



Wind energy projects in Kenya to factor in biodiversity needs



Wind turbines placed on hilltops.

■ BY JOHN MWACHARO AND SERAH MUNGUTI

Wind power is considered to be a clean, low cost and sustainable source of energy. It is also one of the fastest growing electricity sources around the globe. Kenya's potential for wind generation is amongst the highest in Africa, with the 310 megawatt Lake Turkana Wind Power project set to become the largest wind farm in Africa once operational.

Compared to fossil fuels, wind power is relatively more environmentally friendly. However, wind turbines and their associated infrastructure, notably power lines and towers, pose a threat to birds and bats. Spinning blades of wind turbines are potentially dangerous to migrating birds, placing them at risk of colliding with the turbines. The location of wind farms is therefore a serious consideration when it comes to wind power. Risks greatly increase when wind turbines are located in or near major migratory routes, stopover sites or key breeding or foraging areas for birds and bats.

A recent analysis placed Kenya among countries with the highest concentrations of bird species vulnerable to wind power impacts. While bird 'sensitivity maps' have been produced for countries along the Rift Valley flyway to the north, no comprehensive assessment has been carried out in Kenya. Basically, wind power developers in Kenya have been operating in the dark in respect to biodiversity impacts owing to

the lack of reliable information. This information gap for biodiversity and wind power has presented a significant obstacle to realizing wind energy potential in Kenya.

To address this, the Ministry of Energy is carrying out a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for wind power and biodiversity in Kenya. The national SEA for wind and biodiversity is envisaged as a tool for decision making by government and private sector on placement of wind farms, with special consideration on migratory soaring birds, saving time and money. Information provided by the SEA will help to inform decisions on the safe siting of new wind power developments, ensuring that negative impacts on important migration routes, stopover sites or breeding areas are minimized.

An expert technical consortium (dubbed the Kenya Bird Conservation Consortium) comprising of Nature Kenya, The Peregrine Fund Kenya and BirdLife International, working in partnership with The Biodiversity Consultancy (TBC), is conducting the SEA. The process is supported by USAID through its program implemented by Tetra Tech. Tetra Tech has contracted The Biodiversity Consultancy (TBC) to lead the SEA process. The Kenya Bird Conservation Consortium, TBC, Tetra Tech and USAID/Power Africa effectively lobbied the Ministry of Energy to own the national wind power SEA process.

As part of the process, the Ministry of Energy convened a meeting in August to deliberate on the SEA. The meeting sought to create awareness on the SEA among energy and conservation stakeholders to promote understanding, consensus building and buy in. It also sought to get the sector players' input on the proposed SEA.

Key outcomes of the meeting included:

- The national wind power SEA should not be construed as a barrier to projects. Its primary goal is not to designate no-go areas, but to highlight critical biodiversity-related issues that wind power developers in Kenya should bear in mind to avoid adverse impacts and reduce risks to their projects and investments.
- The SEA will follow procedures that are laid out in national legislation. To effect this, a meeting will be held among key stakeholders, including the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the Ministry of Energy for further discussion.
- The SEA process shall strive to be as inclusive as possible including the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible but with considerations of time, financial and other resources.

Site-specific actions will be addressed during environmental impact assessments for specific projects.

Participants in the meeting were drawn from the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, USAID/Power Africa, the Energy Regulatory Commission, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), NEMA, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the Council of Governors, Lake Turkana Wind Power, Kenya Power Institute of Energy and Research, the World Bank, The Biodiversity Consultancy, BirdLife International and Nature Kenya, among others.

Consultations between the Kenya Bird Conservation Consortium and wind farm developers started in early 2017. Over time, wind power project proponents demonstrated to the Kenya Bird Conservation Consortium that a wind farm could achieve a net gain for populations of the critically endangered vultures. This was based on in-depth analysis and a business case.

In addition, the project proponents effectively influenced USAID, through their Power Africa Transactions and Reforms Program (PATRP), to support a national strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for wind power in Kenya. ↗

ACTION

SAVING SPECIES

Timely intervention averts poisoning deaths

PHOTO BY REBECCA IKACHOI



Disposing of the hyena carcass.

■ BY JOHN MWACHARO

Poisoning still remains a major threat to wildlife conservation. Efforts undertaken by conservation stakeholders have ensured that communities are more vigilant and quicker in reporting wildlife poisoning cases. A recent occurrence in Maasai Mara is a testimony of how community rapid response to poisoning incidents can prevent secondary wildlife deaths.

In August, a local community member came across a dead hyena at the border of Olare Motorogi Conservancy in the Maasai Mara area. Suspecting the hyena had died of poisoning, he instantly reported the incident. A rapid response team was immediately dispatched to the scene to inspect the carcass. Upon examination, it was confirmed the hyena had indeed died of poisoning. The carcass was then safely disposed of and the scene decontaminated. Timely reporting of the incident meant there were no resultant vulture deaths.

Poisoning is the biggest threat to Africa's vultures, accounting for 60% of their deaths. Seven of Africa's 11 vulture species now face imminent extinction, with their decline being alarmingly rapid: a plummet of 80-97% over just three generations. Four out of the seven species are now listed as Critically Endangered.

'Preventing Poisoning to Save Africa's Vultures' is financed by BAND Foundation and jointly implemented by Nature Kenya, The Peregrine Fund and BirdLife International. This work in Kenya is also supported as part of a program to tackle vulture poisoning running jointly across Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe, funded by Fandation Segre.

NATURE CHAMPIONS

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are now part of a new, broader definition of sites critically important for the conservation of biodiversity: Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). All 67 IBAs in Kenya qualify as KBAs. Local environmental groups play a key role in protecting Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) when they became a site support group (SSG).

Mt. Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (Mt. Kebio) is the Mt. Kenya forest KBA site support group. Formed in 1999, Mt. Kebio was registered by the Department of Social Services as a community based organization (CBO) in 2004. The need to conserve the environment from which group members earned a living from was the main force behind its registration, with deforestation, solid waste pollution, poaching and charcoal burning as some of the group's immediate concerns. Most Mt. Kebio members are registered mountain guides, porters and cooks operating within Mt. Kenya. These members earn a living from the mountain, by providing their services to visitors and mountaineers.

The group has been engaged in a number of activities geared towards fulfilling its conservation agenda, including tree planting, environmental awareness, ecotourism and garbage collection. Mt. Kebio organizes bird watching trips every last Saturday of the month, drawing local and international bird enthusiasts. The group holds annual clean ups exercises in towns in the Mt. Kenya area, and distributes environmental reading material provided by Nature Kenya to the local people.

Mt. Kebio manages the Mt. Kenya eco-resource centre located at Naro Moru. The centre has a library, a mini museum, conference facilities, binoculars and guidebooks, and camping ground for ecotourism.



Visting Mt. Kenya?

Contact Mt. Kebio at mtkebia@yahoo.com or Martin Njogu martinnjagu87@gmail.com Mobile: 0724 690121

FOREST CONSERVATION

RETURN OF THE BUSHBUCKS

Ongoing conservation efforts at Cherangani Hills Forest have been linked to the return of bushbucks. The bushbucks were spotted during a forest monitoring activity at Kapyego Tenderwa at the eastern side of Kerrer forest block.

The antelopes can now be seen grazing at the edge of the forest, adjacent to potato farms. Area residents see the return of the bushbucks as a blessing as they will draw tourists to the area. They say conservation is key to the survival of the animals which have been hunted for their meat.

Paul C. Kaino



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Birds of Amboseli

■ IMAGES BY MARTIN KIMATHI



1. Great Egret 2. Winding Cisticola 3. Speke's Weaver
4. African Fish eagles 5. Saddle-billed Stork

Planets, Galaxies and Meteors

■ BY FLEUR NG'WENO

Planets, Oct '18

The planets that were so bright last month are changing now. Brilliant Venus is dropping lower, sinking below the western horizon in the second half of October. Jupiter is low over the sunset in the west. Golden Saturn is high in the west, near the constellation of Sagittarius; and reddish Mars, high in the southeast, is fading rapidly. Little Mercury, however, rises above the sunset during October, and passes Jupiter on the 29th.

The crescent moon is near Mercury on 10 October, near Jupiter on 11 & 12 and near the star Antares in the Scorpion on the 13th. The moon, waxing larger, is near Saturn on Oct 14 & 15 and near Mars on the 18th.

October stars

High overhead, the bright star Altair is flanked by two fainter stars. In the north below Altair, about halfway up from the horizon, look for bright Deneb and brilliant Vega. These three stars – Altair, Deneb and Vega – form a giant triangle. Deneb is also the tail of Cygnus the flying swan. Three stars form the body and wings of the swan. Three other stars form the long neck, stretching upwards into the triangle.

Further east is another geometric shape, a giant square with one bright star at each corner. This is the constellation of Pegasus, the flying horse of ancient Greek myths. Below Pegasus and to the left, low in the north, stars form the shape of a letter "M" – the constellation Cassiopeia.

On the other side of Pegasus, high in the southeast, is the bright star Fomalhaut. The star Achernar, even brighter, is rising in the southeast.

Galaxies

A galaxy is a huge star system. Our sun and all the stars we can see with our eyes alone are part of the Milky Way galaxy. On October and November evenings here near the equator, we can see four galaxies. To see them, you need a clear, dark night, away from city lights and without a bright moon. Your own eyes

are enough, but binoculars are helpful.

The Milky Way lies across the sky this month. This pale ribbon of stars stretches from the constellations of Scorpius and Sagittarius in the southwest, to the stars Altair and Deneb in the north and the constellation Cassiopeia in the northeast.

Look carefully between the square of Pegasus high in the east and the M of Cassiopeia below it in the north. Do you see a blurred, hazy spot of light? This is the Great Spiral Nebula M31 in the constellation of Andromeda. If possible, view it with binoculars or a telescope. The Andromeda Nebula is a galaxy of millions and millions of stars.

To see the other two galaxies, choose a place with a good view of the southern sky (and a clear, dark night). Look south (left of the sunset) or further southeast, below the bright star Achernar. You may see two pale areas, like small round clouds, low over the southern horizon. These are the Small and Large Magellanic Clouds. They are small galaxies, composed of millions of stars – the nearest galaxies to us, apart from our own Milky Way

Meteors

At times the Earth travels through areas of dust in space, left from the passage of comets. When these particles fall into the Earth's atmosphere, they burn up, shining briefly for a moment. Look out for such meteors during October: (a) the Draconids Meteor Shower, Oct 6-10; best viewing in the early evening of Oct 8, away from city lights. And (b) the Orionids Meteor Shower, Oct 2-Nov 7, especially on Oct 22 between midnight and dawn.

Moon, Oct '18

Oct 2 – last quarter. Oct 9 – new moon; look for it near Mercury on the 10th. Oct 16 – first quarter. Oct 24 – full moon. Oct 31 – last quarter.

October Sun

In Kenya in October, the sun rises and sets earlier each day. By month's end the sunrise in Nairobi is at 6:11 am, and the sunset at 6:21 pm. ☀

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for updates and much more

IN THE FIELD

OCTOBER AT A GLIMPSE

Oct 3 rd	Morning Bird Walk
Oct 6 th	FoCP Nature Walk
Oct 10 th	Morning Bird Walk
Oct 13 th	FoNA Tree Walk
Oct 17 th	Morning Bird Walk
Oct 19 th	Members Trip
Oct 20 th	FoCP Nature Walk
Oct 21 st	Sunday Bird Watch
Oct 24 th	Morning Bird Walk/ Public Lecture
Oct 31 st	Morning Bird Walk

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 Schaulé <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



NEW MEMBERS

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

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African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW)
Africa Wells Holiday
Conquest Adventures Ltd
Explore-Safaris by Tufayan
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The Safari Collection

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



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- ➡ Confirm details & press OK