

nature net

The Nature Kenya Newsletter

www.naturekenya.org

How come there are so many different plants?

Talk presented by the author of the plant key Upland Kenya Wild Flowers -

Dr. Andrew Agnew

Tues 26 Sept '06

at the Louis Leakey M. Hall, Nairobi Museum 5.30 p.m.



A presentation on the number of flowering plant species in Kenya and a discussion on how plant species can exist together, without competition between them eliminating all but the best one.

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SEPT. AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 9	Tree Walk
Sun 17	Sunday Birdwalk
Tues 26	Talk on Flowering Plants
Mon 25	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning

Kenya Museum Society Know Kenya Course

2 -7 October '06
at the National Museums, Nairobi

A great opportunity for both new comers and long time residents to learn more about Kenya.

Consists of 12 lectures held at the Nairobi National Museum. Topics include: **The Eternal Dance** by Dino Martins, **Marine Conservation** by Hadley Becha and **The demise of Africa's Deadly Dogs** by Duncan Mitchell. You can attend the entire course or just the lectures that interest you. The money raised from the course goes toward museum projects all over the country. For information contact KMS at 3750136 or 3743808 or email info@KenyaMuseumSociety.org

Taita Hills Thu 19 - Sun 22 October '06

Organised by the Youth Committee

A guided hiking trip through the hills. Bring own sleeping bag, drinking water, good walking/hiking shoes and warm clothing. Depart 9:00 a.m. Thursday 19th.

Cost KSh 4000 per person inclusive of transport, food, accommodation and guiding fees. Minimum 10 persons. Book with Nature Kenya by **10th October 2006**.

World Bird Festival
November '06
Team registration form enclosed

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu
Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno
Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

library re-opens

located at the Natural Sciences Building, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi (next to the Langi Langi cafeteria)



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Discussion Forum

make your opinion known at www.naturekenya.org/forum

Society offices at the Museum

While the Nairobi Museum is under renovation, you will find Nature Kenya offices at the Ford Hall and at a prefabricated building on the compound. The prefab building is located next to the Kikuyu homestead and is the office for the Nature Kenya membership shop and subscription desk.

Plan to register a friend or relative as a member!

Would you rather receive the newsletter by email?

It would be a PDF of below 1 MB. Please confirm this preference by sending a note and your current email to office@naturekenya.org
Due to spam filters yahoo, hotmail and other such address will not normally deliver emails sent in bulk, so please do not give email addresses with these extensions. Thank you.

The avian influenza - H5N1 - outbreak in Asia, parts of Europe, the Near East, and Africa is not expected to diminish significantly in the short term. In Africa, outbreaks have been reported in Ivory Coast, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Sudan and Egypt. It is likely that H5N1 infection among birds has become endemic in certain areas and that human infections resulting from direct contact with infected poultry will continue to occur. Already the World Health Organisation (WHO) has confirmed cases of human avian influenza in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Turkey, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Egypt and Djibouti. However, so far, the spread of the H5N1 virus from person-to-person has been rare, limited and unsustainable.

Serah Munguti
office@naturekenya.org
& Muchane Muchai
head.ornithology@museums.or.ke

Pets also at risk

During late February and early March 2006, authorities in Germany announced the detection of H5N1 virus in three domestic cats that died on the Baltic island of Ruegen. During the same month, the virus was also detected in cats in Austria. In addition to the reports of infection in domestic cats, German authorities in early March 2006 announced the detection of H5N1 infection in a stone marten (a weasel-like mammal) on the island of Ruegen, in the same area where the dead H5N1-infected cats were found. As with the domestic cats on the island, it is presumed that the stone marten acquired its infection by feeding on H5N1-infected birds. Several published studies have demonstrated H5N1 infection in large cats kept in captivity. To date, there is no evidence that domestic cats have a role in the natural transmission cycle of

H5N1 viruses. No cases of avian influenza in humans have been linked to exposure to sick cats, and no outbreaks among populations of domestic cats have been reported. All natural H5N1 infections in domestic cats reported to date appear to have been associated with outbreaks in domestic or wild birds and acquired through ingestion of raw infected meat.

Surveillance in Kenya

The National Museums of Kenya Ornithology Dept. in collaboration with Kenya Medical Research Institute, Kenya Wildlife Service, Centre for Disease Control and the Naval Medical Research Unit USA, have teamed up to develop an avian influenza surveillance network. This will provide an early warning system to reduce the threat of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI-H5N1) transmission to humans from endemic areas.

To report any unusual die-offs in wild or domestic birds call this hotline phone:
0722 726682

DOWNGRADING

AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK

Nature Kenya goes to court

Since November 2005, the Amboseli case at the High Court has been severally mentioned or adjourned. No full hearing has taken place:

- 15 Nov. '05 - the hearing is adjourned to the 24 Nov.
- Between 24 Nov. '05 and 15 Feb. '06 - case mentioned several times at the High Court. A hearing was finally scheduled for 9 May '06. However, this hearing never took place because the legal representative of the Olkejiado County Council was unable to attend.
- 14 July '06 - case mentioned in court. There was a further delay because the Attorney General's Deputy Solicitor was unable to attend.
- The case was last mentioned on 27 July '06. The High Court directed that the CSOs (applicants), Minister for Tourism and other respondents to file and serve the Attorney General's office, a second time. The case will be mentioned on 22 September '06.

However, with the High Court injunction granted in November 2005, Amboseli National Park retains its 'national park' status.

Ecotourism Kenya Events

Reserve these dates in your Diary NOW!

Ecotourism Society of Kenya and her partners would like to invite you to attend the following events.

The Great Mara Debate - Is Mara threatened?

Marooned Mara
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR RICHARD LEAKEY

21st September 2006 at Holiday Inn Nairobi from 09.00am - 2.00pm

What will it take to 'save' the Mara and who will do it? Come and listen to landowners, investors, reserve trustees, conservationists and other interest groups debate the future of the Mara.

Your informed opinion will add value to the debate. Charges are Ksh 1500/= per person for members and Ksh 2,000/= for non-members (lunch included).

Ecotourism Society of Kenya Re-launch: We are going places

21st September 2006 at Holiday Inn, Nairobi from 2.30 - 3.00pm

It's been Ten YEARS we are ready to sprint. Join us as we unveil our new vision, and plans for the next five years, including a brand new identity.

South Coast stakeholders meeting- Know Ecotourism Kenya

28th September 2006 at Leopard Beach Resort from 09.30 - 12.30pm

Can coastal tourism be sustainable? Find out more about opportunities and emerging strategies for managing impacts related to coastal tourism as we engage you in our new vision and plans for the future. All tourism stakeholders invited.

Bamburi Meeting- Rebuilding relations

28th September 2006 at Haller Park Pavilion from 2.30 pm

Haller Park is the hallmark of reconstructed nature. Spend time with us at Haller Park and get to know Ecotourism Kenya and its vision for coastal tourism. All tourism stakeholders invited.

North Coast - Defending our Environment

29th September 2006 at Coral Key Hotel, Malindi from 09.30 - 1.00pm

This meeting will provide opportunity for tourism stakeholders in Malindi to get to know about Ecotourism Kenya and to discuss strategies for making our beaches safe for all user groups.

Quote: I think the environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defense of our resources is just as important as defense abroad. Otherwise what is there to defend? - Robert Redford, Yosemite National Park dedication, 1985

Don't miss out. Register today and secure your participation

For more information and to register for participation contact us through info@esok.org or visit www.ecotourismkenya.org
Tel: 2724755/ 2724403

Advertiser's announcement



EVENING SKY

Ian Mackay & Fleur Ng'weno

Moon, September 2006

A partial lunar eclipse will occur on 7 September 2006. During the evening, part of the shadow of the Earth will fall across the moon; the moon will then appear a deep coppery orange colour. 1 Sept - First quarter; 7 Sept - Full moon and partial lunar eclipse; 14 Sept - Last quarter; 22 Sept - New moon; 30 Sept - First quarter

Sun

A solar eclipse over the southern oceans, on September 22, will be seen as a partial eclipse from southern Africa. September 23 is the equinox, when days are of equal length all over the world. It is the start of spring in the southern hemisphere, and in Nairobi, many of the exotic flowering trees such as jacaranda begin to bloom.

Planets, Sept. 2006

Jupiter is a bright light near the stars of the constellation of Scorpius, the Scorpion. Mars is setting, visible only the first two weeks of September. On September 15, Mars passes just north of Mercury; look soon after sunset to see them.

At dawn, Venus is sinking into the sunrise and Saturn is in the eastern sky. The moon will be near Saturn on September 19, and near Venus on the 21st.

Stars, Sept. 2006

High in the northeast, three bright stars form a triangle. Altair, in the east, seems to be escorted by two fainter stars.

Vega is very bright in the north. Deneb is to the right (east) of Vega.

High in the southwest there are the constellations of Scorpius, like a giant fishhook, and Sagittarius, the Archer, shaped like a teapot. At the beginning and end of the month, the moon will pass through these constellations. The moon will be near Antares, the red star in Scorpius, on September 1st and 28th.

The Milky Way stretches across the sky from southwest to northeast. Look through binoculars to see some of the many stars in our galaxy.

The names of the stars and planets given in this column are the ones used in English. They come from ancient Greek, Roman and Arab astronomers. Many of the constellations are named after the myths of ancient Greece. Looking up at the sky, people in Africa told different tales about the stars, the patterns they seem to form, and the planets wandering among them.

natural history

naturalist corner Dino Martins



A mini-migration is currently taking place around you!

The air is dotted with hundreds of tiny bright white and black forms drifting purposefully across the landscape. In the city, one might be forgiven for thinking that someone is carelessly tossing shredded paper into the wind. But for once, litterbugs are not to blame for what's blowing around Nairobi. These are not pieces of paper drifting aimlessly about, but hundreds of living butterflies on the move.

Clouds of white butterflies are currently making their way cross-country all over East Africa, drifting and swirling by in their hundreds. The butterflies can be seen on most sunny days around Nairobi, on the grasslands and riverine areas of the Nairobi National Park and at open green spaces within the city, such as the Arboretum and City Park.

These butterflies are broadly known as the Caper Whites. They are in the genus *Belenois*, and are a common feature of open woodland and grassland areas across the region. They fly restlessly, pausing often to sip nectar from flowers of every kind. They also gather at

damp spots - even by roadsides with busy traffic. The males gather to mud-puddle at damp spots where they can form large congregations depending on the kinds of salts available and prevailing weather. One of the commonest species is the Brown-Veined White, *Belenois aurota*, where the veins on the underside of the white wings are outlined in brown-black.

In Nairobi National Park the food-plants, where the adult butterflies lay their eggs, have been almost totally defoliated in many places. The Caper White caterpillars feed on *Maerua*, *Capparis* and other members of the *Capparaceae*.

The exact reasons behind these mini-migrations that occur periodically depending on the seasons are not fully understood. They could just be driven by instinct to disperse, but it is more likely that there are peaks in population growth that depletes caterpillar food-plants and forces the butterflies to move in search of new areas to lay eggs.

Keep an eye out for these incredible butterflies on their chaotic journey cross-country. You can't miss them!

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Arts/Crafts Exhibition at WEAL House, next to Fairview Hotel, Bishops Rd Daily from 20 Sept '06 10:00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Sat 23 Sept '06 10:00a.m. to noon
For information phone 2720311

Up & about

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.

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.

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. 9 and 25 Sept '06 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.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, i.e. 17 Sept '06. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

SAMAKI DAYS

Guided fish excursions on the first Thursday, i.e. 7 Sept '06 from 9:00 a.m - 12:30 p.m. Meet at the Nairobi Museum car park. Pay Ksh 50/- per person on arrival



KINANGOP GUEST HOUSE

Perched on the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenous forest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks on the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya. Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-
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Ngong Road Forest Walks

Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust nature walks held the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. 2 & 16 Sept '06, at 9:00 a.m. Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Ignatius to confirm on 3875207 or 0720 976299.

(Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 057 2024162 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Mt Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (MKBCG)

The MKBCG organise bird walks to sites around Naro Moru every last Saturday of the month i.e. 30 Sept '06. For more information contact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 or 062 62071 Email: mt_kebio@yahoo.co.uk_

Birding at Kinangop

Friends of Kinangop Plateau organise birdwalks every third Friday of the month i.e. 15 Sept '06 at 9:00 a.m around Magumu and Njambini areas. To participate contact Bakari Ng'ang'a on 0721 470215

MARURA NAROK BIRDWATCHERS

A community group near Uaso Narok Swamp, Rumuruti, which organises birdwalks every last Saturday i.e. 30 Sept '06. Call 062 32718 or email olmaisora@africaonline.co.ke

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. 2 Sept '06, at 6:30 a.m. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees 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. 16 Sept '06. Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

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