

# nature net

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

## GRASSROOTS

### Strategic plan for one of the world's top biodiversity sites now funded!

The future looks bright for Arabuko-Sakoke Forest, a site rated among the world's top 25 biodiversity sites. Nature Kenya, with a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is launching a project to implement the forest's strategic management plan.

This coastal forest has been ranked as the second most important forest for threatened bird conservation in mainland Africa, and lies within an Endemic Bird Area. Six globally-threatened bird species are found in Arabuko-Sakoke, of which four have their biggest populations here, including the endangered Sakoke Scops-Owl. Clarke's Weaver is found only at this site. The forest, located 120 km north of Mombasa, is the largest remaining forest on the East African coast, and is also home to five globally threatened mammals, including the Golden-rumped Elephant Shrew, mainly found in this forest, and the African Elephant.

Outside the forest boundary, however, settlement since the 1980s has seen virtually all the remaining forests cleared for agriculture. It is clear that

Arabuko-Sakoke would have shared this fate were it not for its protected status.

The project to be implemented by Nature Kenya aims to improve the livelihoods of local people, providing them with sustainable occupations, in turn securing support for the forest's biodiversity. Nature Kenya developed the extremely successful butterfly rearing project, Kipepea, now with the National Museums of Kenya, which helped increase community revenue from non-timber forest products and now operates profitably. Local communities nearby also earn income from guiding tourists and keeping bees.

At the same time, the Arabuko-Sakoke Forest Management team, composed of the Forest Department, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forestry Research Institute and the National Museums of Kenya, with funding from the European Union and co-ordination from BirdLife International and Nature Kenya, developed a programme of participatory forest management. As the project ended last year, the management team and a wide range of stakeholders wrote a Strategic Plan to guide the future of the forest: the new project will implement the Plan's first three years. Several hundred local families are now expected to derive benefits from the project, which will devalue management of natural resources to them.



## TALKS & VIDEOS

KMS Talk

*'Life and times of Louis Leakey and his unique & enduring contribution to our knowledge of human origins'*

by Richard Leakey

Leakey family are pioneers in the field of paleoanthropology, Louis Leakey, the patriarch, achieved a spectacular success in archaeological findings throughout East Africa. Join Richard Leakey as he takes us through his father's life and times to commemorate Louis Leakey's Centennial Year (1903-2003).

Thursday 25 September '03, 6.00 p.m.  
Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi. Entrance donation 350/-  
For more details contact the Kenya Museum Society at 3750136 or [info@kenyamusumsociety.org](mailto:info@kenyamusumsociety.org)

### World Birdwatch 4-5 October 2003



#### World Birdwatch T-Shirts

Illustrating the bright yellow, red-eyed Black-headed Weaver

Available in September @600/-. Please check with Nature Kenya front office.

For more information about World Birdwatch activities, contact Anshul Bhalla (Janty) at the Nature Kenya office, Tel. (20) 3746090/3749957.

# MONITORING

## The Papyrus wetlands of Lake Victoria by Anthony Kiragu

The Papyrus swamps around Lake Victoria (Dunga, Kaguta, Kusa, Sia Part and Yala) have a crucial ecological role. They are nurseries for endemic fish species that have likely become extinct in the main lake. They are a habitat for a unique set of papyrus endemic birds, including the globally threatened Papyrus Yellow Warbler and the Papyrus Gonalek. With increasing human pressures on these swamps, they are being burned, harvested unsustainably and cleared for cultivation. Despite the poor performance of the existing reclamation scheme, large parts of Yala swamp are earmarked for drainage for a multi-million-dollar rice scheme.

Sustainable utilisation of the natural resources in the papyrus swamps can only be achieved if we can measure rates of extraction and regeneration in the swamps. To have any substantial information on utilisation trends, a monitoring scheme needs to be put in place. This scheme needs the support of the communities living with the resource, it needs to be simple, yet produce credible data.

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (LVSB), a Site Support Group working with Nature Kenya in Kisumu, are one of the beneficiaries of a monitoring project supported by the Darwin Initiative and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in the UK. The project aims at establishing basic monitoring at all the 60 IBAs and detailed monitoring at some sites.

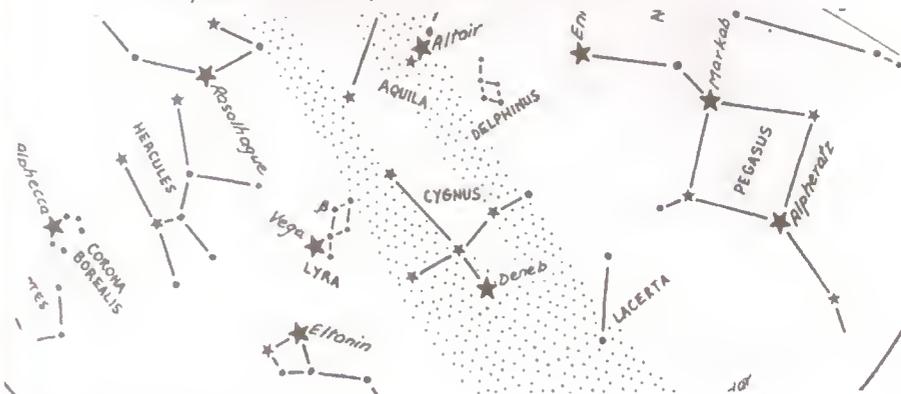
In May, Nature Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya were in Kisumu to give monitoring training to 22 participants including Kenya Wildlife Service, Forest Department, National Environment Management Authority, Kisumu City Council, Environment Department and LVSB members. The Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (WCK) Western region office hosted the meeting.

The training covered techniques for basic monitoring and set up four transects for detailed monitoring at Dunga swamps. These will provide permanent sample areas that could monitor changes and established trends in habitat and biodiversity.

The Lake Victoria waters are an issue of concern to the many countries that depend on its waters and to the millions of people who depend on the lake and its tributaries for their livelihoods. When considering the environmental forces in and around the lake, we need to take into consideration the papyrus wetlands that clean and filter the water before it gets to the lake.

# EVENING SKY

By Ian MacKay and Fleur Ng'weno



## September Stars

The brightest star on a September evening is Vega. It is a bright white light about halfway up in the northern sky. Vega is part of the small constellation called Lyra, the lyre. Lyra consists of a tiny, almost perfect equilateral triangle, balanced on one corner of a parallelogram. Vega is one of the points of the triangle.

In ancient Greek legend, the lyre belonged to a man called Orpheus, who acquired the marvellous musical instrument from the Greek god Apollo. It was said that people, animals and even weapons fell under the spell of its music. The gods placed Lyra in the heavens so we may still admire it today, even if there is no music anymore. In a Chinese legend, however, the star Vega is the celestial weaver, Chih Nu.

East of Vega, bright stars form the shape of a flying swan, a waterbird with a long, outstretched neck. This is the constellation Cygnus, the swan.

Still further east, four stars form the corners of a very large square. The square is the body of Pegasus, the mythical flying horse of the ancient Greeks. On 9 September, the planet Mars is just above the nearly full moon, and Pegasus is slightly lower and to the left. Look for the big square shape, tilted a bit to the side, low in the east-northeast.

## Planets, September 2003

The planet Mars is still big and bright in the eastern sky. For the rest of the year Mars slowly shifts westwards as the months go by. After the 25th, the September sky also holds the bright planet Venus, like an 'evening star' low in the west.

## Moon, September 2003

3 September, first quarter (overhead at sunset); 11 September, full moon; 19 September, last quarter (rises at midnight); 26 September, new moon.

## ARKive

- images of life on earth

Now available - an incredible free web resource that was recently launched by Sir David Attenborough and is supported by many of the world's most distinguished scientists, wildlife advocates and international conservation organisations.

ARKive [www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org) is the 21st Century Noah's Ark; it is harnessing the latest in digital technology to bring together, for the first time, the world's most important nature films, photographs, sound recordings, and memories, then using them to build vivid and fact-backed portraits of Earth's endangered plants and animals. Recently launched, the site is only just

the beginning of ARKive with about 800 endangered species ARKived so far, although over the coming months more species will be uploaded with the ultimate goal being to provide an audiovisual record of the 11,000 species threatened with extinction. There are also dedicated learning areas for children and an educators site full of free resources.

ARKive is aimed at anyone with an interest in the natural world from children to scientists, schools to international conservation groups. ARKive is a free world resource for pleasure, learning and research.

## REGULAR ACTIVITIES

### BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' 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. **21 September**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

### TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **13 & 29 September from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. 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. **6 September at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees may also apply.

### FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **20 September** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 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. **6 & 20 September, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse.

### Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 035 42952 or email wck@vicweb.net

## Bird Hotline 3749957

**Madagascar Squacco Heron**, Manguo Pond, Limuru/July. Sunday birdwalk.

**Little Rock Thrush**, L. Elmenteita/ July Nature Kenya field Trip.

**Great Crested Grebe**, Suguta Mugie Springs, North Laikipia/June. Peter Faull.

**Magpie Starlings**, Laisaba Ranch, Laikipia/July. Anne Powys & John Mamai.

## CLASSIFIEDS

Reach over **1000** members by advertising in Nature Net Rates for Classifieds: • Up to 25 words 250/- • Up to 50 words 500/-

## Field Trips

### Nakuru Expedition

Fri 17 - Sun 19 October '03. Organised by the Youth Committee. Places to be visited include Lake Nakuru National Park, Hyrax Hill, Menengai Crater and Bahati Forest. Max 20 persons.

Book at the Nature Kenya office with 2000/- for Nature Kenya members and 2200/- for non members; by Wednesday 08 October '03.

## SEPTEMBER DIARY

Sat 6	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 13	Tree Walk
Sat 20	FFJ + NRF walk
Sun 21	Sunday birdwalk
Mon 29	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning  
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

## 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

## Lesser Flamingo Ringing Programme Passes 250 Mark

Over 250 Lesser Flamingos have been ringed in an on-going project being conducted at Lake Bogoria in Kenya by Dr. Brooks Childress, Research Associate, Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya and Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Biology, University of Leicester (UK). The programme is part of the Lakes of the Rift Valley research programme run by Dr. David Harper, Senior Lecturer, Department of Biology, University of Leicester (UK), and is supported by the Earthwatch Institute and The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (UK). Each bird ringed has a Ringing Scheme of Eastern Africa metal ring placed on its right tibia and an orange plastic ring with black letter combinations placed on its left tibia. In addition to ringing, satellite transmitters have also been put on seven individuals.

The purpose of the programme is to learn more about the longevity and movements of Lesser Flamingos in East Africa, so the sites that are most important to the survival of this near-threatened species can be preserved and protected. In the meantime, a large database of Lesser Flamingo biometrics is being assembled that will help in understanding their growth patterns and in determining gender in the field without more intrusive methods.

The importance of ringing in determining longevity is illustrated by the recovery of eleven rings from the nestling ringing efforts of Leslie Brown in the early 1960s at Lake Magadi in Kenya. According to the recovery records held by the British Trust for Ornithology, the average age of the birds from the first seven rings recovered was 25 years, with a range of 22.6 to 26.7 years, while the average age of the last four rings discovered was 37 years, ranging from 34.9 to 38.7 years.

Although it would seem a difficult task to spot one of the orange East African rings amongst the sea of pink legs in a flock of Lesser Flamingos, Dr. Childress is asking everyone who visits an area holding Lesser Flamingos to keep a watchful eye out for them. Eleven different birds have been re-sighted at Lake Bogoria, several months after they were ringed. Based on their satellite tracking results, they know that birds from Lake Bogoria have visited all of the alkaline lakes in Kenya and Tanzania, several times in some cases, so there is a possibility that the rings will be seen almost anywhere in eastern and southern Africa.

## TALKING SHOP

**Scopus volume 23 has now been published.**



### Contents:

**Marks, B.D., Gnoske, T.P. & Ngabo, C.K.M.** Additions to the avifauna of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Echuya Forest Reserve, Uganda.

**Nemeth, E., Fanshawe, J.H. & Ngala, D. A.** First nest record and notes on the breeding behaviour and season of the East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi* from Arabuko-Sokoke Forest in Kenya.

**Butynski, T.M. & Ehardt, C.L.** Notes on ten restricted-range birds in the Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania.

**Baker, N.** A reassessment of the northern population of Cape Teal *Anas capensis*.

**Wilson, M.** First record of Pale Wren-Warbler *Calamanastes undosus* for Uganda.

**Pearson, D. & James, J.** An exceptional autumn arrival of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in Tsavo National Park.

### Book review

News (recent & not-so-recent reports)  
To subscribe for Volume 24 @ 500/-, please check with the Nature Kenya office. Send contributions to Scopus to: [jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk) or

Jeremy Lindsell, Editor Scopus, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, UK SG19 2DL, fax +44 1767 692365 or the Editor, Scopus, Nature Kenya, P.O. Box 44486 00100 GPO, Nairobi, Kenya.

## A Check-list of Kenyan Succulent Plants.

by Len Newton

Now available from the Nature Kenya office! Published by *Succulenta East Africa*, a Sub-Committee of Nature Kenya. Price 200/-

### Overview:

Succulent plants have special tissues in which water is stored, enabling them to survive long periods of drought. The water



storage tissues are in the leaves or the stems, and the organ concerned is enlarged, sometimes giving the plant a bizarre appearance that many gardeners find attractive. Other features may include a waxy surface and spines. These plants are often erroneously called cacti, but there is only one true member of the botanical family Cactaceae) indigenous to Kenya.

The number of succulent plant species known in Kenya's native flora is growing steadily, with new species being described nearly every year as more remote localities are explored. It is intended that this check-list can be used as a notebook, in which succulent plant enthusiasts can indicate which plants are in their gardens, and can also add brief notes such as collection numbers and field locations. The list includes only indigenous plants.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Contributions to *Nature East Africa* Volume 33

The numerous compliments the office has received for the content and style of this last issue (Volume 32), greatly inspires us to make a move towards the next issue.

Nature East Africa gives you, as a Nature Kenya member, an opportunity to see your work, notes or field observations in print and to share with other members and people interested in conservation and natural history. Images, where possible, are encouraged.

We will continue the use of colour (in a similar style to the last issue), but we need to raise funds for this through advertising, and ideas of people you know who we can approach, will be highly appreciated.

**Volume 33 parts 1/2 2003  
Deadline for contributions 30  
September 03**

We look forward to lots of material!