



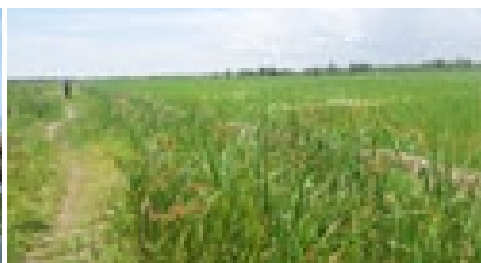
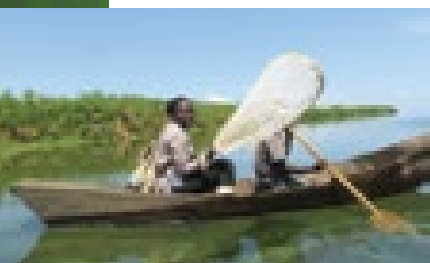
## Land tenure system a threat to Nabugabo Ramsar site

By Wilson Behwera

... land owners are usually found to cultivate right to the edge of the river without respecting the agreed distance specified by law.

*The Land tenure system around the Nabugabo Ramsar site could pause challenges in conservation of Biodiversity Significant area. In a recent Biodiversity Survey carried out by NatureUganda, the Cartography team established that Mailo land is the predominant tenure system at 58%, Freehold 8.4%, Leasehold 7.48% while 25.83% is unknown. Mailo land around the area is known to promote conflicting or multiple land use practices that degrade the environment.*

Mailo and Freehold owners hold land in perpetuity and assume absolute powers, which make conservation of natural resources under the two tenures system challenging. Mailo owners are known to lease their land to persons without conditions that promote conservation. [more on Pg4](#)



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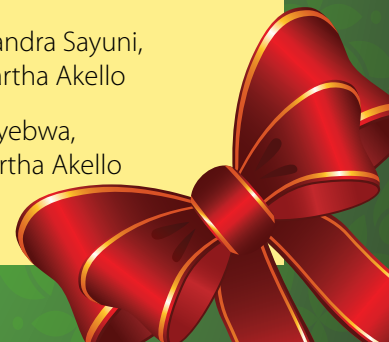
## Editorial Team

The Naturalist is produced by NatureUganda

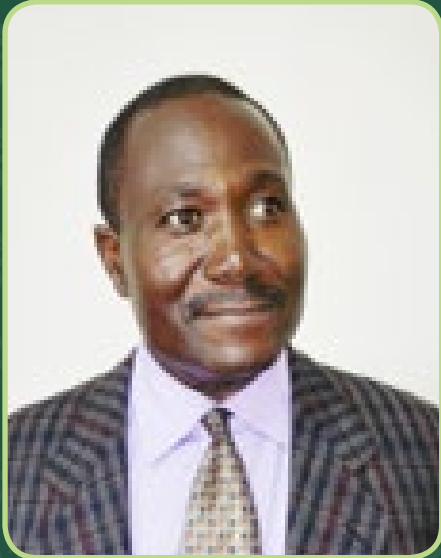
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**Editorial Team:** Sandra Sayuni, Michael Opige, Martha Akello

**Photos:** Gilbert Tayebwa, Perpetra Akite, Martha Akello, Edwin Torach



# Chairman's message



*The year 2016 has come to an end!*

*As we approached the end of the year, we had exciting events that kept the members engaged. Notably was the engagement of the working groups in the Nabugabo Ramsar site biodiversity survey, results of which are meant to inform the new Management Plan for the Ramsar site as well as the expansion of the boundaries for the Ramsar site.*

*In the quarter, we also held the Big Birding Day successfully. We managed to record 768 species of birds in just one day across 28 sites (Protected and non protected) around the country. I want to take this opportunity to thank Uganda Tourism Board and Uganda Wildlife Authority for the support that made the event a success. The quarter also saw NU host three important partners; RSPB, DOF and CISU. To us, this is a sign of strength and good partnership going on as we execute our mandate.*

*Last but not least, I wish to extend season's greetings to all the members and encourage each of you to join the societies' activities in the coming year. Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2017!*

**Dr Robert Nabanyumya**  
Chairman, EC

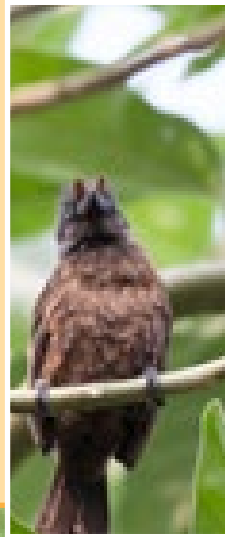
# Uganda

an incredible natural resource

*By Martha Akello*

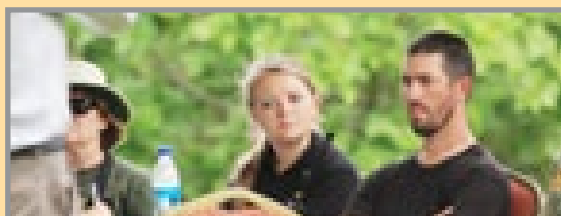
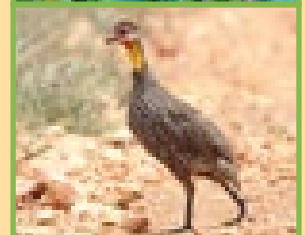
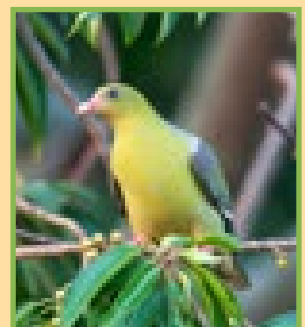
**What an incredible natural resource Uganda has**

The Professional Birders and Bloggers that recently took part in the Big Birding Day have praised Uganda as a beautiful natural resource that is rich in species. The birders/bloggers were invited by Uganda Tourism Board to market Uganda as a birding destination. According to the tally centre at NU, the bloggers recorded 440 species of birds during their 14 day visit that took them from Bwindi to Queen Elizabeth National Park in South Western Uganda.

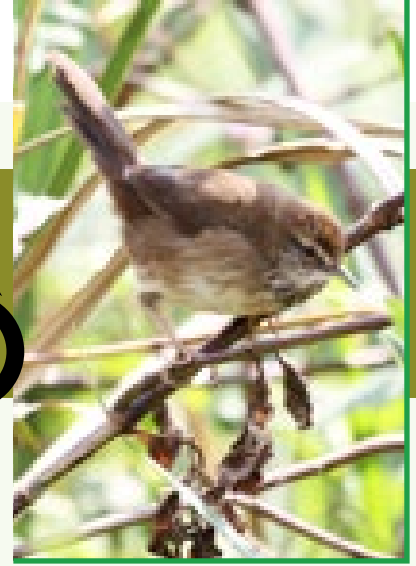


While speaking at the launch of the Africa Birding Expo at Botanical Beach Entebbe on November 18, 2016, Laura Kammermeier from Nature Travel Network in the USA said, "It has been an incredible trip. We are so impressed by the friendliness of the Ugandan people. Seeing the Shoebill was an incredible experience. What an incredible natural resource Uganda has." The bloggers were taken to the different sites by Uganda Safari Guides Association (USAGA), a member of NatureUganda.

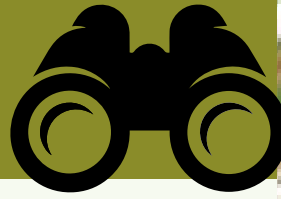
Johnnie Kamugisha from USAGA in his remarks at the Expo said that birding in Uganda started three decades ago. The profession has however grown with many young people showing interest. He encouraged those interested in birding to look out for the older birders for mentorship in the profession.



**The profession has however grown with many young people showing interest**



# BBD records 768 species



The Big Birding Day 2016 registered a total of 768 species in one day! The BBD was held on November 12, 2016 in 28 sites across the country. The activity was launched in Mabamba bay in Mpigi on November 7th. Mabamba bay is a wetland known to host the Shoebill which is vulnerable according to IUCN. A total of 311 participants took part in BBD including bloggers and professional birders from across the world. The event was organised by NU and supported by UWA and UTB.

Birding took place in both protected and none protected areas. The results were announced at the launch of the Africa Birding Expo at Botanical Beach Entebbe.

## Best Birding Team

### Best Birding Teams inside Protected Area

Site	Number of Species
Queen Elizabeth NP	372
Mt. Elgon NP	285
Murchison Falls NP	233

### Best Birding Teams outside Protected Area

Site	Number of Species
Greater Masaka	155
Mabamba Bay	128
Lutembe Bay	111

## FEEDBACK: Public Talks a good resource

Venture Uganda Travel - a Corporate member of NatureUganda finds great value in our monthly public talks. Venture's Managing Director, Lesley Harris says the Public Talks are an excellent opportunity to learn, share and network with like-minded individuals and to join hands and strengthen efforts to achieve common environmental management goals.

During the recently concluded Public Talk on Climate Change, four staff from Venture Uganda including the Managing Director attended. The December topic complimented their work as they arrange university field courses on climate change, amongst other environmental management courses.



# Land tenure system a threat to Nabugabo Ramsar site




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**Mailo Land owners usually assume absolute powers over the land and most are not cooperative if other stakeholders point out issues of conservation that directly affect the land they hold**

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*from Pg1.*

John Baptist Mugarura, a Cartographer in Masaka District in charge of mapping says mailo land owners usually assume absolute powers over the land and most are not cooperative if other stakeholders point out issues of conservation that directly impact the land they hold. For example, if a key species is found on someone's land, many land owners never consider their importance even when contacted to try and take measures to conserve the species, e.g, by leaving that part of their land undisturbed for conservation.

Mugarura adds that most Mailo Land owners make uninformed decisions on their land such as sub dividing land without consideration for conservation issues. Lease holders on the other hand pile pressure on the land to acquire profits before the expiry of their lease. Free hold tenure has conditions which may cripple conservation. For example it may specify that some section of land be used for farming but it rarely specifies the nature of farming suitable for that particular area.

During the biodiversity survey validation meeting at NatureUganda offices recently, it was noted that customary land

ownership rarely specifies boundaries. In such cases, land owners cultivate right to the edge of the river or lake without respecting the agreed distance specified by government.

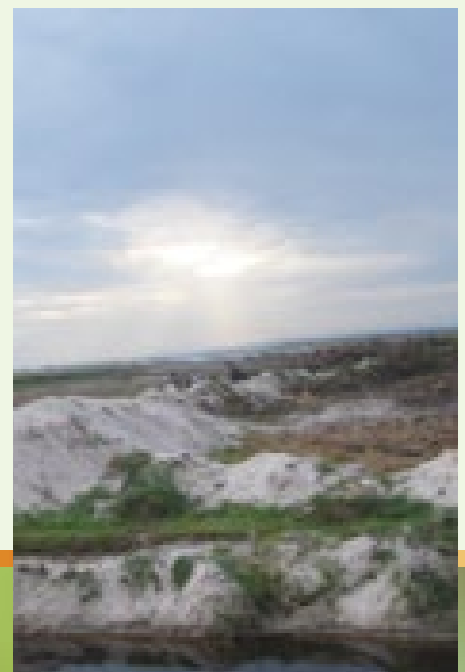
On a positive note however, landlords in the mailo land tenure could impact positively on conservation if they understand the importance of the species found on their land. Mugarura says landlords can influence the tenants to embrace practices that promote conservation on land entrusted to them. Mugarura says this could be possible if the communities are sensitized enough.

NatureUganda and the Ministry of Water and Environment, with funding from USAID through the PREPARED project, are spearheading plans to extend the site boundaries of Nabugabo Ramsar site across an area of 77,700 ha. to cover the most biological important area.

This will incorporate several other important wetland habitats most notably the 273 km<sup>2</sup> Katonga wetland complex which stretches north-west from Lake Victoria across Mpigi, Butambala, Kalungu, Gomba Districts, and the large tracts of papyrus swamp which fringe Lake Victoria to the north of Lake Nabugabo. This section of the wetland is probably the

most important breeding area for fish, with other key species of plants, birds and amphibians.

The expansion is aimed at providing better protection for wetland systems around the northern shore of Lake Victoria. This expansion calls for more conservation efforts and corporation among stakeholders, more local Governments; increasing population pressure on the resource; multiple land-use practices and ownership with a shift from traditional to commercial and large scale exploitation of the wetland resources.





# LWUA visits Yala Swamp

**NatureUganda together with two members from the Lutembe Wetland Users Association (LWUA) participated in an experiential visit to Yala Swamp in Siaya County in Kenya.**

The visit brought together Birdlife partners from Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda who implement the Critical wetlands project around Lake Victoria. The project is funded by the MacArthur Foundation. During the visit partners were able to learn from each other, especially implementation of conservation and livelihoods projects around the Lake Victoria basin.

The Lutembe Wetlands Association particularly got interested in strengthening of structures as exhibited by the Yala Ecosystem Site support group as well as the fish farming projects that the CBOs in Yala were engaged in. LWUA promised to use the experience to strengthen their own structures as they improve on their livelihoods projects.

During the visit, the participants visited; the Yala Swamp Weavers Umbrella Association in Hawinga, Lake Kanyaboli, a view of Dominion Farm, the Rapudo Community Fishing project, Olalo Women Group in Omindo Ndiha Village, Game sub county, Wambasa Community and the Got Ramogi Conservation area. We bring you some of the pictures from that trip:



## Conservation Conference

Nature Uganda will hold the 4TH Conservation Conference on the theme: Conservation, Climate change and People from April 6th - 7th, 2017 at the Uganda Museum. The focus will be on how scientists are using research to inform and design approaches to conservation in the face of climate change, youth participation and the advent of Information Technology. For more information and submission of abstracts, log onto [www.natureuganda.org](http://www.natureuganda.org)

# Changing land use around Nabugabo

## A threat or opportunity?

Land use in Nabugabo Ramsar site has been majorly composed of traditional activities like settlement, cattle grazing, small scale natural resource extraction (Herbs, grass, sand, clay, firewood, poles, fish, water etc), small scale cultivation (1-5 acres), and social infrastructure (places of worship, roads, schools, settlement, health centres etc). These activities sustained people's livelihoods without significantly affecting the ecological balance of the setting.

However, new investments are currently being established around the Ramsar site, thus changing the landscape. Some of these new activities include; Large Sand/clay mining using excavators, Large scale clearance of natural vegetation for rice and palm oil growing; commercial Eucalyptus plantations; Commercial farmland; establishment of Industrial parks and expanding of recreation areas like beaches and cage fish farming.

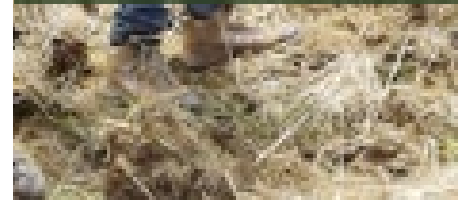


While these seem to be options to increased employment opportunities and increased production, they are at the same time threats to the Ramsar site and critical species therein. A case in point is the scarcity of fish caused by overfishing and using illegal gears. This was highlighted during the consultations with the local Governments in Masaka, Kalungu, Mpigi, Butambala and Gomba. In some Districts, Fish is no longer the priority wetland resource because it's hard to get. As part of reviewing and updating the Nabugabo Ramsar Site Management plan, an inventory of large investments in Nabugabo has been undertaken, and shows large scale degradation of the wetland systems.

Preliminary findings of the inventory show that most of the large investments in the area are alien to Nabugabo Ramsar site. These include; Fish cages on Lakes Birinzi, Victoria and Nabugabo; large scale rice growing in Kalungu, Butambala and Gomba; large scale sand mining; large scale irrigation; and large scale extraction of clay. These activities are likely to trigger a number both positive and negative impacts on the community within the Ramsar Site and beyond. The broader positive impacts may include; enhanced food production, for markets and some jobs for locals. However, these benefits may be overshadowed by the negative impacts like; destroying the scenic beauty and tourist potential, social disruption (destruction of cultural heritage, displacement) of the community, accelerated propagation of invasive species, pollution of underground water systems, disrupting water flow, land conflicts, destruction of habitats for wildlife, loss of biodiversity, increased HIV/AIDS infections, eutrophication of the lake and increased exposition of factors to climate change.



**NU staff receives  
EDGE Fellowship**



NatureUganda Programme Assistant Judith Mirembe received an Evolutionary Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) Fellowship funded by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). EDGE of Existence programme seeks to protect some of the most unique and most wonderful species on the planet.

The programme aims at securing the future of EDGE species by building conservation capacity in regions where they occur through awarding Fellowships to future conservation leaders working on poorly known EDGE species. The Fellowship is a two year Programme which started off with a one month Conservation Tools' Training Course in Madagascar (22nd Nov-21st Dec 2016).

The participants will then learn more about conservation, different survey and monitoring techniques and above all Project Planning and management skills. The skills learnt will then enable the participants in the successful implementation of a project to protect the shoebill in Mabamba CCA. This project will supplement ongoing work that NatureUganda has been supporting to protect the Mabamba IBA and Ramsar site.



# Queen Elizabeth!

An experience like no other

The Trip to Queen Elizabeth National Park in December crowned the membership activities for the year 2016. A total of 18 members (14 adults and four children) took part in this thrilling event.

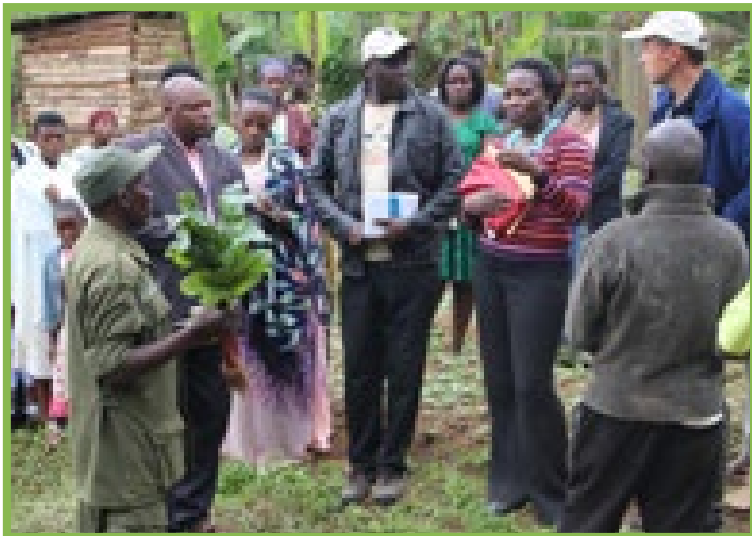
During the excursion, members participated in the morning and evening game drives through the Kasenyi plains, and the Crater lakes. They were able to see Wild pigs, Waterbucks, Kobs and crocodiles.

The excursion ended with the team visiting salt mines in Katwe where they saw over 3000 flamingoes and Bunyampaka salt lakes where they were taken through the process of salt mining.

## RSPB, CISU and DOP visit

During the quarter, NU hosted three of its Development partners; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Danish Ornithologist Society (DOF) who majorly were on support supervision visits while Civil Society in Development (CISU) was here to evaluate the different projects supported by DANIDA. During the visit, NatureUganda benefitted from a one day training delivered by CISU on advocacy.

RSPB supports NatureUganda's Bird Population Monitoring programmes while DOF and CISU support the People Partner with Nature for Sustainable Living (PPN) programme being implemented in Echuya and Kashyoha Katomi Forests in South Western Uganda.





*We wish you a*  
**HAPPY**  
 &  
**PROSPEROUS**  
 2017

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- Makerere University Conservation Biology Association (MUCOBA)
- Green Hill Academy
- Balibaseka Secondary School
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- Neul Tours
- Kasheregenyi Friends Group
- Kampala International University
- Birdlife Uganda
- Uganda Wildlife Research and Training Institute

**WORKING GROUPS**

- Plants Working Group
- Herps Working Group
- Mammal Conservation Group
- Friends of Dudu
- Microbial Resources Group
- Birdlife working Group

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Corporate	200,000	\$350
Institutional	70,000	\$90
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