CONSERVATION
Bamboo Domestication: Echuya Community Conserves landscape

FEATURE
Protecting our heritage: The Grey Crowned Crane

NEWS
Ending Deforestation with Trillion Trees campaign

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Dear Member,

Season’s greetings from NatureUganda!

Thank you for your continued support as a subscribed member of NatureUganda during the year 2017. NatureUganda is a membership organisation which aims at developing a cadre of individuals or groups of individuals who will promote conservation at all levels and we are pleased that you supported us through this year, 2017.

Your membership enabled us to accomplish so much this year.

1. CONSERVATION:
   • We were able to promote conservation of critical sites in Uganda. For example, we domesticated bamboo in and around Echuya Forest Reserve in order to reduce pressure on the forest and protecting the soil in this mountainous area. Over 1000 households benefitted.
   • We have promoted alternative livelihood initiatives by supporting communities through training in income generation, village saving schemes and environment friendly projects like bee keeping, mushroom growing and banana wine processing among others.

2. EVENTS
   • Together with other partners, you helped us to advocate for a healthier environment through participation in the World Wetlands and World Environment day celebrations in Masaka and Rubanda districts respectively.
   • Your support also enabled us to promote avi-tourism through the Big Birding Day festivities. Over 600 members were involved and nearly 750 species recorded in one day. A world record.

3. MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITIES
   • We were able to promote the appreciation and understanding of nature among Ugandans through conducting 5 public talks, 5 nature walks, 2 excursions and production of quarterly newsletters – The Naturalist.

4. RESEARCH
   • We conducted studies including vulture counts in Kampala area and water fowl counts at 28 sites across the country to guide conservation of natural heritage.

We are proud of what we have been able to do this year and we could not have done it without you.

For 2018, NatureUganda has carefully developed exciting events that will help us to achieve our primary goal of promoting the understanding, appreciation and ultimately conservation of nature. The events have been included in our 2018 year planner. Please find a copy from the NU secretariat or visit our website to plan your participation.

Let me request you to renew your membership subscription and help us to recruit new members.

I wish you good reading.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Dr. Robert Nabanyumya
Chairman, NatureUganda.
NatureUganda in partnership with the NFA (National Forestry Authority) have embarked on forest restoration efforts for Echuya CFR in South western Uganda with over 600 bamboos planted.

The bamboo found in Echuya forest reserve is a montane bamboo and is one of the fastest growing perennial plants occurring naturally in other mountain forests in Uganda including Bwindi Impenetrable, Mgahinga, Rwenzori and Mt Elgon National Parks. It belongs to the family gramineae and sub-family bambusoideae. Once established, new bamboo shoots can attain full heights and diameters within 2-3 months and by 2-3 years are mature and strong enough to be utilized.

Bamboo forest is a habitat and has a wide range of functions for biodiversity conservation and human well being.

For instance, it protects water catchments, prevents soil erosion and provides food for animals of global conservation concern such as mountain gorillas and monkeys that consume young bamboo sprouts. As well as these ecological functions, bamboo is widely used in homesteads around protected areas. It is the single-most important plant resource, with a multitude of uses including building poles, bean stakes, granaries, basketry and fuel. As a way of reducing pressure from the forest and protecting the soil in this mountainous area of Echuya, NatureUganda with support from Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF) embarked on a number of interventions including planting bamboo outside the forest which has for long been a source of bamboo for domestic use.

In October 2017, the NFA apportioned 2 hectares of land for bamboo planting; 1 hectare in Rwamaashunga-Hamukara on the shores of L. Bunyonyi- Muko and another at Echuya FR. Together with CFM members of Echuya Conservation & Development Association (MECDA) and community members of Hamukara, bamboo has been planted on the apportioned pieces of land.

The bamboo used was dug up from a bamboo nursery which was set up in November 2016 in Muko Sub County as a result of a partnership between NatureUganda, the NFA & the Community comprising over 6933 Lowland Aspur species. Approximately 630 bamboo cuttings were planted in Echuya CFR in October 2017 alone.
Uganda confirmed 1,060 bird species recorded which translates into more than 11% of the world’s total number of birds.

In collaboration with Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other partners, NatureUganda organized the 2017 Annual Big Birding Day (2017) with the objective of promoting avitourism and bird conservation in Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

The weeklong event was launched at the Uganda Museum on 9th November with a public lecture entitled “Are we Using our inheritance in Uganda wisely; A CASE OF BIRDS” delivered by Dr Panta Kasoma, the Executive Director for Jane Goodall Institute.

In his address, Dr Panta demonstrated the richness of Uganda saying “Uganda is 0.79% of Africa but contains 45.3% of all birds found on the continent and 0.000005 of the surface of the earth and contains 10% of the world total, if well managed and promoted, birding can be a cash cow for Uganda.” The guest speaker also highlighted the challenges facing avi-tourism in Uganda as professionalism, promotion, government support and habitat degradation and destruction. Some of the recommendations he gave to enhance avi-tourism in Uganda were investment in human resource training, allocation of resources to avi-tourism and creating incentives to protect natural areas.

The Launch event ended with registration of participants for the Saturday 11th birding race to various parts of Uganda.
With 26 teams registered countrywide, the birding race started on Saturday 11th November at midnight and ended at the midnight hour mark leading into Sunday 12th. The teams were divided into those covering protected areas (National parks, game reserves, forest reserves etc) and those birding outside protected areas which include homesteads, wetlands and many others.

At the stroke of midnight, a record of 609 people had participated and 745 species recorded in just 24 hours.

The BBD was crowned with a festival on 18th November at the Uganda Museum where leading teams were given awards. Team Queen Elizabeth National Park emerged winners as best recorders under the category of protected areas followed by Kidepo National Park and Murchison Falls NP teams in 2nd and 3rd place respectively.

Team Bigodi Wetland, Lutembe Bay and Makanaga Wetland were the winner and runners up respectively under the category of ‘Outside protected areas.’

While addressing participants at the festival Mr Stephen Asiimwe, the CEO UTB said that the government of Uganda is looking at tourism as one of the potential vehicles which can contribute greatly to elevate Uganda to attain middle income status by 2020. That said, “We (UTB) pledge to invest more in future BBD events both financially and in terms of mobilizing people,” he added.

Uganda is arguably Africa’s best birding destination for birders and other nature enthusiasts with more bird species per square kilometer than any other country in Africa.

NatureUganda thanks all who participated and we encourage all Ugandans to conserve nature and embrace avitourism as a niche tourism product for the Uganda.
For the last decade, NatureUganda has led conservation efforts for the species through activities that focus on the species and its habitat, wetlands. The primary role has been to curb the decline of Grey Crowned Cranes in the species’ strongholds in Uganda, by maintaining and improving the ecological integrity of wetlands, developing effective methods of protecting breeding pairs, chicks and flocks, and improving the livelihoods of local communities.

The following strategies have been used to subdue this catastrophic decline:
1. The development of the National Species Action Plan (SAP) for the Grey Crowned Crane for Uganda.
2. Establishing a national Task Force comprised of individuals from various institutions including Ministry of Water and Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Makerere University, Jane Goodall Institute, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda Wildlife Education Centre, Nature and Livelihoods, NatureUganda and the African Crane Conservation Programme to support the implementation of the action plan.

After a series of meetings by the Task Force, great strides have been made towards the SAP completion which is now scheduled to be launched in March 2018 according to the recently concluded task force meeting held in Kampala on 23rd Nov 2017.

The Species Action Plan is critical because once launched, it will provide national level support towards:
- Implementation of activities that enhance active conservation of cranes and their habitats by reducing adult and juvenile mortality of Grey Crowned Cranes
- Conservation of Grey Crowned Cranes through reduced loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitats.
- Filling the knowledge gaps about Grey Crowned Cranes and better understand the ecology of the species
- Promoting livelihoods that support Grey Crowned Crane conservation

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?
- Promoting wetlands for tourism - have board walks and other required structures so that people can walk along and into the wetlands and have a feel of the biodiversity there. A viable example is the Kampala wetlands
- Responsible authorities have to design a balance between infrastructural development and conservation especially for wetland parts that serve as breeding, feeding and roosting sites for the Grey Crowned Cranes.
- Conserving existing local trees and planting more since roosting on electricity poles and pylons is neither a natural phenomenon nor a luxury for cranes, but rather an adaptation mechanism.
- Raising the profile of the Grey Crowned Crane as Uganda’s national bird.

GET INVOLVED
Protecting our national symbol is a responsibility which does not segregate against ethnicity or status. When you sign up as a member of NatureUganda, you support all our conservation efforts including the protection of Uganda’s national symbol through advocacy and awareness campaigns.

To become a member, simply send your annual contribution for any of the categories below to +256 777147367 through...
“It’s about the right trees in the right places,” said Patricia Zurita, CEO of BirdLife International. “With responsible land-use comprising almost 25 percent of the global climate solution, aligning our forest work through Trillion Trees is our contribution to one of the largest societal priorities of the 21st century” she added.

The best way to realize this vision is through focused activity. Work has already started at some of the highest priority sites. The 3 giants are currently expanding and strengthening protected areas in Colombian rainforests. In Africa, designing sustainable, deforestation-free cocoa production in forests across the continent is on-going.

If this work is to have a lasting impact, it is essential to develop locally tailored action plans that also benefit the community whose livelihoods depend on the forests. There’s nothing wrong with being ambitious. This partnership will spur all three global organisations on to greater heights than ever before – and, hopefully, inspire governments and NGOs worldwide to raise their game, too.

The three organizations are already performing successful forest restoration worldwide but are optimistic that joining forces will create a greater power than the sum of its parts. Forests soak up more than 45% of carbon on land, offsetting the effects of climate change. They are home to two thirds of all land-based plants and animals, and support the livelihoods of 1.6 billion people. They clean our air and water. We really need our forests.

For more details about the campaign checkout www.trilliontrees.org

mobile money or by visiting the secretariat in Naguru Plot 1 Katalima Crescent. You can also write out a cheque of any amount to Nature Uganda as a contribution towards the Grey Crowned Crane.

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