

# nature net

naturekenya.org

March 2018



## Lake Ol' Bolossat now protected!



An aerial view of Lake Ol' Bolossat. PHOTO: A. WAMITI

By J. Kiptum

**L**ake Ol' Bolossat, an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, is now formally a protected area. This follows the recent gazettement of the lake as a Wetland Protected Area. The immediate former Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Prof. Judi Wakhungu, made the announcement during this year's World Wetlands Day on the shores of the lake in Nyandarua County.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management (Protected Wetlands) Regulations of 2015 give the Cabinet Secretary powers to declare a wetland, through a notice in the Kenya Gazette, an important habitat or ecosystem for wildlife conservation upon the recommendation of the Kenya Wildlife Service in consultation with the National Land Commission. The gazette notice will make it clear whether Lake Ol' Bolossat will be managed as a fully or partially protected wetland or will be subject to conservation by the local community.

Following the declaration, National

Lands Commission chairman Mohammed Swazuri, who was also in attendance, said all title deeds for the land stood dissolved. Swazuri noted that according to Sections 10, 11 and 12 of Lands Act 2012, the issuance of a gazette notice means the title deed of the land in question and any others prior to the notice ceases.

Lake Ol' Bolossat is the only lake in central Kenya. The lake forms the headwaters for the Ewaso Nyiro River, which supports the livelihoods of communities, livestock and wildlife in the dry Laikipia, Samburu, Isiolo and Garissa Counties. Despite its small size (43.3km<sup>2</sup>) the freshwater lake is known for its rich biodiversity that include hippos and over 300 bird species (both residents and migrants). The lake lies within the central tourism circuit, and supplies Nyahururu town with water. The Ewaso Nyiro River supports the thriving wildlife tourism in Buffalo Springs, Shaba National Reserve, and Lorian swamp in Wajir, where the river goes underground, to re-emerge in Somalia where it joins the Jubba River.

Over the years, Lake Ol' Bolossat has been experiencing massive shrinking as a result of human activity. In the last one decade, the lake's water surface area has gone from about 10,000 hectares to 3,000 hectares, escalating human-wildlife conflict as wild animals, particularly hippos, lose their habitat. As an unprotected wetland, the lake has been battling numerous challenges and threats including water

abstraction, overgrazing, human encroachment, deforestation of catchment areas and siltation.

It is hoped that the gazettement will provide the crucial legal framework to guide the conservation of the lake. Nature Kenya has been actively engaged in advocacy and awareness creation activities to help the lake attain legal protection and conservation.

**108<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**VENUE**  
Louis Leakey Hall, Nairobi Museum

**DATE**  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**TIME**  
12:00 - 2:00pm

## World Wetlands Day celebrated

By J. Kiptum, E. Mateche and G. Odera



Friend of Kinangop Plateau (FoKP) exhibiting during the World Wetland Day celebrations at Lake Ol' Bolossat. PHOTO: J. KIPTUM

Nyandarua County played host to this year's World Wetlands Day (WWD) national celebrations that were held at Kichakani grounds on the shores of Lake Ol' Bolossat. The event, marked on February 2 to raise awareness on the importance and value of wetlands, brought together various stakeholders from the national and county governments, conservation organizations, community-based organizations and others. Those present included Nyandarua County Governor Hon. Francis Kimemia, Cabinet Secretaries (CS) Najib Balala (Tourism and Wildlife), Sicily Karluiki (Health) and Prof. Judi Wakhungu, the immediate former CS for Environment. The guests visited the Nature Kenya exhibition stand where CS Balala bought two books – *50 Top Birding Sites in Kenya* and *My First Book of East African Birds*. Friends of Kinangop Plateau (FoKP) exhibited its community products during the event and CS Balala acknowledged its good quality wool products in his speech.

The highlight of the day was the announcement of the gazettement of Lake Ol' Bolossat as a Wetland Protected Area (see separate story).

This year's WWD theme was "Wetlands for a sustainable urban future" and the domesticated slogan was "Healthy Wetlands, Clean Towns". The theme sought to highlight the vital roles of healthy wetlands for urban areas, such as slowing flood water, cooling effects in hot weather, filtering of wastes and providing urban green space as an aesthetic value. Wetlands are complex and vital ecosystems, providing numerous benefits

to both nature and mankind. Among the benefits is the ability to harbour a huge variety of life, protecting coastlines, and storing carbon dioxide to regulate climate change and consequently reduce the risk of natural calamities to the surrounding communities and urban infrastructure.

In other parts of the country, Nature Kenya and local Site Support Groups (SSGs), together with different partners organized events to raise awareness of the many values of wetlands and raise awareness at the local level.

At the Yala wetland in Siaya County, the event was celebrated at Kadenge Ratuoro market in Alego Usonga Sub-County with 160 people in attendance. The event, organized by Yala Ecosystem Site Support group, was presided over by a representative of the County Executive Committee Member (CEC) for Water, Energy, Irrigation and Natural Resources, Madame Hellen Odongo. In her keynote speech, she emphasized the need to promote the wise use of wetlands as a means of achieving a sustainable urban future. She highlighted some of the threats facing Yala Swamp including over exploitation of its natural resources. She noted some of the ongoing sustainability efforts by stakeholders, including the formulation of the Land Use Plan for Yala Swamp, supported by Nature Kenya and other partners, whose main goal is supporting sustainable livelihoods of the residents of Siaya and Busia Counties while taking into account the ecological integrity of the swamp. 🌿

## Vultures still poisoned in the Mara!

By R. Ikachoi

One early evening in February, an alarm was raised of a poisoned vulture at the Paradise Plains in the Mara National Reserve. Stratton Hatfield, a researcher with the Mara Martial Eagle Project, noted that the White-backed Vulture displayed symptoms of poisoning and made a call for action to help save the bird. With the help of the Kenya Wildlife Service veterinary officer, the bird was moved and placed on a treatment program.

The manner in which this news spread was startling: a social platform has been formed called "Mara Poisoning Response". This platform helps engage people, including rangers, vets, researchers, wardens and managers, to get updates of any other casualties and share information of any other poisoning events in the Mara.

Poisoning accounts for over 60% of recorded vulture deaths in Africa. In most cases, this happens when predators kill livestock and herders poison the carcass to kill the predators. Poachers also poison vultures. Over the past two years, Nature Kenya, BirdLife International, The Peregrine Fund and other

conservation stakeholders have been championing and raising awareness on the plight of vultures. It is clearly evident that these efforts are yielding positive results, based on the kind of attention and response the current poisoning event attracted.

Rangers from the conservancies and the Mara Reserve have been mobilized to enhance patrols, especially around thickets and riverbeds since sick vultures seek darkness and shade and also tend to feel thirsty. From the thorough patrols being conducted, a number of other White-backed Vulture casualties have since been reported: 3 at Naboisho, 3 at Ol' kinyei, 1 at Double crossing and we ended up losing the one that had been rescued at Paradise Plains. At the same time, six lions and 74 vultures were found dead near a national park in southern Tanzania after they were allegedly poisoned. Timely response to poisoning incidents can significantly reduce resultant wildlife deaths and environmental contamination. In future, we need to have the necessary equipment and machinery in place to facilitate timely response and minimize casualties. 🌿



Vultures gather at the site where one of them was found dead at Maasai Mara. PHOTO: R. IKACHOI

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

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## Environment is the foundation of the "Big Four" says new CS

Illegal loggers face tough times ahead, new Environment and Forestry CS Keriako Tobiko (pictured above) said, minutes after taking over. He said his ministry will not negotiate with people who encroach on water catchment areas. "The docket is the foundation of the Big Four. A healthy, secure, clean environment is a critical enabler of all the four pillars," Tabika said at his NHIF office. He said the ministry is critical to tackling food insecurity, providing resources for manufacturing and ensuring a clean and safe environment, all key to universal healthcare. The "few rogue officers messing up with some of the plans should be weeded out," Tabika said. "I know the Kenya Forest Service has done a good job, but if no immediate action is taken to enforce the law, in a couple of years, we would be facing a situation as dire as what is happening in South Africa." [Note: in South Africa, the city of Cape Town is running out of water.]

The above report was carried in The Star newspaper last month



**Stop Press! The Kenya government has imposed a three-month moratorium on timber harvesting in all public and community forests, due to the current acute water crisis. Nature Kenya welcomes this move, but notes that timber harvesting is only one of many human activities in forests. Building roads, railways and dams in forests; Invasion by herders and their livestock; encroachment by agriculture and mining; and especially charcoal making, are destroying our forests. Nature Kenya appeals to the government to control all these threats in order to maintain the critical ecosystem services that forests provide for people.**

## Evening and morning bright planets

By F. Ng'weno

**B** Brilliant Venus is back in the evening sky, low over the sunset. For most of March, it is joined by the small planet Mercury. In early March Venus and Mercury are very close together, low over the horizon. Mercury passes Venus on March 5, and rises until March 15. Then it drops back rapidly into the sunset, while Venus continues to rise. The slender new crescent moon is near Venus on March 18 & 19 - a beautiful sight.

In the morning sky, bright Jupiter is high in the southwest before dawn. The constellation, or star pattern, of the Scorpion follows Jupiter, high in the south. The reddish planet Mars is to the east of the Scorpion's reddish star Antares. During March, Mars brightens, and Mars and Saturn seem to move closer together, passing each other on April 2.

### Moon, March '18

There are two full moons in March 2018, as there was in January. The first full moon is on March 2. The second full moon, often called a "blue moon", is on March 31. Easter Sunday is set for the first Sunday after the full moon after the March equinox - this year the very next day, April 1st. March 9, last quarter ("half" moon overhead at dawn). March 17: new moon. March 24: first quarter ("half" moon overhead at sunset).

### March Stars

Sirius, the brightest star at night, is high in the south; below it is Canopus, the second brightest star. The star Procyon is high above, on the other side of Sirius.

North of Procyon, four bright stars form the corners of a long rectangle - the constellation of Gemini, the Twins. To the east of Gemini, the constellation of Leo the Lion is rising. Imagine its star Regulus as the lion's heart, and a half-circle of stars to the north as the lion's mane. The nearly full moon is near Regulus on March 28.

The distinctive constellation of Orion, the Hunter or Warrior of the ancient Greeks, is high in the west: Three bright stars in a row, and around them, four stars like the corners of a box. The giant pentagon of Auriga, the charioteer, with its bright star Capella, is in the northwest. The Pleiades cluster or Seven Sisters and the reddish star Aldebaran are between Orion and Auriga, dipping towards the west. The waxing moon is near Aldebaran on March 22-23.

### March Sun

On March 20 the sun crosses the equator, marking the equinox: the time of equal day and night, all over the world. ☀

**THE ART OF CONSERVATION**

Artwork by pupils from Mwarandinda Primary School in Kilifi. The artwork was the best in an art competition organized by the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya for schools located adjacent to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest.

## Charity Golf Tournament

DATE: FRIDAY 23RD MARCH 2018 | VENUE: KAREN COUNTRY CLUB | TIME: 10:00AM - 7:00PM

Date To register contact: 0780 149 200, EMAIL: office@naturekenya.org

MAIN SPONSOR: KSH. 1,000,000- 3,000,000 | GOLD SPONSOR: KSH. 500,000

SILVER SPONSOR: KSH. 250,000 | BRONZE SPONSOR: KSH. 100,000 | HOLE SPONSOR: KSH. 50,000

INDIVIDUAL PLAYER KSH. 2,500 (NK MEMBER), KSH. 3,000 (NON MEMBERS) | TEAM ENTRIES KSH. 10,000



# in the FIELD

## MARCH AT A GLIMPSE

Mar 3 <sup>rd</sup>	FoCP Nature Walk
Mar 7 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Bird Walk
Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Bird Walk
Mar 17 <sup>th</sup>	FoCP Nature Walk
Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday Bird Watch
Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	Morning Bird Walk
Mar 28 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Bird Walk
Mar 30 <sup>th</sup>	Members' Trip

Bird ringing every Tuesday morning (check with Ornithology section, National Museums).

**Birders Please Note!** The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet at 8:30 am at the Nairobi National Museum. Transport is on a self-help basis. The group meets in the courtyard of the Nairobi National Museum, past the entrance to the galleries. We normally return at about 12:30 pm.

The Sunday Birdwatch on the THIRD Sunday of each month now also meets at 8:30 am, at the same location. It is a day trip; please bring water and lunch.

**Mombasa Birdwalks** On the 3rd Saturday of each month. For meeting time and place, please contact Taibali Hamzali <thamzali@gmail.com> / 0733-980540; or Doris Schaule <dorischaule@gmail.com> / 0722-277752. Or check Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

Contact the office for information on other birdwalks in Kakamega, Kisumu, and other sites

**Ngong Forest walks** - 1st and 3rd Saturday at 9.00 am. Contact Simon 0729-840715



## MEMBERS' TRIP

Join us for an overnight camping & hiking trip to **Aberdare National Park** Friday 30th to Saturday 31st March 2018



**Come enjoy**  
 • Overnight camping  
 • 14Km mild hike  
 • Game & Bird watching  
 • Picturesque sceneries

**Cost**  
 Ksh. 10,400/= pp  
 For Booking & enquiry  
 Contact Norman  
 news@naturekenya.org  
 0739 200 216

**Cost covers**  
 • Transport  
 • Meals  
 • Drinking water  
 • Guide & Guard fees  
 • Camping gear  
 • Park entrance fee

## WELCOME ON BOARD

Nature Kenya (the EANHS) would like to welcome the following members to the East Africa Natural History Society:

### CORPORATE

Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance (RACIDA)  
 Mpala Research Centre  
 Rondo Retreat Center

Vuria CFA

### FAMILY

Boedts Bruno  
 Chandrakant Devji Chhabhadia  
 Edward Wanderi  
 Wanjiku Ndegwa

### INSTITUTIONAL

Cranes Conservation Volunteers  
 Chawia CFA  
 Dakatcha Woodlands Conservation Group  
 Dakatcha Woodlands CFA  
 Dawida Biodiversity Conservation Group  
 Gede CFA  
 Iyawembi CFA  
 Jilore CFA  
 Ngangao CFA  
 Sabaki River Conservation Development  
 Sokoke CFA  
 Sundifu CFA

### INDIVIDUAL

Bryan Michuki  
 David Muchiri Njane  
 David Waitthaka  
 Eunice Kumunga  
 Mona Liljeblad  
 Harun Ndagwe  
 Pat Sara Neylan  
 Paola Nicoll

### STUDENT

Joseph Ngotho  
 Joseph Kanjabi  
 Mohammad Ebrahimic  
 Hannah Kramer



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## Yes! Start my NatureKenya membership

Surname \_\_\_\_\_  
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### MEMBERSHIP TYPES

	Ksh Per Year
Full	2,000
Sponsor	6,000
Family	2,800
Student	1,200
Schools,	1,500
Clubs	
Corporates	20,000 - 30,000



## JOIN/RENEW MEMBERSHIP

- Select 'Lipa na Mpesa'
- Select 'Pay Bill'
- Enter business number 100300
- Enter account number (put your lapsed membership number or write new member)
- 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