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July 2018

Mt. Kenya Forest restoration Phase two initiative kicks off



The public-private sector partnership for sustainable water flows from Mt. Kenya forest is a Nature Kenya initiative that seeks strategic commitment and support from the business sector to enhance the quantity and quality of water flowing from Mt. Kenya.

Under the initiative, Nature Kenya worked with the five CFAs with financing from KBL. The CFAs received support for establishing tree nurseries with a capacity of 100,000 seedlings for each. Nature Kenya, through funding from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), also built the capacity of four water services sellers (Mt. Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group, Naro Moru, Gathiuru and Ngare Ndare CFAs) in Mt. Kenya to engage with water buyers, seeking commitment from them to pay back business proceeds for water catchment management and threat removal.

By N. Kiboi and J. Mwacharo

A target of 53,000 tree seedlings have been earmarked for planting in the second phase of the Mt. Kenya Forest restoration sponsored by Kenya Breweries Limited (KBL). This phase will involve five community forest associations (CFAs): Hombe, Kabaru, Naro Moru, Gathiuru and Ngare Ndare. The tree-planting exercise was flagged off by KBL's Finance Director Ms. Kinya Kimotho during the World Environment Day celebrations held on June 5 at Naro Moru, Nyeri County.

A team from KBL, under the staff-driven Kijani Team Initiative, joined members of the community in planting 2,500 tree seedlings at Naro Moru. Speaking during the event, Ms. Kimotho, who is also the Kijani Team patron, expressed KBL's commitment to environmental conservation, particularly the restoration of Mt. Kenya Forest. Ms. Kinya added that KBL was proud to have come this far with the forest restoration programme.

Launched in 2017 by KBL in partnership with Nature Kenya and local CFAs, the Mt. Kenya Forest restoration initiative aims at restoring 250 acres of degraded forest in Mt. Kenya by planting 100,000 tree seedlings by the end of 2018. A total of 47,000 tree seedlings were planted in different blocks of Mt. Kenya Forest in 2017.

The initiative not only contributes to reforestation, but also supports over 30,000 beneficiaries around the Mt. Kenya Forest. All seedlings planted are sourced from the five CFAs. The CFAs are also involved in the planting and nurturing of the trees.

The Mt. Kenya ecosystem provides water to key national parks and generates half of the country's total hydropower. It is an important water catchment – the source of the Ewaso Nyiro North and Tana River systems, which are vital to Kenya's economic development, food security and energy generation.

Ms. Kinya Kimotho plants a tree at Naro Moru to launch phase two of the Mt. Kenya Forest restoration initiative sponsored by Kenya Breweries Limited. (Below) Some of the community members who turned up for the tree-planting exercise. PHOTOS: NORMAN KIBOI



United in beating plastic pollution

By J. Mwacharo

Plastic pollution is a global problem that many nations are grappling to address. Plastic waste is a major pollutant of our environment and poses a serious threat to the marine ecosystem as well as our very own well-being. This year's World Environment Day (WED) theme "Beat Plastic Pollution", with the rallying call: "If you can't reuse it, refuse it", sought to promote sustainable initiatives aimed at reducing plastic pollution. Nature Kenya joined the rest of the world in marking this day at various locales across the country.

Kenya became a leader in this effort last year by banning the manufacture, sale and use of plastic bags. A few practical exceptions were made, such as labeled bags for waste disposal. There is still a lot of plastic used in packaging, however, requiring further action.

In Dakatcha Woodland Important Bird Area at the Coast, the event was marked at the Bore Singwaya Primary School on June 9. Vivo Energy Kenya, for the fourth year running, sponsored the event which kicked off with a clean-up exercise at Marafa town. Students from Marafa Polytechnic and Marafa Primary School joined members of the Sauti ya Kina Mama community-based organization in collecting waste materials around the town.

The exercise netted a substantial amount of plastic waste, which included discarded water bottles, containers and bags.



Plastic waste collected during the clean-up at Marafa town.

After the clean-up, students from Bore Singwaya, Baraka, Kandunguni, and Kundeni primary schools joined in for the celebrations. Living up to the theme, students from Bore Singwaya Primary School demonstrated how discarded plastic bottles could be innovatively used to drip-irrigate tree seedlings planted to mark the event. The students also showcased other creative ways of reusing plastic bottles.



Kilifi County Environment CEC Kiringi Mwachitu planting a tree to mark WED.

The event was graced by the Kilifi Assistant County Commissioner Dominic Kinyanjui, who was the chief guest, Kilifi County Environment CEC Kiringi Mwachitu, Garashi Ward MCA Peter Ziro, representatives from the Kenya Forest Service, Bore Green Umbrella, Dakatcha Community Forest Association, Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group and Action Aid, among others. Over 250 students and 150 community members participated in the event. The Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Park was the venue for the WED celebrations in Siaya, where over 300 people participated in the event. A clean-up exercise, tree planting session and a bird walk were among activities held to mark the day. Nature Kenya was actively involved the planning for the event. In the Taita Hills, the event was held at the Dawson Mwanjumba stadium, Wundanyi, on June 6, with Nature Kenya participating.

This year's national celebrations were held at the Kwale Baraza Park, Kwale County, and were presided over by the Deputy President William Ruto on June 6. Nature Kenya was among organizations involved in the planning of the national event.



The clean-up at Marafa town.



Bore Singwaya Primary School pupils demonstrating how to reuse discarded plastic bottles. Drip-irrigation using plastic bottles. ALL PHOTOS BY JOHN MWACHARO



For updates go to www.naturekenya.org

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SPREADING THE ANTI-POISONING MESSAGE



Nature Kenya's Simon Shati speaks about the dangers of wildlife poisoning during a community outreach at the Naikarra market, Narok County. PHOTO: REBECCA IKACHOI

Singing and dancing to stop wildlife poisoning

By R. Ikachoi

Songs and dances are effective awareness tools. These two mediums, often used to entertain, communicate and transmit culture, have a strong appeal to the public, particularly at the community level. Through such performances people are not only entertained but also get to learn a thing or two.

An awareness campaign aimed at sensitizing communities on the dangers of wildlife poisoning through song and dance took place in Maasai Mara in June. The outreach, involving shows by a troupe of traditional Maasai artists named the Buffalo Dancers, staged a series of public performances at seven markets in seven days. Using songs, choral chants and drama the performers visited Ngosuni, Naikarra, Ewaso Ng'iro, Olpusimoru, Nkeneji, Oololaimutia and Aitong markets, delivering powerful anti-poisoning messages aimed at discouraging the public from engaging in retaliatory wildlife poisoning.

The markets were targeted as key venues for the performances since they

serve as meeting points for people from various areas seeking to exchange livestock and purchase food. Unlike holding public meetings in villages and manyattas, the performances attracted huge crowds, leading to a higher rate of message transmission. Members of public thronged venues where the performances were held, some of them even recording the proceedings on mobile phones to share on social media platforms.

Gauging by its popularity, it appears that the outreach is having a positive impact as an awareness tool. Over 6,000 people were reached through the awareness campaign that was undertaken jointly by Nature Kenya and the Mara Predator Conservation Programme.

Nature Kenya is implementing the "Saving the African Vulture" Project in the greater Mara Ecosystem. The project seeks to reduce poison related vulture deaths as a contribution towards the halting and long-term reversal of vulture declines in Africa. 🐾

The Nature Kenya Faces

Edwin Utumbi is a project officer based at Dakatcha Woodland Important Bird Area, Kilifi County. Edwin is the link person between Nature Kenya and communities residing in Dakatcha Woodland. He is responsible for community mobilization and awareness creation for conservation actions as well as facilitating establishment of linkages between the community and the county and national governments. Edwin also undertakes advocacy actions at site and county levels. He is involved in linking up conservation to community livelihoods to reduce pressure on the forest as the main source of natural resources. Edwin has previously worked in other project sites namely: the Arabuko Sokoke Forest, River Sabaki Estuary and Tana River Delta. Edwin holds Bachelor's degree in Tourism and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Project Planning and Management. During his spare time Edwin practices farming and engages in nature adventures.



Mars at its best

By F. Ng'weno

This month all five planets that can be seen with the unaided eye are in the evening sky. Venus is brilliant in the west. Little Mercury is below Venus, above the sunset. Golden Jupiter is high overhead, a little to the east; and golden Saturn, not as bright, is lower in the east.

Mars, glowing orange-red, is now brighter than Jupiter! That's because its orbit around the sun brings it closer to Earth this month than it has in years. Rising in the east during the evening, Mars is in the sky all night. As the Earth rotates towards the east, the planets seem to move across the sky towards the west; Mars is still low in the west at dawn.

The moon is near Mars on July first; near Venus on the 16th, near Jupiter on July 20 & 21, near Saturn on 24 & 25. On July 27 the moon will be near Mars again, and will go through a lunar eclipse:

Lunar Eclipse

On the night of July 27 to 28, the Earth will be between the full moon and the sun. The moon will thus pass right across the shadow of the Earth. It's the longest total lunar eclipse of the century.

From Kenya, the moon enters the Earth's outer shadow around 8:15 pm. As the moon enters the Earth's full shadow around 9:25 pm, it begins to darken and take on a coppery colour. From about 10:30 pm to midnight, the moon will be completely in the Earth's shadow. It may then look red, a 'blood moon'. The eclipse ends around 2:30 am.

New moon is on July 13.

July Stars

The sparkling orange star Arcturus is north of Jupiter. Arcturus is at the tip of a kite-shaped constellation, or star pattern, that the ancient Greeks called Boötes the Herdsman. The blue-white star Spica is west of Jupiter. And the reddish star Antares, the fiery eye of the constellation of the Scorpion, is below Jupiter, in the southeast.

In the south there are two brilliant stars, Alpha and Beta Centauri in the constellation of the Centaur. Alpha Centauri, the brightest, is actually composed of three stars. Two of these stars, Alpha Centauri A and Alpha Centauri B, are very close to each other; to us they appear as one. They are about 4.3 light-years away from us, the nearest stars to our sun. The third star in the system, a small, red star called Proxima Centauri, is even closer to us - 4.22 light years away.

In the southwest, the Southern Cross is tilting towards the west. Across the sky, low in the north, is the constellation of the Plough. It is a star pattern that looks like its other name, the Big Dipper, or giant drinking spoon.

The constellation of Leo the Lion is setting above the sunset. Its bright star Regulus appears close to Venus from July 6 to 14. The moon is near Regulus on July 15, near Venus on the 16th, near Spica on the 19th and near Antares on the 23rd. 🐾

More information on projects managed by Nature Kenya in the August issue

in the FIELD

JULY AT A GLIMPSE

Jul 4 th	Morning Bird Walk
Jul 7 th	FoCP Nature Walk
Jul 11 th	Morning Bird Walk
Jul 15 th	Sunday Bird Watch
Jul 18 th	Morning Bird Walk
Jul 21 st	FoCP Nature Walk
Jul 25 nd	Morning Bird Walk
Jul 26 th	FoNA Public lecture

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

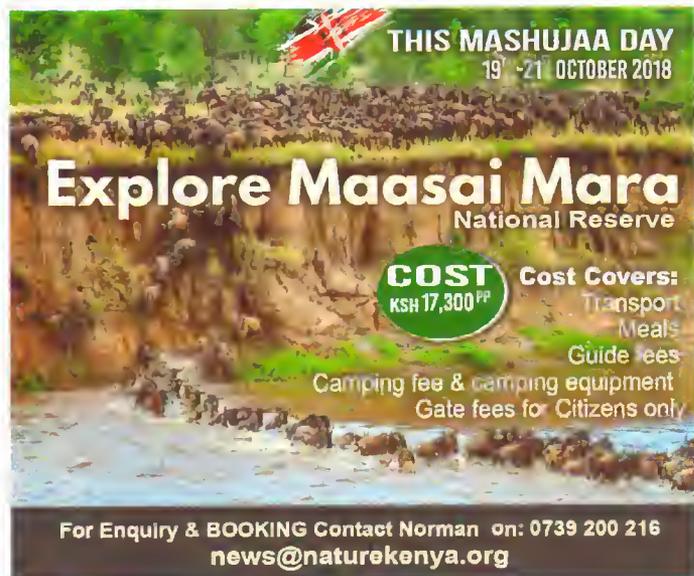
Birders Please Note! The Wednesday Morning Birdwalks meet at 8:30 am at the Nairobi National Museum. Transport is on a self-help basis. The group meets in the courtyard of the Nairobi National Museum, past the entrance to the galleries. We normally return at about 12:30 pm.

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 <dorischau@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



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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