clear January evenings, the sky is filled with bright stars. The star pattern Orion the Hunter rises due east. Viewed from Greece, he seemed to walk across the sky, setting in the west. To us near the equator, Orion seems to lie on his back as he rises in the east.

Three bright stars in a row form Orion's belt. Three fainter lights in a row hang from the belt. Among these is M42, the Orion Nebula. You can see it with the unaided eye on a clear, dark night, or with binoculars.

Four bright stars like the corners of a box form Orion's body. Imagine bright blue-green Rigel, at the upper right, as Orion's knee kicking into the sky; and orange Betelgeuse, at the lower left, as Orion's left shoulder.

These stars have meaning in many cultures. The glow of M42 was considered the fire of creation by the Maya people of central America. According to NASA, "The Mayan culture's likening of the Orion Nebula to a cosmic fire of creation is very apt. The nebula is an enormous cloud of dust and gas where vast numbers of new stars are being forged."

In Greek myths, Orion is followed by his hunting dogs: Sirius, the brightest star we see at night, in the southeast, and Procyon in the east. Here near the equator, we can also see the second brightest star, Canopus, low in the southeast. To the right of Canopus, the bright star Achernar is low in the southwest.

To the north of Orion there are constellations, or star patterns, named by the ancient Greeks. The Pleiades cluster or "Seven Sisters", is high overhead. With binoculars, you can see the blue haze that surrounds them. Between the Pleiades and Orion, the Hyades cluster forms a cone-like shape, the face of Taurus the Bull to the ancient Greeks. Reddish Aldebaran, the Bull's fiery eye, is at one end of the cone.

Further north, bright stars form a large pentagon, part of Auriga the Charioteer. At the pentagon's northern end is the bright star Capella. Below Capella, low in the north, is the constellation Cassiopeia, shaped like the letter M. To the west of Cassiopeia is the Great Square of Pegasus.

The Milky Way, a pale band made of millions of stars, stretches across the constellations, from the M of Cassiopeia in the northwest, through the pentagon of Auriga, past Betelgeuse in Orion, past Sirius, to the southeast.

In the morning before dawn, the beautiful constellation of the Southern Cross is prominent in the southern sky.

### Moon, Jan '23

Jan 6: Full moon. Jan 15: Last quarter (half-lit moon overhead at dawn). Jan 21: New moon; on Jan 23, look for the slim crescent near Venus and Saturn. Jan 28: First quarter (half-lit moon overhead at sunset).

### January sun

In Nairobi in late January, the sun rises at 6:41 am and sets at 6:51 pm. ☀

## Birding Updates

### Wednesday Morning Birdwalks in Nairobi

Please observe Covid-19 protocols as needed: wear or bring masks and meet at designated venues.

**4th January – Museum Grounds/Michuki Memorial Park.** Meet at 8 am in the open space in front of the entrance to the museum galleries.

**11th January – Manguo Pond, Limuru, with the African Waterbird Census.** Meet at 8.30am at Manguo Pond, off the upper Nairobi-Naivasha Road, just past the flyover to Limuru.

**18th January – Dandora Sewage Works (Nairobi Oxygenation Ponds, Ruai), with the African Waterbird Census.** Meet at 8.30am at the main entrance to the Sewage Works/Oxygenation Ponds off Koma Rock Road in Ruai, Nairobi. Birding and counting likely to end at 2 or 3 pm. For more directions please e-mail <news@naturekenya.org> Or WhatsApp 0738 682773 Or phone 0720 335819

**25th January – Nairobi National Park / Langata Wetlands with the waterbird counts.** Meet at 8.30am at the Nairobi National Park Main Gate, KWS headquarters along Lang'ata Road. Thanks to KWS for welcoming the birdwalk.

**January 15th Sunday Bird Watch – Brackenhurst.** Meet at the Brackenhurst Main Gate, at 8.30am. Directions: Drive along Limuru Road to Ruaka, take a right turn and continue straight along Banana Hill Road. 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 gate. There is an entrance fee of Ksh. 200 per adult and Ksh. 100 per child below 12 years.

If you have questions, please write < news@naturekenya.org> or phone 0780-149200.

### Tentative January 2023 Waterbird Counts on the Rift Valley lakes:

Lake Ol'Boissat January 13 and 14

Lakes Bogoria and Baringo, January 20, 21 and 22.

Lakes Naivasha, Sonachi, and Oloidien, January 27 and 28.

If you would like to take part; if you are experienced in identifying and counting waterbirds and if you can meet the group at the site or provide a 4x4 for transport,

please contact Ireene Madindou at <ilhanmadindou@gmail.com> or phone 0701-028739.

### Thursday Birdwalks in Malindi

**5th January – Mayungu.** Meet at 4:00pm at the Malindi Museum near Nature Kenya Membership Office

**12th January – Malindi Museum Grounds.** Meet at 4:00pm at the Malindi Museum near Nature Kenya Membership Office

**19th January – Mtangani via Afya Hospital.** Meet at 4:00 pm at Malindi Museum (100/= Boda boda fare to and from)

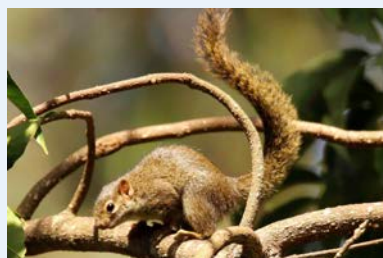
**26th January - Moi Village.** Meet at 4:00pm at Malindi Museum (100/= Boda boda fare to and from)

**28th January. Saturday Birdwatch – Mtangani.** Meet at the Malindi Museum at 7:00am. The bird walk is likely to end after 3 hours (Bring drinking water)

For more information, email: <malindimembers@naturekenya.org> or phone 0725223042.

### Coast January 2023 Waterbird Counts

If you would like to take part; if you are experienced in identifying and counting waterbirds; and if you can meet the group at the site or provide a vehicle for transport, please contact: Amina Simba <malindimembers@naturekenya.org> / 0725223042 or Lennox Kirao <lennox.kirao@arocha.org> / 0738575431.



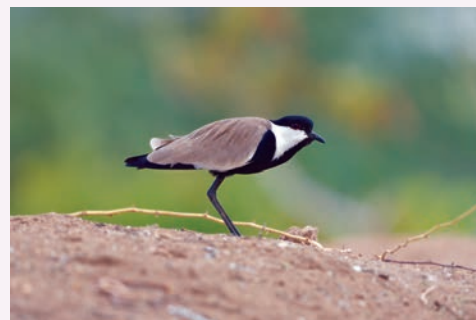
**Bush squirrel.** Photo by P. Usher

**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

## FUNDAMENTALS OF ORNITHOLOGY

A Certificate Course for Bird Guides and Birders



Register for the FoO 2023 Course that will take place at Elsamere Field Study Centre, Naivasha from 23<sup>rd</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Participation fee is KSh 70,000 for Kenyan citizens and US \$720 for residents and foreign participants

For more information send an email to: foo@naturekenya.org

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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	50,000 and above



### JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

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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