Tourism is the second biggest foreign exchange earner for Uganda and it is important to note that our basis for tourism is biodiversity. It is therefore our duty to protect this biodiversity and promote sustainable utilization of this resource.

_Nature_ Uganda in collaboration with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Sustainable Tourism in the Albertine Rift (STAR-Uganda), Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), UgandaBirdGuidesClub(UBGC), and Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) organized a three-day Big Birding Festival which coincided with the World Bird Festival.

The Big Birding day was launched on 14th October at the Uganda Museum where a presentation was made on birds and birding in Uganda. It was clearly noted that tourism promotion in Uganda must be holistic but emphasizing products that Uganda has comparative advantage over other countries. Birding is probably the biggest of these products. The big birding day is a birding race, one innovation to raise awareness about birds in Uganda and promote birding as an important tourism product.

The Birding on 15th October 2010 was a 24-hour exercise beginning at midnight on 15th October 2010 to midnight on 16th October 2010. It involved teams recording birds in different parts of the country including all National Parks, Wildlife reserves, Important Bird Areas, Ramsar sites, Forest reserves and many other sites. Each team chose a site where

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_NatureUganda holds its 3rd Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM)_

NatureUganda held its third SPM on the 4th-5th October 2010. This followed the expiry of the existing plan that was reviewed in 2006 and served from 2006-2010. The first Strategic Plan was drafted in 1996 and served from 1997-2002 while the second plan was developed in 2003 for 2003-2007.

The aim of this SPM was to review the current strategic plan/framework for the period just completed and to prepare a comprehensive revised plan/framework to cover the next five years (2011-2015).

All staff members of NU and a few partners met at Kolping Hotel Bwaise and reviewed the existing plan with guidance of the mission statement i.e. promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature and
Bigger and Better...

they conducted the birding race and they comprised of at least 2 people (lead birder and a recorder) who have good knowledge of birding. Each group was equipped with at least a pair of Binoculars, a guide book and a note book. The teams recorded all the birds seen and heard calling in their sites at anytime of the day. The strategy was to work out the best itinerary that a tourist would take to record the highest number of species in Uganda.

The birding involved 50 groups which covered 38 sites in all regions of Uganda. The teams included community groups from Katwe, QENP, Ruboni in Rwenzori, Echuya Forest Reserve, Conserve Uganda in Katakwi, Mabamba Bay, Kasyoha Kitomi and Kyambura Reserve, Tourist teams, teams from NatureUganda, UWA including all national parks, UBGC members and other interested parties.

The highest record came from Kampala-Entebbe area with 175 species. It was followed by Murchison falls National Park with 162, QENP with 160, Kidepo National park with 150 species, Mabamba Ramsar site with 138 species, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park 137, Mabira Forest Reserve with 136 species, Bahai temple-Park Alexander group 126, Kibale National Park 110, L. Mburo National Park 110 among others. Together all groups recorded a total of 606 species.

NatureUganda staff in the SPM at Kolping Hotel

NatureUganda holds...

the three Strategic objectives which include Awareness and understanding of Uganda’s wildlife and natural resources increased, Conservation and management of key species, sites, and habitats improved and Institutional capacity of NatureUganda increased.

A number of successes were noted based on the previous plan although the conservation of nature is faced with so many challenges including limited ‘good’ governance, unpredictable weather conditions, biting poverty with limited alternatives and lack of adequate financial resources. It was also noticed that NatureUganda activities were missing in the cattle corridor but efforts will be made in the new plan to ensure full coverage.

YOUR LETTERS

The Blue Swallow - My Experience.

I heard of the Blue Swallow but to me it was only a bird. My first encounter was in Sangobay Ramsar site. Upon knowing my participation, my anxiety and illusions grew about how the counting of the species was done.

On my first encounter with the bird, anxiety was then replaced with a good experience of the Blue Swallow and its habitat. The habitat looked scenic and friendly from a distance but inside, the taste of roughness was felt.
this couldn’t hinder our counts and discoveries. Many times we fell in ditches anxious to have a first glance of the bird. The first day of the counts didn’t disappoint us. It was all a life experience packed with fun and satisfaction. The trip was not all about the Blue swallow for me but also the anxiety to sleep in a tent for the first time.

I extend my regards to Nature Uganda for the wonderful, exciting trip and my team leader (Dianah Nalwanga) for rendering me all her time to make an amateur in birds get to the gist of every detail.

By Sandra Sayuni
Nature Uganda.

The role of the youth in combating climate change

According to the statistics, Uganda’s climate is drastically changing and for the worst. Climate change is a long term effect of one or more climatic elements and the main variable is temperature. Globally for the last 40-50yrs, the earth has been heating up a condition termed as ‘Global warming’. This occurs due to long lived industrial and agriculturally generated atmospheric gases such as Carbon dioxide, chlorofloro carbons (CFCs), ammonia and Nitrous oxides that absorb some of the radiation. Green house gases make up to 1% of the atmosphere. They trap heat and keep the planet 3 degrees warmer than it would otherwise be.

The main issues pertaining to green house gas emission include inefficient utilization of fuel, poorly planned models of transport, poorly serviced motor vehicles and use of old engines and deforestation. According to the World Bank report (2000), people living in poverty are most susceptible to climate change effects and Uganda has 38% of its population living below the poverty line. These derive their livelihoods from Agriculture which primarily depends on climate. Climate change affects health and human activities negatively. So, what are the youths going to do about this?

The National Environment Statute Article 245 under protection and preservation of the environment states that Parliament shall by law provide measures intended to protect the environment from abuse, pollution and degradation, to manage the environment for sustainable use and to promote environmental awareness.

The youth can act as reminders if no implementation of the statute is done. They should write articles in the media, plant a tree or two in their home compounds, sensitize the communities about the repercussions of burning fossil fuels and polythene bags (Kavera). They need to be innovative by teaching people how to use coffee or rice husks for cooking stoves to reduce charcoal use which is got by deforestation and leads to emission of chloro florocarbons. The youth should remember that there are inheriting a degraded world. What future planet do we want to live in? Can we retrieve what we have lost? Environmental protection is a responsibility for us all.

By Winfred Ongom
St. Joseph’s Girls S.S.S Nsambya

FROM THE FIELD:
Do we still have the Blue Swallow in Uganda?

A partial follow up survey of the globally threatened Blue Swallow Hirundo atrocaerulea) was conducted by staff of Nature Uganda during the period 9th-11th September 2010. This was the third time this survey has been conducted following the last complete survey in August 2004 and in 2002. Although the date was not optimum, the conditions not ideal and the time span more limited, the results were very encouraging with at least 167’ individuals. Of these, 24 were males and pairing up had started getting ready for the journey back to their breeding grounds in Southern Africa.

The survey was conducted in the grasslands of Sango Bay, Nabugabo and Mabamba. These sites had been identified in the previous surveys as ideal for Blue Swallows. They prefer seasonally flooded grassland patches around Lake Victoria and more specifically the recently burnt grass with herds of cattle.

After a break of about 5 years, it is evident that the Blue Swallows are still utilizing these areas. They therefore must be protected to give this globally threatened species a chance to survive. Annual surveys at the optimum time will be conducted to evaluate increases or decreases and if necessary formulate action plans if numbers drop.

By Roger Q. Skeen
Nature Uganda
Participatory Environmental Management Approach (PEMA) is a project implemented by Nature Uganda in Bushenyi district. It launched a campaign to restore the degraded areas in Kasyoha Kitomi forest. An assessment conducted revealed that of the total 39,200 hectares covered by the forest, 39 hectares were horribly degraded.

The project facilitated the restoration/enrichment planting of 12 hectares in Kakasi beat, Illimia block compartment 3 in partnership with NFA and community members of Kanywambogo environmental conservation association – (CBO supported by the project) in Ibanda district – Kicuzi Sub County, 5000 assorted seedlings of indigenous tree species including Khaya anthotheca, markamia spp and codia Mellini were planted. This restored part had previously been degraded by the species of birds which are tourist attractions for revenue.

After a lot of engagements under CFM arrangements, Forest adjacent communities have appreciated the role forests play in conservation and are ready to plant more indigenous trees inside the forest to bring back its glory. Communities perception towards conservation of the forest started when they realized the benefits they access when they co manage the forest with NFA.

Mr. Tibesigwa Amos, a community member says “we believe when this forest is restored, it will be for our own benefit because we are allowed to access a few regulated products like fire wood and medicinal herbs”. He also says Kasyoha Kitomi is one of the few forests that have different species of monkeys, other small animals and many.

By: Rogers Niwamanya
SPO PEMA II,
NatureUganda
Rakai District to get Tourism Development Plan

With Support from the Ecosystems of IUCN, Nature Uganda in collaboration with Rakai district local government started the process of formulating a tourism development plan. This was through a workshop held in Kyotera graced by the LCV chairman Vincent Semakula Settuba. Among issues discussed was the potential of Musambwa islands as the flagship site for tourism development in the district and a suggestion to gazette SangoBay as a Game Park was strongly supported. Different strategies were sought to see the tourism industry boom in the district including publicity strategy, infrastructure development strategy and fundraising. It was noted that all stakeholders including civil society, local government, communities and private sector have a role to play if Tourism is to prosper in Rakai. A committee comprising community members, private sector, local district officials and civil society was selected from the participants to compile the final report. A call was made to enhance the public-private partnership for the success of this industry.

By Seguya Henry Kizito
NatureUganda

NatureUganda visits ABO (Birdlife partner in Burundi)

Following the visit of ABO to Musambwa project early this year, NatureUganda group also visited them in June 2010 to share experiences in tourism, conservation and community development.

Burundi is endowed with lots of biodiversity and undulating hills which make the country’s experience memorable. The Rift valleyescarpments to Bujumbura-the capital of Burundi, are a very scary experience to the first time travelers and equates to that of Kisoro roads in Western Uganda although Bujumbura’s is prolonged. As one proceeds down the escarpments, fear is over taken by adventure. The valleys are all green with vegetables and unending streams of flowing water from mountains.

The Kigwena - Bujumbura experience is memorable with hospitable people, drummers and dancers clad in the Kirundi traditional attire in major towns a key for the tourism industry. The country also boosts of the artisanal palm oil industry, the scenic lakes of Cyhoha, hot springs, Kibira National park, Ruvubu national park and the game river drive along river Ruzizi. The communities are enterprising and have engaged in a number of income generating activities including beekeeping and agro-forestry.

However, the terrain and the high population pose as major challenges to conservation with severe pressure on resources in the valleys since the majority of the arable land is hilly and unusable.

Nevertheless, some steps have been taken to reverse the impacts on the environment, with Buffer zones created around lakes and the degraded areas are being restored through afforestation. The communities are involved in biodiversity monitoring and are implementing good biodiversity conservation practices like controlled fishing regimes and other good farming practices. Although Burundi appears small on the African map, it is a niche with a variety of learning aspects and a lot to see.

By Seguya Henry Kizito
NatureUganda
During the Big Birding Day, the occasion was graced by even the press in form of giving it a big coverage as indicated by some of the photos on this page.
Unusual Bird Sightings June - October, 2010

- **Sharpe’s Starling:** A flock of ten seen in Mgahinga NP, were new records for the park.
- **Rufous Bellied Heron:** Two birds seen at Lukaya Flats on 21st July.
- **Broad-billed Roller:** A pre-gathering roost of 150 birds was counted in MFNP on 25th July.
- **Pennant-winged Nightjar:** A maximum count of nine birds MFNP on 26th July.
- **White-crowned Lapwing:** Two birds recorded on the River Nile at MFNP on 28th July. This species has only recently been recorded in Uganda.
- **Sand Plover:** Two birds thought to be Mongolian Sand Plover at Nabugabo on 26th August are the third record for Uganda.
- **Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting:** Single bird at Bukakata landing site near Nabugabo 26th August.
- **Great Snipe:** Two over-summering individuals or early returning migrants at Lake Nabugabo on 27th August, still present 9th September.
- **Blue Swallow:** A Partial survey of Mabamba, Nabugabo and Sango Bay wetlands from 9th - 11th September revealed 167 Birds present.
- **Sand Plover:** A single at Entebbe on 4th September has been identified as Greater Sandplover and as such is a second record for Uganda.
- **Red-chested Flufftail:** Single bird at Nabugabo on 10th September.
- **Ruddy Turnstone:** seen on 16th September in Nakiwogo
- **Common Stonechat:** A male showing characteristics of the race albofasciata at Sango Bay on 11th September. This race is said to occur only in extreme Northern Uganda.
- **Woolly-necked Stork:** Three migrating south with a small kettle of Stepe Buzzards and three Lesser-spotted Eagle at Gaba on 9th October.
- **Broad-billed Sandpiper:** A single juvenile seen at Lutembe Lagoon on 12th October.
- **Yellow Penduline Tit:** A pair at Red Chilli camp site in MFNP on 25th October.
- **African Pita:** Single calling in Budongo forest 27th October.
- **Harlequin Quail:** one killed itself by flying into a window at Makerere University 7th July.
- **Grey Crowned Crane:** up to 35 roosting on pylons at Lusanja, feeding at the rubbish dump during the day.
- **Golden-breasted Bunting:** single bird at Lusanja since May 2009.
- **Grey-headed Bush-Shrike:** Two in the garden at Lusanja 15th August.
- **Freckled Nightjar:** One calling for over two hours on 17 August, at Lusanja. Not recorded in “Birds of the Kampala area”. The atlas states, occasional wanderers found further south.
- **Bat Hawk:** Immature over Bundibugyo, 8th June.
- **African Crake:** Three in area of the explosion crater lakes, QENP 1st June.
- **Black-and-white Cuckoo:** one of the uncommon serratus ssp seen in QENP in the crater area 1st June.

Contributors: Roger Skeen, William Dunlop, Prof. Derek Pomeroy and the Blue Swallow Team.
& Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions

*Students category caters for Primary, Secondary

Join us to promote the Understanding, Appreciation and Conservation of Nature

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

You can subscribe and be part of Nature Uganda by sending a cheque or cash to cover your subscription at our offices on plot 83, Tufnell Drive, Kamwokya.

ABC MEMBERSHIP

The African Bird Club has a local membership scheme at Nature Uganda. Members based in Uganda and new members can register or renew based on the local registration fee of UGX 20,000.

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES

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<tr>
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<td>Annual General Meeting (AGM)</td>
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<td>10th -12th Dec.</td>
<td>Excursion at Kibale National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th-17th Dec.</td>
<td>Annual Planning Meeting (APM)</td>
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CORPORATE MEMBERS

- Abacus African Vacations
- Acacia Safaris
- Access Africa Safaris
- Adventure Trails Uganda
- Africa Adventure Safaris
- Alliance Francaise
- Barclays Bank Uganda Limited
- Bird Uganda Safaris
- Bunyonyi Safaris Ltd.
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Concord International Travel Bureau
- Credit Uganda Tours Ltd
- Chimpanzee Sanctuary and wildlife conservation Trust - Ngamba
- Destination Jungle
- Humanitarian Care Uganda
- Impact Associates
- Ndere Centre
- Park Alexander
- Pride Microfinance Ltd
- Primate Watch Safaris
- Rwenzori Bottling Co.Ltd
- Rwenzori Mountaineering Services
- Sseziwaba Falls Resort
- Tour Guide Publications
- Travel Hemispheres, Ltd
- Uganda Breweries Ltd
- Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Uganda Travel & Hotels Guide
- Wash & Wills Country Home Ltd

WORKING GROUPS

- Birdlife Uganda
- Plants Working Group
- Herps Working Group
- Mammals Conservation Group
- Friends of Dudus
- Microbial Resources Group

UPCOUNTRY BRANCHES

- Eastern Uganda based at Islamic University in Uganda
- Western Uganda based at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)
- Northern Uganda based at Gulu University

EDITORIAL

- Sarah Nambweere

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