



3rd Conservation Conference Held



The biennial Conservation Conference (CC) was held on 15th & 16th May 2014, at the Uganda Museum. It is an event that brings together conservation practitioners in Uganda for two days of workshops, presentations and other activities to share experiences, learn from them and make recommendations for future conservation and research work in Uganda. The conference also provides a forum for learning about the most pressing issues facing conservation today and how these can best be managed. This was the 3rd of the biennial Conservation Conference organized by NatureUganda.

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management, and ultimately catalyze change. The theme of the 2014 Conference was "Biodiversity management in Uganda" exploring the role that information can play in policy making, best practices in the management of natural resources and providing inspiration for specific plans through plenary and specialized sessions that draw on the expertise of those at the forefront of conservation. The conference was opened by Mr. Paul Mafabi, Chairman, NatureUganda who is also the Commissioner of Wetlands.

Dr. John Makombo, director of conservation, Uganda Wildlife Authority was the keynote speaker at the conference and gave the roles and importance of our biodiversity and wildlife heritage.

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NatureUganda holds its 22nd AGM

NatureUganda held its 22nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday, 4th April 2014 at the Uganda Museum. It was also the 104th AGM of the East Africa Natural History Society. It was well attended with over 60 members including staff, representatives of partner agencies and other community organisations.

Addressing the assembly, the Chairman board of NatureUganda, Mr. Paul Mafabi thanked the members for always finding time to participate in activities organised by NatureUganda such as; the nature walks, monthly public talks and excursions among others which are aimed at promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of Nature. He added that "there are still threats that our environment and natural resources are facing in all parts of the country but with combined effort, we hope to reach out to the public

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Chairman's Message



Dear member,

Welcome to our bulletin of the Naturalist Vol.19.2. In this Newsletter, we share with you some of the work we have done during this period. We would like to encourage you to take interest in what we do as NatureUganda and feel free to advise us where you think we need improvement, but also to applaud us where you think we have made great achievements.

Many of us have a special relationship with birds in our communities. This may be embedded in our culture or religion as omens, symbols or beliefs. Birds still remain part of our lives and livelihoods and their songs, colours and behavior will put a smile to many faces Worldwide. Not only that, but they will always be one of the first creatures to note any changes in their environment and they will say so by moving away from bad places, leaving behind those who do not care much like the crows and marabous (Kalori). These beautiful and handsome creatures will always remain a crucial link between people and Nature. That is why all of NatureUganda projects will in one way or another be linked to birds. Even the highly celebrated Uganda Big Birding Day has its central theme as Connecting birds to People and Nature.

In working with people, we have continued to engage local communities in our conservation work through our Site Support Group approach with community groups at Lutembe Bay and Mabamba Bay under the Local Empowerment Project and Katwe community under the AEWA project, as well as the Collaborative Forestry Management community groups in Echuya Forest Reserve under the DOF project. This has enabled us touch the right nodes which has given our projects good mileage.

We have had a series of key activities in this period including the Annual General Meeting, the 3rd Conservation Conference, a member's excursion to Mt. Elgon National park, the World Migratory Bird's Day and the World Wetlands Day in addition to a number of projects that we had to implement in the organization. I therefore thank all who participated in these events.

Lastly, this is an appeal to each one of us to keep renewing our subscription and also encourage our friends to register and join NatureUganda.

I thank all our members, partners, supporters and staff for standing with us as we strive to promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature. I wish you a good reading.

Paul Masabi

Chairman, NatureUganda.

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NU holds its 22nd AGM



NU Members reading the Chairman's Report

and communities directly benefiting from these resources to sustainably use and manage them for longer term benefits".

At the AGM, Dr Arthur Mugisha, Country representative Fauna & Flora International (FFI) was elected as the Vice chairperson, Ms Sarah Kaweesa, Executive Director of Arocha Uganda and Mr Polycarp Mwima, Programme Officer, Forests at IUCN were elected as committee members.

The outgoing Vice Chairperson, Ms. Pauline Nantongo presented the treasurer's report on behalf of the treasurer, Dr Robert Nabanyumya. The report reflected that the income generated from membership subscriptions had declined despite the increase in the membership. She reminded members that NatureUganda is a membership organisation that relies on such incomes to service its members. She called upon members to renew their membership subscriptions and also to call upon all to join the NatureUganda membership fraternity.

The discussions during the AGM called for the revision of NatureUganda membership structure with an aim of allowing wider participation in the activities organised. The meeting proposed that the membership and communication committee work together with the secretariat to develop an aggressive membership drive and carry out a study to explore the reasons why membership is not increasing as expected.

NatureUganda will continue diversifying activities to both members and non-members. We therefore call upon all to get in touch with the secretariat on how directly involve the members in the activities aimed at promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of Nature.

Crane Trade/ removal from the wild – case studies and suggested mitigations



Grey Crowned Crane removal from the wild has been cited as one of the profound impacts affecting the already declining population of the national bird for Uganda, the Grey Crowned Crane, *Balearica regulorum*. The population of the species in Uganda stands at below 10,000 birds with clear evidence of continuing to drop. NatureUganda is implementing a project “Community conservation of cranes and wetlands in Uganda” which seeks to understand drivers and factors underlying Crane removal from the wild, assess the impact and improve the bird’s conservation status through various means including a deliberate “custodianship” programme where Crane breeding sites and

or Crane chicks are taken care of by a member(s) of the community adjacent to the breeding site. It also intends to demonstrate alternative livelihoods for the communities that would potentially have an impact on Crane survival. The project sites are spread out in the districts of Masaka, Rakai, Lwengo, Lyantonde, Mbarara, Sheema, Mitooma, Ntungamo, Rukungiri and Kabale.

Grey Crowned Cranes are currently listed Endangered Species according to IUCN, having been uplisted from Vulnerable in 2012. Dangers to cranes include, among others – habitat (wetland) degradation, poisoning, removal from the wild, power line collisions, domestication and trapping. Grey Crowned Cranes are of great aesthetic value hence they

have a tourist attraction potential. Cases of crane removal from the wild have been documented since the early 2000s.

Crane domestication Crane chicks were recovered from a captor in Mitooma district

Several other items have been intercepted and culprits arrested. These include Chameleons, Tortoises and ivory. In fact half a tone ivory (reportedly from the DRC) was intercepted at the Katuna border in 2013. There are cases of capture and sale of parrots near the Mutukula border. Case of tree species (believed to be an aphrodisiac) which are traded in Tanzania. A case where a trader smuggling 8 Ostrich eggs was intercepted and arrested at Mutukula border.

Jimmy Muhsebwa,
Project Coordinator

3rd Conservation Conference Held

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He noted that “Uganda is the only country on the globe with Mountains that hold substantial glacier at the Equator”. He further mentioned that communities’ attitudes towards conservation have greatly improved but there are other challenges that need to be addressed and these include loopholes in policies. He pointed out Uganda needs policies geared towards addressing the issues of land use and population as well

as commitment to implementation of policies related to biodiversity.

While presenting a plenary, Prof Agea Jacob highlighted that “Humans have a great role to play in the management and conservation of our resources. Illegal activities in this country are at times fueled by the politicians and technocrats. There’s lack of coordination between authorities responsible for the

management of these resources for example between NEMA and NFA.

While discussing the state of Uganda’s environment, Prof. William Banage mentioned that all elements of the environment are deteriorating, including the forest cover, wetlands and the policies in this country have derailed. All papers will be published in the Conference proceedings.

World Migratory Bird Day celebrated in Katwe-Kabatooro, Kasese district



Participants during a Nature walk at L. Munyanyange

NatureUganda, the Birdlife International partner in Uganda and lead organization in the conservation of birds in the country, together with the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and Uganda Wildlife Society organized an event to celebrate the World Migratory Birds Day (WMBD) which took place at the Katwe Tourist Information Center (KATIC) in Katwe-Kabatooro town council, Katwe, Kasese District.

WMBD was first promoted worldwide by Birdlife International, the African-Eurasian Migratory Water birds Agreement (AEWA) and the UNEP's global Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in 2006 and is celebrated on every second weekend of May each year as an annual awareness-raising campaign highlighting the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats.

The event started with a nature walk to Lake Munyanyange where 10 Afro-tropical and 8 Palearctic migrants were recorded. This was followed by an exercise dubbed "Keep Katwe Clean" which aimed at raising awareness on solid waste management as a means of maintaining the integrity sites of migratory birds. Lakes Munyanyange and Katwe, found in Katwe town council

are bird migration stopovers in Uganda and present a unique opportunity to watch different migratory birds such as the Lesser Flamingo, Lesser-black-backed Gulls and Pied Avocets among others.

NatureUganda in partnership with Katwe Tourism Information Centre (KATIC) are implementing a project that will work to safeguard the birds' habitats, while creating job opportunities for local communities.

In his remarks, the speaker, Katwe town council, representing the chairman of the town council, Kasingwe Edison called upon NatureUganda, UWA and KATIC to work hard to fully implement the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed between KATIC and the town council to protect the lake and the birds for sustainable tourism and encouraged the local community to invest in local tourism. Speaking on behalf of Uganda Wildlife Authority, Mr. Tushabe Patrick, senior warden of Queen Elizabeth National Park encouraged people to learn to live in harmony with wildlife and advised them to find ways through which they can benefit from opportunities brought about by birds and their migrations to this area. The Executive Director, KATIC, Mr. Kimulya Rogers said that KATIC sensitizes communities about conservation through music,

dance and drama. KATIC was formed in 2005 with the mission of conserving the surrounding natural resources for sustainable tourism with the intent of enhancing economic and conservation benefits for the community. Each year, KATIC hosts numerous visitors especially students who visit Katwe to learn about Salt Lake, its history and ecology.

The Ag Executive Director of NatureUganda, Michael Opige said that the activities aimed at conserving and restoring Lake Munyanyange and its environs as well as the birds. Speaking on behalf of the commissioner, Wildlife Conservation, Mr George Oweyesigire, the Principal Wildlife Officer, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities said that Uganda is a unique tourism destination with enormous wildlife resources and cultural practices, besides her unique climate coupled with the geomorphology constitute the country's overall resource base. He requested UWA to support community initiatives to boost tourism services and conservation initiatives and welcomed the patriotic and heroic support NatureUganda is giving to support government in environment-related initiatives.

Tourism is one of the primary growth sectors in Uganda as per the NDP and Vision 2040. The Ugandan cabinet recently approved the Wildlife Policy 2014, Principles of the Wildlife Act amendment bill, Uganda Wildlife Education Centre bill and Uganda Wildlife Research and Training Institute bill. This shows that the Ugandan Government is committed to conserving wildlife. The speakers urged all to emulate KATIC and play a role in conservation as well as livelihood improvement.

Joel Wako & Phionah Mwesige

Community Resource Planning in Lutembe and Mabamba Bays



Lutembe women's group in one of the PRA exercises



Mabamba Bay LCG conducting a PRA exercise



Lutembe men's group in one of the PRA exercises

Two local conservation groups in Uganda; one in Lutembe bay (Lutembe bay Wetland Users Association) and one in Mabamba bay (Mabamba bay Wetland Eco-tourism Association) have been undertaking a resource planning activity to inform the development of Community Action Plans. A Community Action Plan is a statement of community's vision, values and intentions in relation to use and management of their natural capital.

The exercise which kicked off in November 2013 involved natural resource assessments through the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools. The tools that were applied included; community resource map, resource access and timeline, and hazard mapping among others. Information collected ranged from seasonal

climatic variability, resource access and control as well as the livelihood hazards exposure.

The PRA exercises which will culminate into Community Action Plans will inform the review of district wetland management plans under Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment. Members of both Lutembe Wetland Users Association and Mabamba bay Wetland Eco-tourism Association majorly depend on natural resources for their livelihood. Therefore the exercise will not only enable the two communities to understand their status and current dependency on natural resources. But will also encourage better use and management of natural resources.

NatureUganda, the BirdLife partner in Uganda, has been

facilitating the process in both Lutembe bay and Mabamba bay under the "Empowering local communities for the conservation and sustainable development of birds and biodiversity of the Lake Victoria Basin" project. The project seeks to empower local conservation groups to successfully incorporate their development needs into natural resource management through capacity building, resource mobilization and policy influencing. The project is financed by the generous support of the A. V Jensen Foundation.

Dianah Natwanga-Wabwire (NU) & Olivia Adhiambo (BirdLife International)

NatureUganda Publications



CONSERVATION

On-farm biodiversity Conservation; a lens into traditional conservation approaches

On-farm biodiversity conservation is a new approach being promoted in the conservation arena. This brings conservation from the conventionally conserved areas like Key Biodiversity Areas, Forest reserves, National parks and others to people's farms within the community. The coverage of protected areas in Uganda is approximately 20% but it is important to note that most biodiversity especially the avifauna have no boundaries and they spread to other areas which are unprotected. The quest for more land arising from the increased population, poor farming regimes have led to destruction of such habitats which act as safe havens for the biodiversity.

To contribute to the reversal of

this trend, one project supported by Rufford Foundation is using the cultural values approach to promote community conservation in Rakai district, Kyebe Sub County. The project integrates the indigenous knowledge of the people to propagate and manage *Ficus* spp trees locally known as the Mutuba tree. This tree improves the ecological integrity of their farms and acts as an alternative habitat to species. Over 6000 ficus trees and 3000 meopsis emini (Musizi) trees have been planted. The bark of the tree is processed to make a fabric locally called Olubugo which is an alternative source of income.

Socio-economic surveys will be conducted over time to measure impact of on-farm biodiversity

conservation. This will go a long way in preparing the community for tourism since the project area is earmarked as a tourism focal area in Uganda. Community members have been trained in data collection cadres such that they can contribute to different biodiversity monitoring schemes.

In a nutshell, culture and indigenous knowledge is an important building block that conservationists and other development players need to adopt and blend it with other conventional approaches to conservation. This will go a long way to delivering interventions that make a meaning to people who translate into ownership and appreciation of their environment.

Henry Seguya Kizito

NU members' excursion to Mt Elgon National Park; a unique experience



The latest NatureUganda members' activity was an excursion to Mount Elgon National Park which took place from April 19th - 21st 2014. Mount Elgon is an extinct volcano that first erupted more than 24 million years ago. Its size is immense with the largest surface area of any extinct volcano in the world. It is the fourth highest mountain in East Africa and attains a height of 4,321 meters.

The first activity was a trip to Sipi

village found on the Elgon foothills. Here members were given a very interesting tour of a coffee farm and were shown the whole process from planting the seedling, to collecting the red berries, drying of same, then roasting before being given hot water to sample the product, coffee.

On day two, the group chose to do the 5km walk to the Cherbonet Falls and surrounding rich forest and recorded almost 90 species including the colourful Hartlaub's Turaco and African Emerald Cuckoo. The Abyssinian Ground Thrush and Brown-chested Alethe were heard calling and skulking in the undergrowth but refused to be seen. The trails were very steep in places and it was not a walk for those of a nervous disposition! Members also visited the Kapkwai cave which is now only used by bats but in olden times was used

as a home to the peoples of the mountain.

Members then set off to explore the Sipi Falls. The first fall is over 100 feet from top to bottom and is one of three extensive falls the mist from these drenching those foolhardy to get too close. Still bird watching the group was rewarded with extra species such as Southern Citril and the highland race of Baglafaecht weaver, while overhead Mountain Buzzard and Great Sparrowhawk showed well. The final activity of the day was back at the cultural centre where members were treated to songs and dances from the local community.

It can be seen that Mount Elgon and its surrounding foothill villages offer a remarkably diverse experience, both cultural and through its varied bio-diversity. All members agreed that they had had an extremely entertaining and educational trip.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS



The **Karamoja Apalis**, a rare apalis occasionally recorded in northern Uganda, was sighted at Irriri in Moroto on 1st February 2014, where breeding birds were discovered in 2011. Unfortunately the habitat of thorny Acacia scrub where this bird is usually sighted has been cleared and burnt so presumably most of the population will have moved to more suitable habitat. That was the sad statement from ...who sighted this bird.

Kibimba

Rice Scheme has become a haven for bird watchers and the migrating bird species in the recent four years. And it's not stopping on hosting rare species but also congregations of these. During the February 11th water bird monitoring count by NatureUganda staff, DN, PM, IE and PM, a count of 1037 **Wood Sandpiper** for that site was a remarkable total for this Palearctic wader, also present on the same count were 63 **White Stork** and 34 **Greater Painted Snipe**, all three species recorded in exceptional numbers.

Two separate individuals of the **Lesser Sand Plover**, were recorded on the shore of Lake Albert on the 1st and 3rd of March. These, if accepted by the East African Rarity Committee, will be only the 3rd and 4th records of this migratory species in Uganda. Unfortunately this and its sister species the Greater Sand Plover are very similar and difficult to identify correctly.

The **Terek Sandpiper** is another species which is not yet confirmed for Uganda. A single bird on the shore of Lake Albert on 3rd March will be the 5th record for Uganda. As the bird is relatively easy to identify and a photograph taken, then its acceptance should be a formality.

Two individuals of the **Caspian Tern** were recorded on Lutembe Lagoon on the 12th March. This species has only recently been added to the Uganda checklist but now appears with some regularity, especially at Lutembe Bay.

At least three individuals of the **Buff-spotted Flufftail** were calling in the early morning during a recent visit to Mount Elgon National Park by NatureUganda members on 21st and 22nd of April. Their eerie calls in the misty mornings added to the Elgon adventure was an experience you shouldn't miss next time.

Eight individuals of the **African Skimmer** resting on mud flats just

to the west of Entebbe airport on the 30th April were an exciting find at this site. Normally they are found on the River Nile in Murchison Falls NP and in Queen Elizabeth NP.

Two individuals of the **Red-capped Lark** were seen at Katwe on 9th May. The habitat of short grass and the pair indulging in courtship chasing, suggests a breeding pair. This record is a range extension and according to the Uganda Bird Atlas the first probable breeding record since 1910.

Individuals of the **Brown Twinspot** and **Zebra Waxbill** were both recorded carrying nesting material on 26th May in farm-bush some 30km west of Hoima, there are just a few breeding records of both of these species in Uganda.

An individual of **Little Rush Warbler** hangs onto its tenuous position in Kampala when other three singing birds of the same were calling from a sugar cane farm on Nakivubo Wetland near Namuwongo on 22nd June. This species is rarely recorded in Kampala.

A single adult bird of the **Allen's Gallinule** was recorded at Nakivubo Wetland near Namuwongo on 22nd June. This is the first Kampala record for over twenty years benefiting from improved swamp management at this site.

Interesting Cuckoo Facts



DID YOU KNOW?

The cuckoo is a brood parasite, laying its eggs in the nest of other species and will provide no parental care of its young.

Cuckoo eggs mimic those of their most common hosts. If the hosts notice the extra egg they will abandon the nest.

WEIRD SCIENCE FACTS

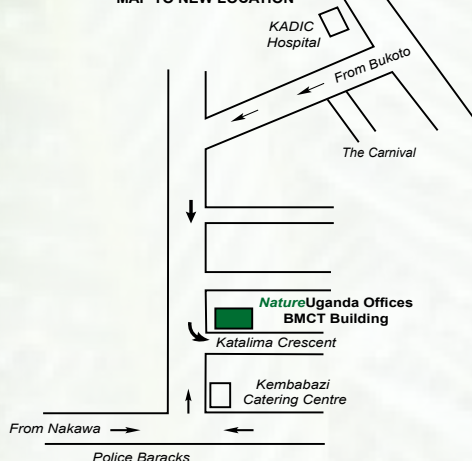
The newly hatched cuckoo chick immediately ejects other eggs and chicks from the nest of its host.

A cuckoo chick will often grow to be much larger than its unsuspecting foster parent.

Migrant adult Cuckoos arrive back in Africa some two months before the juveniles make the journey.

MEMBERSHIP

MAP TO NEW LOCATION



Upcoming Events

- 16th Aug - Naturewalk to the Reptile Village, Entebbe
- 6th Sept - Kampala Vulture Counts
- 18th Oct - Naturewalk to Zika Forest

Upcountry Branches

- Eastern Uganda based at the Islamic University in Uganda, and Busitema University
- Western Uganda based at Mbarara University of Science & Technology
- Northern Uganda based at Gulu University

Working Groups

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

How to become a Member

Pay or renew your membership subscription by; writing a cheque to *NatureUganda*; paying at the secretariat in Naguru or at any of our upcountry branches; sending your fee to MTN mobile number 0777 147 367.

Join us in Promoting the Understanding, Appreciation & Conservation of Nature

Membership Rates Per Annum

Category	Local	Overseas
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Life members	100,000	
Sponsor	500,000	
Corporate	200,000	\$350
Institutions	70,000	\$90
Family	25,000	\$30
Full member	20,000	\$20
Students	5,000	\$15

* Students' category caters for primary, Secondary and Undergraduates in Tertiary institutions

* Sponsor category caters for an individual or organization that doesn't belong to any of the other categories

ABC Membership

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



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- Children's Rights Advocacy & Lobby Mission (CALM AFRICA)
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- Neul Tours

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