

# nature net

The Nature Kenya Newsletter [www.naturekenya.org](http://www.naturekenya.org) Dec 02/ Jan 03



## NATURALISTS TALKS & VIDEOS CORNER

### Toxic Beauty

By Dino J. Martins  
[dinom@elci.org](mailto:dinom@elci.org)

The African monarch butterfly flies with a remarkably confident and relaxed air. This assured demeanour in the face of predators is no bluff. Far from being a delicate, defenceless creature, the African monarch is well armed. She carries in her body tissues unpalatable toxins. Her bright colours serve as a warning to would-be predators: "Watch out! I taste very bad!"

Where do these poisons come from? The female African monarch and other members of the Danaidae, lay their eggs on members of the milkweed family, *Asclepiadaceae*. The caterpillars feed on the leaves ingesting and concentrating toxic alkaloids. These toxins are maintained in the system through pupation and the final metamorphosis into a adult butterfly. Birds and other creatures quickly learn to associate the bright "warning colours" with the toxicity.

Through the sacrifice of a few African monarch butterflies to 'teach' potential predators the toxicity lesson, the overall survival chances of the emergent African monarch brood are improved - another example of incredible adaptation.

Nature Kenya congratulates the Kenya Orchid Society on their Golden Jubilee!

### MZIMA: Haunt of the River Horse

Video premiere  
Monday 9 December '02,  
5:00 p.m. Louis Leakey HALL,  
National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi

The film reveals the intricate pyramid of life that a hippo school supports and the astonishing and sometimes shocking behaviour that is hidden beneath the calm surface of Mzima Springs. The team used a combination of scuba and specially designed remote cameras to get their lenses into the mouths of hippos and crocodiles to show revelatory and intimate behaviour - much of it new, even to science.

Bring your membership card!

### Succulenta Annual Supper

#### Exploring Africa for Succulent Plants

A slide presentation by

Dr Len Newton

Friday 6 December  
'02,

6:30 p.m. at Julia Glens'  
Please liase with Julia on  
contributions for the drinks and food  
tel 891065

Please refer to the Succulenta  
newsletter for directions

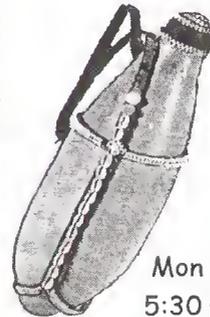


Video on Westonbirt  
Arboretum in the UK

Wednesday 18  
December '02,

3:00 p.m. Louis Leakey HALL,  
National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi

Organised by the Friends of Nairobi  
Arboretum, updates on 2002  
activities will be  
given



Tentative Talk  
by Pablo B.  
Eyzaguirre  
Senior Scientist -  
Anthropology &  
Socioeconomics  
IPGRI

Mon 10 February '03,  
5:30 p.m. Ford HALL,  
National Museum, Nairobi

### HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Season's Greetings from the  
Nature Kenya Executive  
Committee and Staff.

Please note the office will close  
on Friday afternoon 20 December  
'02 and reopens on Monday 6  
January '03.

Birdwalks will take place as usual.

## PUBLICATIONS

Available at the Nature Kenya office

*Indigenous Knowledge for  
Biodiversity and Development*

Proceedings of the National Workshop  
on Indigenous Knowledge, held on July  
1 -3 1996 @ 550/-

*Birds of Kenya* greeting cards in full  
colour by Andrew Kamiti, 150/- per  
card, 800/- for a set of 6 cards.

Kenya Horticultural Society  
calendars @ 425/-

December Sky, from  
The Safari Star Guide  
by Alex and Joy  
MacKay

## EVENING SKY

By Alex and Ian MacKay  
and Fleur Ng'weno

Sun, December 2002

An eclipse of the sun takes place on 4 December 2002 in the late afternoon. The new moon passes between the Earth and the sun, briefly blocking the sun's light. Here in Kenya it is a partial eclipse; the sun seems to shine as usual, but less intensely and more golden.

Do not look at a partial eclipse, as the sun's light will damage your eyes, even with dark glasses. Make a pinhole camera instead: using a pin, make a hole in a piece of cardboard or stiff paper. Hold the paper so that it casts a shadow on the ground. Sunlight going through the hole makes a perfectly round spot of light on the paper's shadow. This round spot of light is an image of the sun. During the eclipse, watch the spot of light on the shadow of the paper. You can see the dark shape of the moon move across the sun's image.

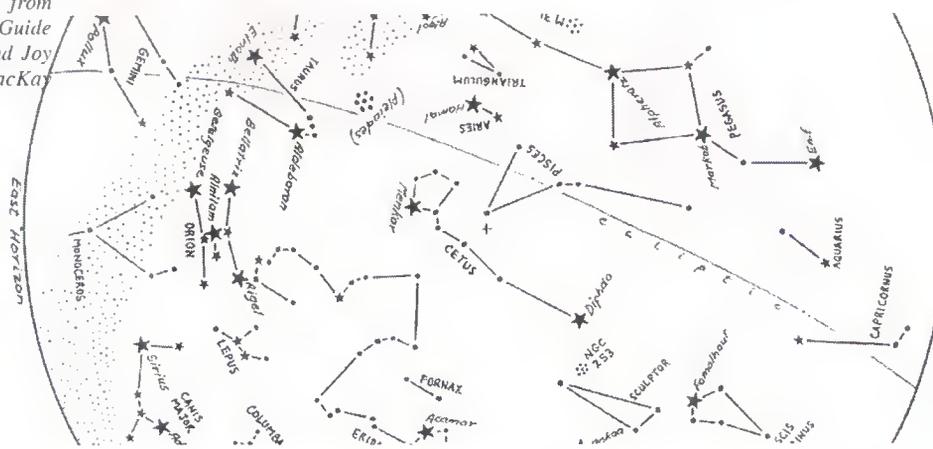
The northern winter solstice is on 22 December 2002, when the sun is as far to the south as it goes. Here on the equator we notice that in October and November the sun rose and set earlier than usual. In January and February it will rise and set later than usual.

### December Stars

Look in the northern sky for CASSIOPEIA, a constellation of stars shaped like the letter "M". The great square of PEGASUS is high in the northwest. Between these constellations is a fuzzy spot of light - the giant galaxy, M31.

The PLEIADES, a group of six or seven stars close together, is rising in the east. With binoculars, you can see many more stars in this open cluster. Do you know a vernacular name for this group of stars, or a story about them? Tell *Nature Net* about it! The ancient Greeks called them the Seven Sisters. Most of the English names of the constellations are from the myths of ancient Greece.

Between Cassiopeia and the Pleiades is the constellation PERSEUS. One of its stars, Algol, the "demon star", changes in brightness from night to night. This happens because Algol is two stars revolving around each other.



Low in the southern sky, two small "clouds" seem to "float" over the south pole. These are the Large and Small Magellanic clouds, really galaxies full of stars. Above them is the bright star Achernor.

### Planets, December 2002

The faint planet Mercury is low over the sunset. Jupiter and Saturn are high in the sky after midnight. Venus is now visible in the morning before dawn, and so is Mars.

### Moon, December 2002

4 Dec *New moon* its sighting will mark the end of Ramadan • 11 Dec *First quarter* (overhead at sunset) • 19 Dec *Full moon* • 27 Dec *Last quarter* (rises at midnight)

### Holiday viewing

The constellation of ORION, the Hunter, rises from the eastern horizon in the evenings. That is particularly beautiful over the sea at the Coast.

Are you up all night on Christmas, Election or New Year's Day? Then look for CRUX, the Southern Cross, in the south before dawn. The brilliant planet Venus is like a Star of Christmas over the sunrise.

### January Stars

January evenings are full of spectacular stars and constellations, with the Milky Way stretched out across them.

High in the north, almost overhead, are the PLEIADES or Seven Sisters. A little to the east, there is a group of stars forming an upside-down "V" shape. At one end is a bright, reddish star, Aldabaran. The "V" forms the head of the bull, TAURUS, and Aldabaran its fiery eye. Lower in the sky, five stars make a five-sided shape, AURIGA the Greek chariot driver. The brightest of the five stars is Copello, the "little goat".

ORION, the Hunter, is high in the east. Look for four bright stars forming a box shape - Orion's shoulders and knees. Between them are three bright stars in a row - Orion's belt. On a clear, dark night you can see another three stars in a row - the sword hanging from Orion's belt. Look closely at the "sword" to see a faint fuzzy glow - the great nebula M42.

On the other side of Orion, high in the southeast, is Sirius, the brightest star that we can see at night. Further south still is the second brightest star, Canopus.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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#### Contact:

Corole Hemmings

0151 47332

hemmings@ofricoonline.co.ke

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- 1/2 page @ 3000/- with image +500/-

## REGULAR ACTIVITIES

### BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museum, Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

### SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, i.e. 15 December & 19 January. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

### TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the last Monday, i.e. 27 January from 9:30 a.m. Meet at the FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ. Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.

### WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

### ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. 7 December & 4 January, at 6:30 a.m. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

### FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month i.e. 21 December & 18 January, at 4:00 p.m. Please call Marlene Reid on (011) 491 648 to confirm

Ngong Road Forest Walks, Nairobi  
The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust Nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. 7 & 21 December & 4 & 18 January, at 9:00 a.m. Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse.

### DECEMBER DIARY

Fri 6	Succulenta Dinner
Sat 7	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Mon 9	Mzima video
Wed 18	Westonbirt video
Sun 15	Sunday Birdwalk
Sat 21	FFJ Birdwalk & NRF walk
<i>Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning</i>	
<i>Bird ringing every Thursday Morning</i>	

### Bird Hotline 3749957

Upcher's Warbler, Nairobi National Park/ Nav Itai Shanni

African Skimmer, L. Navaisha/ Oct Joseph Kariuki

African Finfoot, Malewa River Lodge,  
Eleonora's Falcon, Loresha, Nairobi/  
Oct Bernd de Bruijn

## City Park still in Danger

City Park used to be 223 acres, now only 73 acres have been gazetted as a national monument. But there are many more acres that are not protected and have been allocated.

The unprotected acreage includes areas along Limuru Road, from the Forest Road roundabout to the Hawkers Market, areas by the Dog Pound on Muranga Road and the area where the maze is situated.

The Friends of City Park, a project of Nature Kenya works towards the preservation and conservation of this important natural national heritage.

### Your Support

You too can support this park and become a Friend!

Just send your contact details, including your email contact to [friendsofcitypark@iconnect.co.ke](mailto:friendsofcitypark@iconnect.co.ke)

Friends of City Park office is located at Aga Khan Hospital East Tower Block 1st Floor Room 105 and is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Tel: 3740021 / 740000 ext. 2484 or 3750290, 3750185, 3750229 or visit the Nature Kenya web site at [www.naturkenya.org](http://www.naturkenya.org).

### DECLARATION

*Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.*

**Editor,** Catherine Ngarachu

## Waterbird Counts January 2003

### Provisional schedule

10 - 11 Jan 2003	Lake Bogoria
11 - 12 Jan 2003	Lake Nakuru
24 - 25 Jan 2003	L. Elmenteita
25 - 26 Jan 2003	L. Naivasha, Oloiden, Sonachi, Wetlands around Lake Victoria, North Coast wetlands
1 - 2 Feb 2003	Lake Magadi

As part of the Wednesday Morning Birdwalks organised by Nature Kenya, the following waterbird counts will take place:

8 Jan 2003	Limuru and Manguo
15 Jan 2003	Dandora Sewage
22 Jan 2003	Nairobi National Park and Langata Wetlands
29 Jan 2003	Kenyatta Univ Ponds

The January waterbird counts will again take place on a very restricted budget and the size of the teams will be limited to experienced counters and participants who are willing to provide transport.

For participants forms and more information about the January 2003 waterbird counts, please contact Alfred Owino - Ornithology Department, tel 3742161/2/3 [kbirds@africaonline.co.ke](mailto:kbirds@africaonline.co.ke)

### New Brochure



Nature Kenya new brochure enclosed with this issue of Nature net. Please use it to sign up more members

## TRAINING

**Fundamental of Ornithology, A course for birders and bird guides**  
Elsamere Field Studies Centre,  
Lake Naivasha  
28 April — 5 May 2003

### The course

'Fundamentals of Ornithology' or FoO is a course designed for birders (both professional and amateur) who want to improve their understanding of birds and their skills in the field.

### Course content

Topics to be covered include: fieldcraft and ethics · evolution and classification · scientific names · habitat and distribution · identification: parts of a bird; finding the right family; making descriptions and taking field notes; calls; submitting records; using bird guides; wetland, forest and grassland birds · migration and movements · flight, feathers and physiology · feeding strategies · breeding behaviour · bird ringing · habitats and conservation.

### Qualification

Participants will be monitored and those who perform to the instructors' satisfaction will receive a Certificate in Ornithology issued by the Notional Museums of Kenya and Nature Kenya.

### Course fees

The course fee is KSh 25,000/= per person, payable to 'Nature Kenya'. This subsidised fee includes full-board accommodation for seven nights at Elsamere Field Studies Centre, transport to and from Naivasha and during field outings, and all other course materials, fees, equipment, and teaching expenses.

### How to apply

Applicants must have some experience in bird watching, education up to at least KCSE level and fluency in English. There is a strict limit of 18 places; to secure a place, applications must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of half the course fees (KSh 12,500/-). Course fees must be paid in full by 16 April, or the place may be re-allocated.

For further information, and to apply, please contact: Course coordinator, Tropical Biology Association, P O Box 44486, 00100 GPO Nairobi tel. (02) 3749957, 3746090, fax 3741049, e-mail tba2@africaonline.co.ke

## FIELD COURSES IN TROPICAL ECOLOGY UGANDA, TANZANIA & MADAGASCAR 2003



The Tropical Biology Association is running month-long field courses in tropical ecology and conservation in 2003. The courses are intended for students at advanced undergraduate or early postgraduate level who have a keen interest, but little experience, in tropical biology.

Teaching will be in English by leading biologists from Europe and Africa. Topics in ecology, evolutionary biology and conservation biology will be taught through field demonstrations, seminars, lectures and independent research projects. Some institutions may count participation on a course towards a degree.

### TBA Courses in Kibale Forest National Park, Uganda

23 June to 22 July 2003 TBA 03/1

27 July to 26 August 2003 TBA 03/2

Kibale Forest is a mid-altitude tropical moist forest with a spectacular array of species and a long established programme of ecological research. These courses will be based at the Makerere University Biological Field station and will include a short visit to a savanna habitat in the nearby Queen Elizabeth National Park.

### TBA Course in the East Usambara Mountains, Tanzania

2 September to 30 September 2003 TBA 03/3

The forests of the Usambaras are noted for their extraordinary biological richness and high species endemism. These forests are now severely fragmented and under great human pressure. The course will introduce some of the area's research and conservation programmes.

### TBA Course in the Dry Forests of Madagascar (Dates provisional)

1 November to 30 November 2003 TBA 03/4

Dry deciduous forests are among the world's most threatened biomes. Madagascar's dry forest has undergone high rates of deforestation and fragmentation. The course will study aspects of the forest ecosystem and

introduce regional research and conservation programmes. All teaching will be in English, but some knowledge of French would be an advantage.

### APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Scholarships are available which include transport to and from the field-site, accommodation, subsistence and course fees.

Applicants must be nationals of an African country. They should have a first degree in a biological science (for example, zoology, botany, wildlife management or conservation biology) by the time the course begins. Applicants should either be studying for a higher degree or have an active involvement in biological field research; however, applicants should note that the courses are intended for scientists at the start of their research careers.

Applications (including letters of reference) must be in English and must include:

- A cover letter explaining in detail why you want to attend the course in your own words (no more than 2 pages);
- A Curriculum Vitae giving details of academic and non-academic career, achievements and interest (other academic documents not necessary). Include your current postal address, telephone, fax and/or email;
- Confidential references (in English) from two referees (e.g. lecturers at your University, or employers at your current institution). All applicants must arrange to have references sent to the TBA as soon as possible: you may include them in a sealed envelope with your application, or ask your referee to send them directly to the TBA.

Applications should be sent to:  
Project Officer, Tropical Biology Association, c/o Nature Kenya, P O Box 44486 GPO, 00100 Nairobi, KENYA  
Tel.: (+254 2) 3746090, 3749957  
Fax: (+254 2) 3741049

Email: tba2@africaonline.co.ke

Website: <http://www.tropical-biology.org>

Closing date for applications: 25 February 2003 Successful applicants will be notified by the end of March  
*Late applications will not be considered*