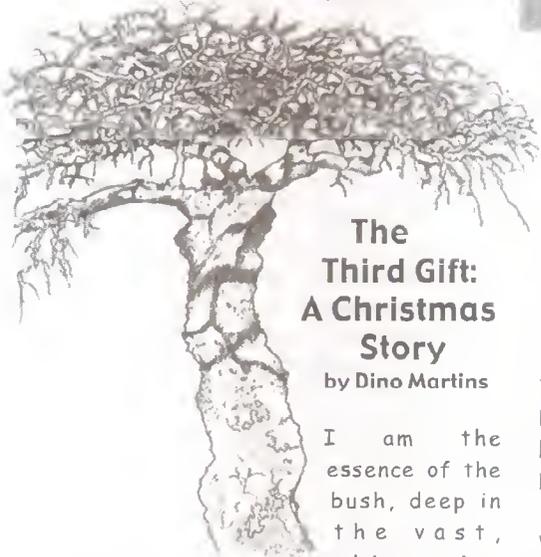




# nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter [www.naturekenya.org](http://www.naturekenya.org) Dec 2001 & Jan 2002

## NATURALISTS CORNER



### The Third Gift: A Christmas Story

by Dino Martins

I am the essence of the bush, deep in the vast, shimmering reaches of Africa. I am ageless and unknown. I have shared in one of the greatest fables of the earth. Each moment of my life is richer for the story.

It began, many centuries ago, with a flower, a female flower, ripe and waiting, in the milky twilight of an ancient evening. A tiny ant, seeking forage for an insatiable nest, strays from her duties when she notices the flower. Fortunately, this is not the first flower she has visited this morning. Clustered amongst her legs are golden grains of pollen. She fumbles about trying to get to the flower. Once there, she pauses. The stars twinkle. A single pollen grain unites with the fragile stigma. And I exist. Today I know that this, in itself, was a miracle.

Who Am I?

*continued on page 2*

## TALKS & VIDEOS

### BIODIVERSITY

#### ONLY TOO MUCH IS ENOUGH: HOW MUCH BIODIVERSITY DO WE NEED?

A TALK BY DR. LEON BENNUN

Monday 14 January '02, 5:30 p.m. FORD HALL,

National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Refreshments prior & Tawn drop off

This presentation will look at what biodiversity is; whether it is important; how much of it we need; and what we have to do to conserve it.

While 'biodiversity' seems a straightforward word, it wraps up some tangled ideas and gives rise to many misunderstandings. The ways we try to conserve it are often irrational too. We need approaches that are more objective and more tough-minded.

What is biodiversity good for, and how much of it do we really need? How should we decide where to focus effort, and where to let things go? How does biodiversity conservation rate among global priorities for allocating resources? The answers may often be uncomfortable, but they are also important.

(talk previously given to the East African Wildlife Society)

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### GREAT X-MAS GIFTS!!

THE NEW Arboretum Guidebook now available

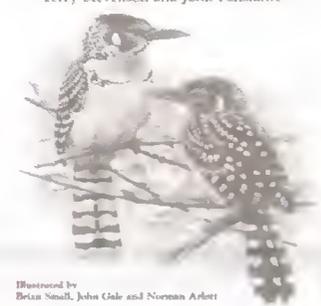
Price: Ksh 350

Softback. Approx 48 pages full colour with maps & illustrations; describes the work of the Friends of Nairobi Arboretum, the history and biodiversity of the Arboretum

### FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF East Africa

Kenya Tanzania Uganda Rwanda Burundi

Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe



Illustrated by Brian Small, John Gale and Norman Arlett

New Bird Guide now Available!

### Birds of East Africa

by John Fanshawe & Terry Stevenson

Special Christmas price of Ksh 2,500 ; price after December 2001 will be Ksh 2,600

Hardback. Approx 602 pages ISBN: 0-85661-07908 full colour throughout with 287 plates showing 3400 images illustrating all the plumages and major races of a remarkable 1388 species

## Action for Biodiversity Conservation

NATURE KENYA, P. O. Box 44486, 00100 GPO Nairobi Tel: 749957 / 746090 Fax: 741049 E-mail: [office@naturekenya.org](mailto:office@naturekenya.org)

## TRIPS & OUTINGS

### SUCCULENTA ANNUAL DINNER! Friday 7 December '01 at Sue Allen's at 6:30 p.m.

Supper will be followed by an illustrated talk by Professor Len Newton.

This function is timed to coincide with the Craft Fair so **up-country members** could come down on the Friday before visiting the Fair. Those planning to attend can liaise with Sue 891190 regarding contributions for drinks and the supper table.

### WILLIAM HOLDEN EDUCATION CENTRE, NANYUKI Friday 7 (from 8:30 a.m.) - Sunday 9 December '01, Organised by the Youth Committee

The cost for the trip (accommodation, transport and meals included) is Kshs 1,200. Group cooking will be organised. Remember to carry some extra cash for contingencies. Carry your own sleeping bag. Transport will be through public means. For those who have their own cars, lifts will be highly appreciated!

Bookings with the Nature Kenya Front Office. Book early, space is limited.

### ABERDARES NATIONAL PARK Saturday 15 - Sunday 16 December '01 A Friends of Kinangop Plateau, South trip

Meet at Caltex Petrol Station, Njabini at 8:30 for 9:00 a.m. departure, to enter the park through the western gate at Gita Forest Station.

Interested members should book with the FOKP/South, Box 174, S. Kinangop or at the Nature Kenya front office, no later than 8 December '01. Please indicate if you can offer a ride.

Cost: 500/- for gate fees and guide. Bring camping gear, warm clothing, food and payment.

### ANNUAL WATERBIRD COUNTS

The Annual African Waterbird Census will be held in January. Wetlands around Nairobi are counted during the Wednesday Morning Birdwalks. Rift Valley Lakes and Malindi are usually counted on weekends, although plans for these are still tentative. For more information contact Alfred Owino at the Museum Ornithology Department.

*The Christmas story continued*

I have been called many names by many peoples: Dahkellah, Kumbi, Molmol, Commiphora, Ilk'aldess...others I have forgotten.

Humankind have always sought me out. Not for my flowers, you would never notice them. Nor for my timber, it is worthless. It is when I bleed, my very blood, that is so precious. Healing resin fills every pore.

Tempered by the heat of a thousand droughts, sweetened by the stored softness of a hundred rare rainstorms, burnished by countless shimmering sunsets, my resin-blood is the essence of nature. This is myrrh. It is my gift to the world.

In a time long past, I was visited by a gatherer. She walked a great distance to find me. Hills, deserts, thirst and thorns. She endured all. Her mother, her grandmother, all her ancestors had also visited me. She smiles. We have never met before, but we are friends. Singing, she speaks my name, Ilk'aldess, beloved Ilk'aldess. She has heard it uttered many times from the wise lips of her people. Her gentle hands caress with the knowledge of one who has learned well the ways of using plants. She fills a leather bag with my resin-blood. Myrrh brought her to this wild place, and myrrh will lead her away.

The gatherer carries my myrrh across a great distance. After three days of walking, she finds her people. With other gatherers she travels on. They walk for weeks until one day the faint sharpness of salt fills the air. It is the scent of the ocean! They are close to their goal: the city by the sea. It is not the city that has drawn them, filled with strange smells and languages, but a market.

They enter the city. Hundreds of people. Strange music. Clothes of many colours. The gatherer is overwhelmed. She stays close to her people. They weave through staring children and heckling traders. The market sprawls along the shore. The gatherer gasps when she first beholds the sea. It is all at once terrifying and indescribably beautiful. Her awe is

stirred by a gentle voice. She turns, and faces a tall man. His demeanour indicates that he is from far away.

Richly robed and jewelled, he is followed by servants. He smiles and gestures to his servants to lower their loads. He speaks kindly. The gatherer relaxes, understanding the tone of his voice, if not the words. He is a traveller too, she can see the distance in his eyes. Talking, he points at her battered bag.

Opening her bag, she gently arranges the lumps of myrrh on a wooden square the traveller places on the sand. He gasps, and tenderly lifts a piece into the light. Its heart glows with a bronze opalescence. "Ilk'aldess?" he whispers, questioning. "Ilk'aldess," she nods, answering.

Smiling, he gestures at the servants. They place lumps of yellow gold, gems, vials of sticky perfume and tiny bags of colourful spices on the wooden square. The gatherer must choose something in exchange for the myrrh. She touches the gold, it is cold and lifeless, the perfumes make her dizzy, the colourful spices make her sneeze. All are of no use in the desert. She leans back and looks again at the bags then at the traveller himself.

He gestures again. A young servant places a bag of dried leaves on the wooden square. The gatherer recognises them instantly. It is the bitter herb her grandmother used to heal the devastating fevers that plague her people during the rains. She presses the bag to her chest and smiles. Healing for healing, a fair exchange.

As the traveller reaches for the myrrh, the gatherer places her hand over his. She looks into his eyes, questioning. He understands. He leads the gatherer down to the water's edge.

He kneels and draws dark lines in the bright, wet sand. He etches a cross, pointing to the sky. Ah, yes - that is a star. The traveller draws on until finally, he leans back and the gatherer studies the scene.

*The Christmas story continued on page 3*

# REGULAR ACTIVITIES

## BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museum 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. **16 December & 20 January**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

## TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the last Monday, i.e. **28 January from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ. 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. **1 December & 5 January**, at 6:30 a.m. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

## FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month i.e. **15 December & 19 January**, at 4:00 p.m. from Ratna Square, Nyali

## 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.

## DECEMBER DIARY

Sat 1	ASF Birdwalks
Fri 7 - Sun 9	Trip to William Holden
Sat 15	FFJ Birdwalk
Sat 15 - Sun 16	Trip to Aberdares
Sun 16	Sunday Birdwatch

## JANUARY DIARY

Sat 5	ASF Birdwalks
Mon 14	Talk on Biodiversity
Sat 19	FFJ Birdwalk
Sun 20	Sunday Birdwatch
Mon 28	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning  
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

## Bird Hotline 749957

Please note the records below are unconfirmed

**Pied Avocet, Southern Pochard, Grey-backed Fiscal** *Seminis Dom/ November*  
Lowerenc Njatho, Titus Macharia

**Woolly-necked Stork Kilindini Harbour**  
**Black-chested Snake Eagle, Palm nut**  
*Vulture Rabai/ November*  
Mwaki Kioko, James Kiptoo

**Great Spotted Cuckoo**  
*Isiolo Valley, Lewa Downs/ October*  
Belinda Low

**Spopper 2 ringed, Willow Warbler ringed**  
*Museum grounds/ October* Nairobi Ringing  
Group

## Other Sightings

**Leopard called 'Zawadi' gave birth to two cubs** *Masai Mara/ Fri 28 Sept/* as sighted by Christine Hort, George McKnight, driver/guide Shieni and two other couples

## CLASSIFIEDS

For unusual, reasonable and unforgettable Landscaping contact Roshan Manzoor on tel: 582618 mobile 072 708878



Tropical Biology Association course participants in the field. Two courses, at Kibale Forest, Uganda and Amani, Tanzania were successfully completed.

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

## NOTICES

### POSTCODES NEEDED!

The Postal Corporation of Kenya is now using the postcode system for mail delivery. This makes for faster and more accurate delivery (especially important in the case of duplicated box numbers). Please ensure you write or call in at 749957 or 746090 or email office@naturekenya.org to update us on your postcode and post box location

### OFFICE CLOSED OVER HOLIDAY

The Nature Kenya offices will be closed on 24 December '01 and re-open on Thursday 3 January '02. Wednesday birdwalks continue as usual.

Happy Holiday Greetings from all of us at the office

*The Christmas story continued*

### For unto us a child is born...

Yes, yes, now she sees. But something is missing. The gatherer kneels and draws a tree, the tree of life, beside the mother and child. Then she draws a spiral above the child. The symbol of healing, life, regeneration, her people's spirit, and that of Africa: Ilk'aldess. The traveller nods.

A few weeks later, the gatherer and her people are re-united at their desert. They gather around her asking for stories of her journey. They gather in a circle and listen, awed. At that very moment a star appears in the distant skies. Many miles away the traveller arrives at his journey's end. He kneels before a child in awe. He opens the carved box. The mother reaches into it. She draws out a piece of myrrh. Smiling, she offers it to the child. Instinctively, his palm closes around it.

At that moment, I tremble. I rejoice.

A gift from Africa: Ilk'aldess.

## THE KENYA GOVERNMENT'S EXCISION OF 65748 HECTARES OF FOREST

Parts of the following Forest Reserves have been excised for private use by gazette notices dated 19 October 2001: Eastern Mau, South Western Mau, Marmanet, Mt. Kenya, Kapsaret, Western Mau, Molo, Northern Tinderet, Nakuru, Mt. Londiani, Nabkoi and South Nandi.

Below are details of each of these forest areas from data taken from 'The Forests of Kenya' by H. J. Beentje (1990) and Kenya Forest Working Group's 'Details on forest areas proposed to be de-gazetted (information as of 5 March 2001)'

### Mau

Kericho, Narok, Nakuru, Bomet districts, alt. 1,900-3000 m; catchment for Malagat R., Sondu R., Mara R., Molo R., L. Nakuru, Lake Naivasha, Ewaso Ngiro South R.

**Area:** 205,605 ha of which 52,528 ha is plantation; blocks W. Mau, S. W. Mau, Trans Mara, Ol Pusimoru, E. Mau, Mau Narok, Eburu

**Vegetation:** *Aningeria-Strombosia-Drypetes* forest: a large block in S.W Mau c. 15,000 ha; *Albizia-Neoboutonia-Polyscias* forest on the W. and S. W slopes, c. 20,000 ha; mixed *Podocarpus latifolius* forest on W. and N.W slopes, at higher altitudes; *Juniperus-Nuxia-Podocarpus falcatus* forest on N., N.E., S.E slopes at higher altitudes; *Juniperus-Olea* forest patches, often in valleys, on S. slopes

**Status:** 128,380 ha gazetted, trustland (Trans Mara, Olpusimoru, S. Mau); 77, 225 ha gazetted, government. Large areas are disturbed or even completely cleared, e.g. > 12,000 ha by squatters in the Olengruone area (1986-1988); the S.W Mau is relatively undisturbed but shows signs of former logging; S.W Mau is main catchment for Sondu-Miri hydroelectric plant, under construction; W. Mau mostly indigenous forest; E. Mau is catchment for L. Nakuru N. P., a Ramsar site and Kenya's leading tourist destination

**Forest Reserve under threat and excisions:** Eastern Mau 64,971 ha, excision 35,301 ha or 54.3% part of the excision has already been cleared; South Western Mau-83,395 ha, excision 22,797.19 ha or 27.3%, excision is on highest slopes, mostly a mosaic of bamboo, grassland, forest and scrub; Ogiek people in Tinet support the excision; they say it will enable them to live in the forest and conserve it; Western Mau-22,885.3 ha, excision two separate areas of 1,036.2 ha or 4.5%

### Marmanet (description includes Ol Arabel/ Rumuruti)

Laikipia district, alt. 2,100-2,400 m; catchment for L. Baringo, Ewaso Ngiro North R.

**Area:** 34,565 ha include. Mlima tatu, Lariak, Uaso Narok  
**Vegetation:** Top and E. slopes, *Juniperus-Nuxia-Podocarpus falcatus* forest; lower

E. slopes, *Juniperus* forest

**Status:** Gazetted, government, except for Mlima tatu (1,330 ha), ungazetted trustland; at present cleared or settled to a large extent; part of the elephant corridor between Rumuruti and Marmanet forests.

**Forest Reserve under threat and excision:** Marmanet 23,327.6 ha, excision 2,837.4 ha or 12.2%

### South Nandi

Nandi Distict, alt. 1,700-1,850 m; catchment for Nzoia R., Yala R.

**Area:** S. Nandi, 19,502.2 ha; partly plantation

**Vegetation:** Tropical rain forest, with less diversity than Kakamega because of rather high altitude

**Status:** Gazetted, trustland; much disturbed and depleted, possibly with the exception of a Nature Reserve along the W. edge of S. Nandi. A loss of 490 ha/year has been reported for S. Nandi over the period 1967-1980; according to informed sources, parts of S. Nandi has now been given out to settlement

**Excision:** 34.59 ha or 0.2%

### Mt. Kenya

Meru, Kirinyaga and Nyeri districts, alt. 2,000-2,900 m; catchment for the Tana R. and Uaso Nyiro North R.

**Area:** 174,055 ha, 9,665 ha of which is plantation

**Vegetation:** c. 27500 ha *Ocotea* forest on E. and S. slopes at lower alt.; medium large areas 6,500 ha of *Albizia-Neoboutonia-Polyscias* forest on S. slopes, lower altitudes; c. 1,000 ha of *Croton-Brachylaena-Calodendrum* forest on the S.W slopes; small remnants of *Newtonia* forest at lower forest edges, and riverine valleys, on E. slopes; large tracts of mixed *Podocarpus latifolius* forest on N.W slopes, and above the *Ocotea* forest on E. and S. slopes; large areas of *Juniperus-Nuxia-Podocarpus falcatus* forest on W. slopes; large tracts of *Juniperus-Olea* forest at lower altitudes on N.W and W. slopes

**Status:** Gazetted, government. Almost no forest falls within the National Park boundaries, which are at 3,000 m, except for some small bits on the Naro Moru and Sirimon salients. On the E. slopes the *Ocotea* forest is severely disturbed by years of selective logging, and more recently by tree poaching. One excised area is a key site for the survival of a tree species once feared to be extinct: *Ixora scheffleri*. Most areas in Ndathi, north of Sagana river, were under Non-Residential Cultivation (shamba system) and are settled at present. Sagana II in Hombe is cleared but not settled; and a community fence recently completed to reduce human-wildlife conflict, has been excised out!

**Excisions proposed:** three separate areas of 1,825.15 ha or 0.9%

### Northern Tinderet , Mt. Londiani , Nabkoi

Uasin Gishu, Kericho, Baringo districts, alt. 2,100-2,600 m; catchment for Yala R, Nyando R.

**Area:** 92,110 ha N. Tinderet, Tinderet,

Nabkoi, Timboroa, Metkei, Chemorogot, Lembus, Maji Mazuri, Mt. Londiani, Kilombe Hill; much of this is plantation

**Vegetation:** *Juniperus-Nuxia-Podocarpus falcatus* forest on the lower slopes; c. 5,000 ha of *Aningeria-Strombosia-Drypetes* forest on Tinderet peak

**Status:** 76,965 ha gazetted, government; Lembus, Metkei, Chemorogot are gazetted, trustland

**Forest Reserve under threat and excisions:** N. Tinderet 92,110 ha, excision 788.3 ha or 3%; Nabkoi 3,014.5 ha, excision 74.11 ha or 2.5%; Mt. Londiani 29,682.4 ha, excision 124.9 ha or 0.4%

### Kapsaret

Uasin Gishu district; alt. 2,200 m

**Area:** 1,194.2 ha, gazetted, government

**Status:** Mostly forest plantation and some indigenous forest

**Excisions proposed:** 1,194.2 ha or 100%

### Molo

Nakuru district

**Area:** 901.6 ha, gazetted, government

**Status:** Area was plantation and indigenous forest, but has been settled already

**Excisions proposed:** 901.6 ha or 100%

### Nakuru

Nakuru district; alt. 2,300 m

**Area:** 618.9 ha, gazetted, government

**Status:** Consists mostly of scrub land and a small area of plantation forest; affected area is called Milimani, located on the way to the Menengai Crater and development is ongoing

**Excisions proposed:** 270.5 ha or 43.7%

### ACTIONS

The court case filed by Nixon Sifuna in Eldoret was dismissed on technical grounds; the case filed by the Green Belt Movement and four other NGOs was lost but will now be heard on 15 December '01; and the Ogieks' case applies only to Eastern Mau forest. Under these circumstances, the Minister of Environment, by gazette notice of 19 October, excised the areas proposed in February 2001.

**Kenya Forests Working Group** is taking the following action: Putting together a monitoring team to assess the situation on the ground. Notifying the Public Complaints Committee of the National Environment Management Authority. Conducting a massive media campaign. Circulating petitions nationwide. Meeting with a team of lawyers to consider legal action (Nature Kenya is a founding member of the Kenya Forests Working Group)

### DO YOU KNOW BETTER??

It would be of tremendous value, to hear from members who live near or are familiar with these forest areas or other forest areas under threat.

Can you update us or add to the data above? Then please write to the Editor, Box 44486, 00100 Nairobi GPO, fax 02 741049 email office@naturekenya.org

Reference: Beentje, H. Forests of Kenya, 1990 Proceedings of the Twelfth Plenary Meeting of aetfat, Hamburg 1990