

COMMUNITIES JOIN FUNDRAISING DRIVE FOR CONSERVATION

So many communities are located near key biodiversity areas and accessed these sites for various reasons, while communities like the Batwa live inside protected territory. This explains why innovations in management of such ecosystems are taking new trends, which consolidate the role of community-based rural institutions.

In Uganda, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) at both national and community levels are playing a pivotal role and have built up a comprehensive body of knowledge and expertise on the conservation strategy based on community empowerment. *NatureUganda*, a CSO, is playing its own role in building the capacity of such local community groups to fundraise for conservation of resources on which their livelihoods highly depend. The organisation's overarching strategy is to create longevity of its own conservation programmes to create a



Mabamba Bay Wetland Eco-Tourism Association with NU staff after their training on fundraising

big impact on the ecosystems where they work. "*NatureUganda* engages groups through various projects and programmes, focusing on critical ecosystems like wetlands and forests. "The target is to empower and equip the communities so that by the end of the project, they can continue with

the conservation projects" Dianah Nalwanga, Monitoring and Research Coordinator, *NatureUganda*.

Model examples of such groups are Lutembe Bay Wetland Users Association (LWUA) and Mabamba Bay Wetland Eco-tourism Association (MWETA) the two site support groups on Lake Victoria. *NatureUganda* has been working with these groups on a local community empowerment project for three years now. The creation and empowerment of these groups has helped to consolidate their engagement in management of the wetlands and has regularized the activities related to sustainable natural resources exploitation. >>page 3

NATUREUGANDA GETS NEW LEADERSHIP



Welcome
Dr. Robert
Nabanyumya,
the new
NatureUganda
Chairperson

NatureUganda held its 23rd AGM on Thursday 9th April 2015 at their Historical venue, the Uganda Museum. This was also the 3rd AGM following the amendment of the NU constitution. This AGM was a big milestone in the history of the organization as it marked the changing of the Chairman of the Executive Committee after more than 10 years.

Chairman's Message



A warm welcome to our second issue of the *Naturalist* in 2015. First of all allow me to take this opportunity to thank all members who participated in this year's Annual General Meeting for our prestigious Organisation in April and also for giving me a chance to lead the Executive Committee. I would also like to congratulate the new members of the Executive Committee upon attaining their new positions. We promise to do our best to take the organization as far as we can.

In this issue we highlight the role of communities in conserving critical natural resources. Conservation is taking a different paradigm, from excluding communities from exploiting natural resources, to trying to empower them and entrust them to manage resources. *Nature Uganda* has facilitated the process to develop two management plans for Tochi and Okole wetlands and two community action plans for the Lutembe bay and Mabamba bay community groups to help communities manage these wetlands. The World Environment day is the 5th of June every year. This year, the theme was "Seven Billion People, One Planet. Consume with Care." In light of the increasing population we need to ensure that the available resources are enough to meet the demands of the population but also not compromising the resources for the future generation. We urge our members to become more conscious of their personal ecological footprint (impact). Let us think about the environmental impacts of the decisions we make in our daily lives to be the examples where we live or work and everywhere we go.

Dr. Robert Nabanyumya, Chairman NU

NATUREUGANDA LAUNCHES WETLAND MANAGEMENT PLANS, DEMARCATES BOUNDARIES

Two community wetland management plans for Kole and Tochi wetlands - the first in Northern Uganda



Akaidebe community and WMD staff demarcating wetland boundaries in Apac

facilitated a process to develop wetland management plans for two major wetlands in Northern Uganda. The wetland management plans were developed together with the Wetland Management Department (WMD) of the Ministry of Water and Environment and other local stakeholders. The management plans for Okole and Tochi wetlands are now the first in the whole of Northern Uganda. The BATBP project is led by Tropical Biology Association a Conservation charity in the United Kingdom and implemented by Ugandan partners *Nature Uganda* and *Tree Talk*. The project aims at helping British American Tobacco

project districts of Apac, Oyam, Kole and Gulu.

The management plans are part of a strategy to restore degraded parts of the two wetlands. These wetlands have been threatened by human activity including brick laying, extraction of sand and agricultural activities – land owners adjacent to wetlands hire out patches to the youth to farm and lay bricks during dry season. These wetlands are vital to other members of the community too as they provide clean water, fish, firewood, craft materials and local herbs for treating various diseases. Tochi wetland is shared by Gulu and Oyam districts and Okole wetland is shared by Kole and Apac districts. Although Northern Uganda has got a lot of wetlands, the efforts towards their conservation had been hampered by the 20 year civil unrest. The return of former IDPs coupled with an increase in population is now stretching resources



The WMD commissioner and the Ass. LCV Gulu District Local Government commissioning the management plans

(Uganda) address challenges related to biodiversity and ecosystem management amidst challenges in a landscape of blossoming agriculture, a sector of prime importance to livelihoods of millions of people in the

Nature Uganda's work on management of wetlands in this region is part of an effort to secure the futures of communities who until after 2007 could not be accessed by extension service staff to be advised on sustainable ways to farm and manage natural resources. The region is now on the mend and the BATBP partners have managed to showcase model systems for biodiversity conservation in this farming landscape including tree planting on public (forest reserves, schools, churches) >>pag3

and private land will help improve conservation of key biodiversity areas in this important ecosystem and improve the lives of local farmers.

During the launch of the management plans, the WMD Commissioner Mr. Oloya Collins said that Uganda has about 7,000 wetlands but only 52 (less than 1%) have management plans and 5 have framework wetland management plans. Under the National Development Plan, the WMD aims at developing 75 community wetland plans every year for the next five years. The launch of the management plans paved way for restoration activities including opening of boundaries and promoting of wetland 'wise use' options to the community.

NU GETS NEW LEADERS

Nature Uganda's outgoing chairperson Mr. Paul Mafabi (*Right*) had served the organisation for 18 years in different capacities.



Dr. Robert Nabanyumya was elected as the new Chairperson, Ms. Regina Namakula as the Publicity Secretary and Hon. John Arimpa Kigyagi as a Committee Member. The new auditors for NU were also elected and JP Magson Certified Public Accountants Uganda was appointed as the new auditors.

The incoming Chairman Dr. Robert Nabanyumya said he was honored to take the reign for the next three years. "I'm truly humbled to have been elected to such an important position and call upon members to continue supporting Nature Uganda in its endeavors to promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of Nature," he said. Nature Uganda staff applaud and appreciates the outgoing Chairperson, for the dedication and wonderful work done to steer the organization forth and welcome the new chairperson with pleasure.

Communities Join Fundraising Drive

The *Naturalist* had an opportunity to interact with the members of Mabamba Wetland Ecotourism Association (MWETA), in Mpigi to help answer the questions on sustainability of community initiatives designed to conserve important



Members of MWETA some of their agricultural produce for sale at a public function.

resources.

"We are happy with Nature Uganda's work here, we are very organized and ready to do everything they ask of us to conserve Mabamba" says Mr. Billy Musoke the secretary of MWETA.

"It is good that there is a lot of interest in conserving the wetland from both sides. However, we are concerned that if Nature Uganda goes away what happens with all the work that they have started here? We also have concerns about resources; revenues from tourists normally drop in some seasons and we have to go and do farming. How can we increase tourism activity in this area?" adds Ms. Idah Katende, the adviser and former chairperson of the group

Ms. Irene Namubiru, the leader of the group says they understand that with time the challenges they are facing will go away but they are not sure what will happen if there is no more money for funding their activities. "We have been told to try and tolerate each other because we have different strengths and weakness and we have been told to choose appropriate Executive members. I think those are issues that will take us miles.

The performance of community projects hugely depends on the attitude of the group members and some projects fail due to lack of community cohesion. The project Coordinator, Dianah says "Some groups may have saboteurs who cause delays in implementation of some activities and they sometimes managed to mislead the members and fail the project". She adds that due to such dynamics, implementation of community projects takes longer than expected.

Although there have been such hitches, this intervention is showing positive impacts on the wetland and tourism in the area, but most especially on communities there who were having a sternly negative attitude towards conservation. This model is worth trying in managing resources across Uganda and other developing countries though **it's not always rosy.**

Tips to starting a successful community group

Select a resource management

Contact your Community Development Officer about the idea of a community group

Register your community group at the sub county and or district level

Contact the district community development department about the existence of your group and ask is there is any funding related to your work/the work of the group.

Start fundraising ask local CBOs and NGOs working in your area for funds to support conservation activities.

Write project proposals for your group

For more information about starting a community group, Call Dianah Nalwanga on 0702 929 626 or ask us on facebook//natureuganda

WAKISO DISTRICT VICE CHAIRPERSON CALLS FOR UNITY IN CONSERVING L. VICTORIA CATCHMENTS



One of the biggest challenges L. Victoria is facing is increased demand of its resources and pollution due to an increase in population within its catchments. These challenges have had a major impact on the quality of water turning it into green in color due to much concentration of nutrients in the water. To try and avert such pressures, NatureUganda through her Local Empowerment Programme has been working with local community groups Lutembe Bay Wetland Users Association (LWUA) and Mabamba Bay Wetland Eco-tourism Association (MWETA). Apart from being L. Victoria catchments, Lutembe and Mabamba bays are also Ramsar sites. This work has culminated into formulation of Community Action Plans to enhance community participation and improve

tourism and conservation. These Community Action Plans were launched by the LC5 Vice Chairperson, Wakiso District; Hon. Rose Mary Namubiru during a function to commemorate the World Environmental Day held at Lutembe Landing site, Wakiso District. In her speech, Hon. Rose Mary stressed the need for joint efforts between civil societies, Government and community groups. She said the district is ready to work with civil society organisations and other supporters to help communities living and utilizing resources from the Lake to protect the catchment.

NU was commended for its efforts in supporting these communities and also for helping the district to fulfill its mandate. The district has limited resources to such activities, so civil society organizations are very important



players in such cases. But the local government is required to intervene especially when projects developed for these purposes have a timeline.

The function was also graced by the District Natural Resources Officer Ms. Rebecca Ssabaganzi. In her Speech, Ms. Rebecca stressed the district's commitment to support the implementation of this plan. The district's roles are mainly to monitor and promote awareness as well as supporting the communities in enforcing the policies and laws governing the right use of wetlands and their resources. She thanked NU for their leadership in formulating and implementing these plans and called for unity in their implementation.

NatureUganda through the Local Empowerment Project (LEP) supported the development and Implementation of these action plans. The community representatives were very grateful for this support but emphasized the need for more if they are to consolidate what has been started. The chairman Ssisa Sub County Dr. Ssemambo Nsohya, called upon other partners to come in and supplement on what had been provided by *NatureUganda*. 'We can only achieve this plan if we work together for development' he concluded.

Mirembe, Lake Victoria's Floating Island



Mirembe Island is a new addition to L. Victoria's landscape. According to NewVision, the island that has recently curved away from the shoreline between Gaba and Namuwongo and settled in Port Bell and Miami beach in lake Victoria and continue floating is

estimated to be 20 acres of land. Satellite images of the piece of land show that the chunks of soil started flowing off in 2011 and the outline of possible breakage were also noticed in 2012, before it significantly detached itself in February 2015. Scientists disputes that it will keep on moving. NEMA is worried that the island could sink because it does not seat on the rock. This breakage is believed to be the outcome of the weather changes and the increasing amount of water in the lake which has weakened the soil and made it lose.

Because of this continue unexpected movement, NEMA has issued a warning note to people urging them to stop farming on the island, because the soil could become even weaker and sink in. NEMA also warned the people to evacuate the island immediately.

Write back!

Write to the naturalist stating how you have been affected by a conservation project/programme and how you would like to improve the management of conservation areas. The best letter will win NUS 100,000.

SEVEN BILLION PEOPLE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HELP OTHERS REALISE THEIR DREAMS?

The theme for this year's World Environment Day was "Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet. Consume with Care"

The World Environment Day (WED) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 on the day that United Nations Conference on the Human Environment began since then it is celebrated every year on 5th June. It is a day to take some action in order to protect our environment and planet earth. The WED had most of its focus towards global environment threats which needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

About the theme

Despite of the fact that we are more than 7 billion by now living on seven of earth's continents, we have only one planet to live and survive. We have limited space, limited food,

and limited shelters. If we keep on using natural resources like we do today, a day will come when our own grand children shall be forced to live homeless with hunger prevailing in the society.



NatureUganda has been working with partners to conserve Echuya CFR in Kabale.

The theme for 2015 is how the well-being of humanity, the environment and economies ultimately depends on the responsible management of the

planet's natural resources. Evidence is building that people are consuming far more natural resources than what the planet can sustainably provide.

Many of the Earth's ecosystems are nearing critical tipping points of depletion or irreversible change, pushed by high population growth and economic development. By 2050, if current consumption and production patterns remain the same and with a rising population expected to reach 9.6 billion, we will need three planets to sustain our way of life. Living well within planetary boundaries is the most promising strategy for ensuring a healthy future. So it's better to consume whether food or fuel with care and responsibility. Stop the wastage, use according to need not greed.

What is it you are planning to do for nature before the year ends?

NatureUganda is inspired by nature conservation and our staff always work to improve our members' appreciation of nature. Every year we in awareness raising activities to try and show Ugandans and the world at that nature conservation is everyone's responsibility. This year, NatureUganda staff cleaned up Dewe trading center in Lutembe, Wakiso district to highlight the need for reduced environmental pollution and a clean environment. Here is what some NU staff are planning to do before the end of the year.



Achilles Byaruhanga, Executive Director NatureUganda. "I have been urging my neighbors to plant trees but they have been telling me that they do not have seedlings, so, I have decided to start a tree nursery to raise indigenous trees that I will give away free of charge before the end of this year"

Geoffrey Akule, Finance and Administration Officer, NatureUganda. "I have been touched by how floods

are destroying property of people in Kampala. Now I am learning more about flood control and wetland conservation to help my country and my city".

Dianah Nalwanga, NU's Research and Monitoring Coordinator urges every NatureUganda member to learn to appreciate nature so as to conserve it better.

Michael Opige, NU's Programme Manager – Urges all Ugandans to first think of what they are going to do and judge its impact on nature.



Samuel Majang, Intern wants all farmers to try and stop soil erosion using different eco-agriculture practices like mulching"

Sandra Sayuni, Membership Assistant Calls upon every individual to make it a point not to use kaveera again.



BIRDING DESTINATIONS: TOORO BOTANICAL GARDENS

The Tooro Botanical Gardens (TBG) are located to the north of Fort Portal town on the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains in Western Uganda. Long known for its conservation of native flora and displaying a number of Albertine Rift endemics, the gardens are both an educational and scientifically based organisation.

Perhaps what not many people realise is how rich the gardens are for other fauna including Reptiles, Insects, Mammals and specifically birds. The bird checklist for the gardens stands at 170 a remarkable total for a comparatively small area in a semi-urban area. This short article intends to escort you, the reader through the varied habitats which all have their niche specialists.

At the Northern gate we have a unique habitat where a stand of Eucalyptus has been encouraged to keep an understory of bushes and shrubs. Mainly Veronia species they provide food and cover for a variety of migrant and resident birds. These include skulking species such as Scaly Francolin, Ludher's Bush-shrike and Black-faced Rufous Warbler. While in the Eucalypts can be found migrant Wood, Willow and Reed Warbler, feeding on a myriad of small insects to gain energy for their long journey back to the Northern Hemisphere.

To the south of the visitor centre a grass-roofed roundel can be found, overlooking this building is a magnificent Fig tree with Palm's and Albesia's surrounding it. This Fig tree is the occasional roost of a pair of Verreaux's Eagle-Owl. Also in the vicinity of the roundel are some Bottle-brush and Tulip trees, much favoured by various Sunbirds and Flycatchers. We were fortunate this winter period to have at least two Semi-collared Flycatchers, scarce visitors from the

Palaearctic, use this habitat.

Moving into the Gardens valley bottom an area of Elephant grass and Bamboo occurs, this invasive habitat has to be periodically checked as it swamps newly planted trees but during the time it is allowed to survive it provides good breeding habitat for various Weaver's, such as Yellow-backed, Brown-throated, Baglafaecht and Vieillot's Black, while Chubb's Cisticola, Greater Swamp Warbler and Ludher's Bush-shrike can be found. During the period



October-March when birds from

Northern Europe arrive to escape the cold Palaearctic winter, European Reed Warbler and Great Reed Warbler can also favour this tall grass environment. Additionally using this habitat are a variety of small mammals and reptiles which can stay hidden from predators. The small water courses which run through this damp grassland provide habitat for another skulking bird species, the eloquently named White-spotted Flufftail, it is often heard but



seldom seen.

Continuing in a southerly direction

we come to a plantation of *Prunus Africana*. This well-known medicinal plant is becoming scarce in Africa and TBG's efforts are to be applauded in safeguarding this plant for future generations. Not only are these good for people but they are sort after by many bird species, mainly Flycatchers and Warblers which feed on the attendant insect life. The low shrubby undergrowth is favoured by another speciality of the gardens the Red-headed Bluebill.

Our final hot-spot is the plant nursery with its surrounding Bottle-brush and Uganda Coral trees. These flowering trees are much favoured by Sunbirds, Waxbills and Flycatchers. While nearby a recently constructed pond is going to be stocked with fish for educational purposes, it is hoped that it will also attract water birds and Kingfishers, already Hamerkop and Woodland Kingfisher have been lured to the ponds by pioneer aquatic life of Frogs and Toads.

You can see TBG is not only a fantastic botanical oasis but home to a spectacular avifauna, which is waiting for you to sample.

Recent work at the gardens involves a programme of bird ringing to sample the population of bird species. This involves mist-netting at favoured sites to capture species of birds. Once safely netted they are processed taking measurements and weighing to assess their overall condition. Then they have a uniquely numbered ring fitted to their leg so we can gauge the age, population structure and general health of recaptured birds. This programme is on-going and is revealing some good information into TBG's bird population.
Roger Q Skeen

NatureUganda

Unusual Sightings

Welcome to the unusual bird sightings in Uganda. This section brings you the interesting bird records for the period and keeps track of the new birds for the Ugandan bird list. In this bulletin, we bring you some of the species that we missed out in the last bulletin (Jan-Mar) because the records came in late, as well as those for the period for this bulletin. In the species we missed out, we bring you a singing male of the **Brown-rumped Bunting** recorded at Awalukok, north of Lira on 18th February. So far, we have only under ten Ugandan records for this species



(Roger Q Skeen-RS).

Other species of interest include the **Basra Reed Warbler** in which a single individual was seen well, at Tooro Semliki Wildlife Reserve on 1st March. It was observed with two Great Reed

Warbler and twenty Eurasian Reed Warblers for comparison. We have only fewer than five Ugandan records for this species so far (RS).

In another finding, a single **African Finfoot** recorded on Ishasha River in QENP on 6th March is an interesting record as this species is well known in Lake Mburo and Murchison Falls National Parks, but not this area (RS).

A record of two individuals of the **Black Dwarf Hornbill** watched for fifteen minutes in Semliki NP on 8th March is interesting. Both showed white tips to tertials, coverts and tail feather tips, unlike illustrations in B of EA (RS).

In other usual records for the period are two individuals of **Bat Hawk** recorded at Mpanga Forest on 11th March, 15 individuals of **Magpie Mannikin** at the visitor centre at Mpanga Forest on 12th March, 2 pairs of **White-backed Duck** with young recorded at Airstrip Ponds in Rakai District on 19th March, 14, individuals of **African Quail finch** seen together at Marabigambo Grasslands in Rakai District showing a good congregation and over 50 individuals of **Lesser Black-back Gulls** recorded on migration over Fort Portal on 30th March (RS).

In another interesting congregatory encounter, we found 200 individuals of the **Steppe Buzzard** spiraling over Saka Hill on 1st April, which was

an impressive total. The same flock included 30 **Black Kites**, 4 **Steppe Eagle** and 4 **Lesser-spotted Eagles**, all appearing after a heavy cloud cover had lifted (RS).

Other records include **Parasitic Weaver** in which a single bird was seen in a Wooded Grassland at Ngariam near Katakwi on 16th April. This is an uncommon visitor for the site. On that same trip, 2 pairs of **Papyrus Canary** and over 55 Lesser Jacana were recorded on Lake Opeta on 17th April (RS, Dianah Nalwanga).

In Semliki NP, a **Congo Serpent-Eagle**, an unusual sighting for the site, was seen well on 26th April. On the following day, a single individual of the **African Piculet** was seen at the same site in a Forest giving the first record for three years (RS).

In other sightings, the **Orange Weaver** recorded on Makanaga Bay near Mabamba on Lake Victoria on the 13th /14th June is the first record for this site. The same trip also encountered a flock of more than 40 individuals of the **Black-crowned Night Heron** seen roosting on an Island in Makanaga Bay is uncommon for the site and the species. Groups of this species are rarely recorded in the country (By Paddy Muramura and Herbert Byaruhanga)

Compiled by Roger Q Skeen and Dianah Nalwanga.

Publications

Our 2014 Annual Report is now available on our website. Please paste this link: <http://www.natureuganda.org/downloads/NU%202014%20Annual%20Report.pdf> Or ask for a copy by emailing us or through contacting us on facebook/ twitter

NatureUganda Star member
Ronald Kakuru

Ronald, a student at Islamic University in Uganda is our outstanding member for April - June. Ronald has attended all NU events, he says "nature is a blessing, I have to follow it"

Now you can renew your membership through membership mobile money line 0777 147 367



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You can also send membership fees through our MTN mobile number 0777 147 367. Join us in Promoting the Understanding, Appreciation & Conservation of Nature

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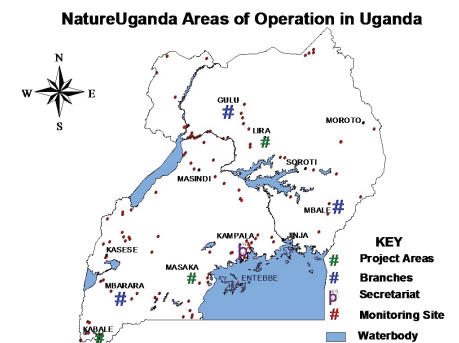
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- Birdlife Uganda
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- Herps Working Group
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- Microbial Resources Group

WHERE WE WORK



Name this Bird...
email: membership@natureuganda.org



The first 3 correct answers get a free copy of the Uganda Bird Checklist

