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The Nature Kenya Newsletter

www.naturekenya.org

April 04

NEWS

Pharmaceutical Causing the Decline of Three Species of Vultures

Populations of three species of Gyps vultures (*G. bengalensis*, *G. tenuirostris*, *G. indicus*) have declined by more than 95%, in the last 10 years across South Asia.

A team of scientists from The Peregrine Fund along with local collaborators in Pakistan discovered that the major cause of the vulture mortalities and declines is a pharmaceutical called diclofenac. Diclofenac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug that is given to people for pain and inflammation. Veterinary use of diclofenac to treat domestic livestock in South Asia has grown in the past decade and is now very widespread.

India has one of the highest numbers of livestock in the world, over 250 million, but for religious and cultural reasons cows are not eaten, and it is only in southern India that cattle are buried. Diclofenac is easily available and affordable and is the most commonly used anti-inflammatory and anti-pyretic veterinary drug. The drug is extremely effective, but is not a cure and therefore sick animals treated with diclofenac die contaminated with large amounts of the drug.

A whole economy has evolved from these dead carcasses.

Continued on page 4

FIELD TRIPS

Mbweha Camp, Nakuru Fri 9 to Sun 11 April

Nothing organized for Easter weekend yet? No problem!

Join the Kenya Museum Society trip to Nakuru, staying at Mbweha campsite. There is a small restaurant, so you can buy meals there, or alternatively, bring your own food. There is a planned visit to the Prehistoric sites of Kariandusi and Hyrax Hill, and game drives to Nakuru National Park. Plenty of leisure time.

Optional at additional cost:

Cycling

Night game drives

Bandas (6600 per banda per night)

** Please bring a fully charged smart card for entrance to Nakuru National Park, Nature Kenya membership card and camping gear.

Cost: Ksh 1500 per person including camping and conservancy fee at Mbweha. Does not include food or entrance fee to National Park.



Bats at Mt Suswa &

Insects at Olorgesailie

Take these rainy season excursions to Suswa to look at bats in caves
on Sat 17 Apr '04

& to the area around the Olorgesailie Prehistoric Site to look insects on
Sat 24 Apr '04

Book at Nature Kenya front office at least 4 days in advance with Ksh 200 and meet at the Nairobi Museum car park at 7:00 a.m. Carry packed lunch, drinking water, hat and comfortable shoes.

Transport is by car pool (4WD needed for Suswa) and confirmation is subject to availability of vehicles. Organised by the Mammal and Insect Committees.

TALKS & VIDEOS

Bats & Naked Mole Rats

*Mammals that shy
from the sun*

by **Bernard R Agwanda**
Talk and Video (35 mins)

Mon 5 April '04

5:30 p.m. Ford Hall, National
Museums, Nairobi

EVENING SKY

By Ian MacKay and Fleur Ng'weno

Moon

5 April Full moon; 12 April Lost quarter (rises at midnight); 19 April New moon; 27 April First quarter (overhead at sunset);

Stars

The constellation of Leo the lion is high in the northeast. Find the bright light of the planet Jupiter, then look at the stars to the left. A sickle-shaped group of stars forms the head and shoulders of a resting lion. The bright star Regulus, near Jupiter, is the lion's front feet. The lion's hunches and tail are lower in the sky.

Orion is setting in the west. Look westward after April 21st to see the constellations of Orion, the Hyades, the Pleiades, our moon and three planets (Venus, Mars and Saturn) in a diagonal line.

Planets

Bright Jupiter dominates the eastern sky. Jupiter is just south of the moon on the last day of the month.

Saturn is still in the constellation of Gemini, high in the northwest, almost overhead.

Venus is a brilliant evening object in the western sky, setting well after the sun. At the beginning of the month it is to the left of the Pleiades (the seven sisters). Each day Venus shifts northwards, to be seen inside the cluster on April 3rd.

Mars is not far from Venus, higher in the sky, but rather faint now. It sets about 2 hours after the sun. Mars can be seen just south of the moon on April 23rd.

The tiny planet Mercury is still high in the sunset at the start of this month, visible for the first few days. On April 6 it appears stationary, then disappears shortly after. In its orbit around the sun, Mercury passes through the glare of the sun on the 17th (therefore impossible to see). After passing through the glare of the sun it is found in the morning sky for the rest of the month, as a prominent morning object.



Dusk 3rd April Looking West



Dusk 21 -25th April Looking West

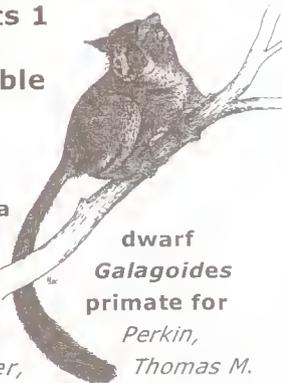


Dusk 29th April Looking East

Vol 91 Parts 1 & 2 (2002) now available @ 1000/-

Articles

The Taita mountain galago sp: a new Kenya Andrew Simon Bearder, Butynski, Bernard Benny Bytebier



dwarf Galagoides primate for Perkin, Thomas M. Agwanda &

Is the Zanzibar leopard (*Panthera pardus adersi*) extinct? H.V. Goldman & M. T. Walsh

Islands in the desert—forest vegetation of Kenya's smaller mountains and highland areas (Nyiru, Ndoto, Kulal, Marsabit, Loroghi, Ndare, Mukogodo, Porror, Mathews, Gakoe, Imenti, Ngaia, Nyambeni, Loita, Nguruman, Nairobi). R.W. Bussmann

A taxonomic study of *Blepharis edulis* complex (Acanthaceae) in eastern Africa. I. Malombe, E. Kelbessa & M. Muasya

Abstracts for these articles are available online at www.naturekenya.org

Journal of East African Natural History

Short Communications

Notes on owl pellets found in the Udzungwa Scarp Forest Reserve, Tanzania W.T. Stanley, D.C. Moyer, E.A. Mulungu J. Pokines & J. A. Bittner

The citation of the name *Encephalartos hildebrandtii* L.E. Newton

Nature Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya publish the Journal jointly, with assistance from the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Belgium). The Journal publishes papers and notes in the field of natural history, relevant to the eastern Africa region. Papers on ethnobiology are also published. Consider subscribing for the next issue @ 1000/-

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. **18 April**. 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. **10 & 26 April 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. **3 April, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees may now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **17 April**. 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. **3 & 17 April, 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

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.

World biRD Watch

On World Birdwatch '03, Oct 4-5, teams of birdwatchers all over the country competed in trying to see as many birds as possible in their chosen Atlas Square. These squares are a quarter of a square degree in size, and are used for mapping bird distribution. 33 teams participated, and saw a total of 709 birds over the weekend.

The winning team, which covered the Arabuko Sokoke Forest and nearby sites on the North Coast saw 224 species or 55% of the birds recorded in their Atlas Square.

The winning team was **Alex Mwalimu, David Ngala, Sophia Jilo, Mary Muhunga, Jacque Kaye, Thomas Kazungu & Rashid Malibe**

In second place was the team led by Colin Jackson also on the North Coast, covering Sabaki River mouth and other sites, who saw 199 or 50% of the potential birds.

In third place was the team led by Martin Kahindi, birdwatching at Bobong Camp at Rumuruti, who saw 142 or 38% of the potential birds in their Atlas Square.

Congratulations to the winning team!
Well done and thank you to all the teams.

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709 Birds

WBW' 03 HIGHLIGHTS

Stone Partridge, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver *Kongelai Escarpment*.
R.J.Barnley, J.M.Barnley, M.Sinyereri & G.Mbitu

Sharpe's Longclaw *N.Kinangop*.

S.K.Joakim, A.M.Waweru, J.N.Githuki, W.Kimenia, P.Kabaru & J.Waweru

Sokoke Scops Owl, Clarke's Weaver *Arabuko Sokoke Forest Arabuko Sokoke Forest* Guides

Blue-headed Bee-eater, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Turner's Eremomela, Western Black-headed Oriole *Kakamega Forest*
L.Victoria Sunset Birders

African Scops Owl *Sukari Ranch* T.Pallister, J.Pallister, B.Williams, P.Harries & H.Collier

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Shimoni* Pat & Maia Hemphill

Great Blue Turaco, Black-billed Turaco, Red-chested Owlet *Kakamega Forest*
K.E.E.P.

African Finfoot *Mpala Research Centre, Laikipia* W.Nderitu, F.Lomojo, A.Bropy, D.McCauley, K.Outtam, J.Petters, N.Georgladis & S.Talbot.

African Green Ibis *Mt.Kenya Summit* Ventures Conservation Group

Red-footed Boby *Shimoni* Shallesh Patel, Bernd de Bruijn, Itai Shanni & Gert Spierenburg

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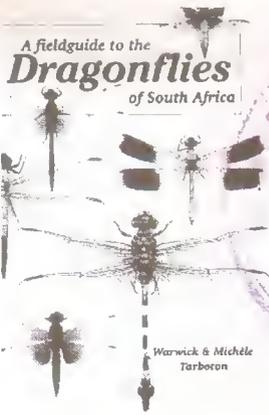
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A fieldguide to the Dragonflies of South Africa
 Warwick & Michele Tarboton
 KSH 1500

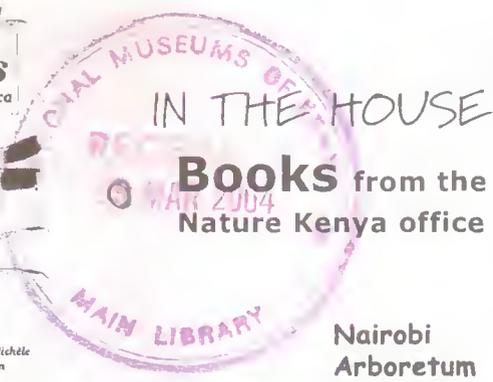
Beautifully illustrated with 275 colour photographs; covers all South African dragonflies, most of which have ranges extending to Kenya; a very useful section on *What to look for when identifying Dragonflies*

Updated and Reprinted:
East Africa Safari Quiz Book
 Bogdan and Stefan Rozwadowski
 KSH 550

Contains 500 questions (and answers) on all aspects of plants and animals, geography and history and peoples of East Africa.

Taxonomy Without (too many) Tears
 Leonard E Newton
 now selling at KSH 140

Plant taxonomy and some related topics in a style that can be understood by anyone without botanical training.



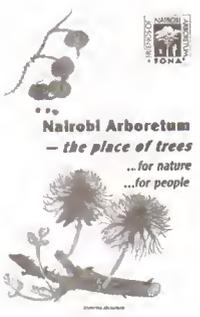
Nairobi Arboretum Guide Book

KSH 350

Continued from page 1

In the Indian caste system, the Chambar caste does the skinning of dead livestock and sells the skins to tanneries. The carcasses are left for vultures, which eat the meat leaving the bones. Bone collectors then gather the bones for processing to such end products as animal feed, poultry grit and toothpaste abrasives. Livestock that die soon after being treated with diclofenac, contain sufficient residues to cause kidney failure and death in vultures that feed on these dead carcasses. It has been demonstrated that if less than 0.4 %, or one out of every 1000 carcasses, is contaminated with diclofenac, it is sufficient to cause declines in vultures observed over the last decade.

The recovery of vulture populations in south Asia is only possible if exposure to diclofenac is prevented. Vultures have a very important ecological niche, and the loss of vultures would have a



huge impact to the environment and increase the risk of disease that threaten human life. At the moment, the areas most affected are Nepal, India and Pakistan. But this family of vultures is also found in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

This is the first known case of a pharmaceutical causing major ecological damage and as a matter of priority, Governments and manufacturers of diclofenac need to ban the use of this drug for veterinary medicine to save these species from extinction. The Peregrine Fund and its partners organized a Summit Meeting in Kathmandu in February this year to present this evidence to South Asian governments and get them to commit to restore vulture populations and control the veterinary use of diclofenac. Without this commitment, the vultures are sure to go extinct. Fortunately, this drug is not used for the treatment of livestock in East Africa.

Dr. Munir Virani of The Peregrine Fund coordinated the Asian Vulture Crisis Project comprising a team of field biologist, veterinarians and diagnosticians that led to the discovery of diclofenac as the primary cause of vulture mortalities. The Peregrine Fund was founded in 1970 and is one of the world's leading organizations in the conservation of birds of prey.

To get full details visit www.peregrinefund.org/conserv_vulture/html

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