

Nature Uganda and TOTAL E&P team up on Biodiversity Conservation



The Nature Uganda and Total E&P team conducting the survey

Uganda recently discovered oil in the Albertine Graben where exploration has been going on for a number of years now in several cases in locations inside protected areas. TOTAL E&P Uganda is conducting oil and gas exploration in and around Murchison Falls National Park. Murchison Falls National Park is an IBA and a Ramsar site and therefore a Key Biodiversity Area. Because of the potential impacts TOTAL's activities would have on biodiversity, it is prudent that the design and execution of exploration activities be guided through proper research.

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The oil exploration activities are expected to follow some stipulated procedures, including Environmental and Social Impact studies (ES- IAS) that must identify short and long term impacts as well as identify mitigation measures to address the potential negative impacts. These studies seek to ensure that oil and gas activities are undertaken in a manner that conserves environment and biodiversity. With potentially more destructive seismic surveys proposed, more in-depth researches are required.

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Impressive biodiversity in the Middle North Tobacco growing region of Uganda

Nature Uganda lead the surveys to undertake biodiversity studies in the tobacco growing region of the middle north of Uganda. This was supported by British American Tobacco Biodiversity Partnership (BATBP), with technical assistance from Tropical Biology Association (TBA). Past works undertaken in partnership with local NGOs and local communities in tobacco growing areas in the country, centred on sustainable forest management and restoration, freshwater monitoring and the conservation of Riverine habitats in Western Uganda. The need to broaden the scope to include developing sustainable agricultural systems within tobacco growing regions entailed the understanding of the status of biodiversity and thereafter a demonstration of the technologies that promote conservation of total ecosystems. The surveys assessed and documented biodiversity baseline of four aspects; birds, plants insects and mammals. The indicated the area being still rich in biodiversity although a great deal of it is degraded natural habitats.

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Chairman's Message



Dear members,

It is great to communicate with you again in this yet another issue Vol.17.1 of the NatureUganda Newsletter the Naturalist and to extend my sincere greetings.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for a successful first ever Extra-ordinary AGM we had early this year on 27th March 2013. I am particularly impressed by the commitment you showed by coming in large numbers. It showed the interest you have in moving our organization forward particularly in streamlining our operations through enacting a new constitution.

As you may be aware, our Executive Committee (EC) members are usually elected every year. It is now that I call upon all of you to nominate members for the next EC to serve 2013-2014. Our membership has grown into a very strong constituency and public awareness has increased. This is reflected in our participation in membership activities, public awareness activities, Conservation and advocacy programmes.

The Executive Committee has ensured development of good institutional policies and procedures that would ensure sustainability of the organizations. It has supported development of networks and partnerships at national and international level which has been a factor in the remarkable growth of the society.

I wish you good reading as we have made history by opening a new chapter in the life of NatureUganda

Paul Mafabi
Chairman

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Impressive biodiversity in the Middle North



Part of the Biodiversity survey team during the survey in the Middle North

Some of the results obtained are below;

These studies recommend an urgent need to conserve the IUCN listed species recorded in this region. These species are endangered and therefore, active management should be adopted whereby any form of use is monitored by the authorities. Management options for the 'Reserves' like the forest reserves in Gulu, Apac and Oyam, can be enriched with natural species instead of the introduced pines. The law enforcement teams should strive to see that the reserves are not further encroached on. The natural savanna ecosystems

also need to be enriched with native species. Potentially these can be replanted with *Combretum* spp., *Acacia* spp., *Albizia* spp., *Borassus aethiopicum*, *Terminalia* spp., *Vitex doniana* and to a lesser extent *Vitellaria paradoxa*.

Follow up studies to evaluate change in future is needed. Using the same methods of evaluation, the area could be periodically re-sampled to note any changes in the composition and structure. The studies can come in handy in developing or revising management plans for the region.

Michael Oryge

Taxa	Number of Species
Birds	195
Plants	Gulu 275, Apac 394, Oyam 328
Insects	Butterflies 114, Dragonflies 16
Mammals	27

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NatureUganda and TOTAL E&P team up

NatureUganda joins the team that will conduct surveys/studies to provide information which will enable TOTAL E&P gain in-depth understanding of the ecosystems in this area, assess their vulnerability and develop the most appropriate technical approach to their planned activities. The studies will also define the protective measures to be taken and enable TOTAL E&P identify the indicators

necessary to gauge the effectiveness of their initiatives especially during seismic survey operations.

The present assignment comes from a realization of the need to follow up the processes and properly document the standards to be employed by the different oil exploration companies and provide quantitative resultant effects. The surveys will take up to one year.

Phionah Mwesige

Our Explorer school wins in the Spring Alive Competition



The Winner Ahimbisibwe Mary being lifted up by one of the teachers

The seventh edition of Spring Alive, an educational campaign of Bird-life International that focuses on the observation of migratory birds, started in September and ended in November 2012 with our very own Kitante Primary School taking the second position in Africa. Spring Alive is a season in which participants on two continents, Europe and Africa, observe the arrival of five migra-

Spring Alive is a season in which participants on two continents, Europe and Africa, observe the arrival of five migratory bird species in their countries. These include the White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo & Eurasian Bee-eater.

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During the year's Eurasian season, from February to June, and African season, from September to the end of November, participants made over 173, 140 observations, which is a 36 % growth compared to the past year. That growth shows the increasing interest of children and youth in nature and bird observations.

Kitante Primary school, one of the NatureUganda's Young explorer's club schools, participated in the SpringAlive Competition with over One hundred pupils taking part and managed to get the second overall winner by the name of Ahimbisibwe Mary. This competition encourages people across Europe and Africa to show their care for birds and the natural environment, and builds an understanding of the inter-relationship between people and the environment.

Sandra Sayuni

Extra-Ordinary AGM

NatureUganda extends its sincere appreciation for the commitment you showed by coming in large numbers to our first ever Extra-ordinary AGM. We were particularly impressed as this showed the interest you have in moving our organization forward particularly in streamlining our operations through enacting a new constitution. This meeting was held on 27th March 2013 at the Uganda Museum. The main Purpose of this meeting was to consider and endorse the new

constitution of NatureUganda, which was successfully achieved. This was the only accomplishment that the EC was remaining to do was to achieve full autonomy of the society in Uganda. This autonomy has finally come with the enactment of our new constitution that guides the operations of NatureUganda in Uganda and develops our regulations based on the country's uniqueness without being bound by any barriers. For this, I personally thank the EC for their untiring effort to conclude this assignment.

Nature Uganda's 21st Annual General meeting (AGM) will be on Friday 24th May and as usual, a new Executive Committee that guides the operations of the society will be elected. I therefore call upon you to renew your membership to be able to participate in the election of these committee members. Your payment can be done by writing a cheque to NatureUganda or by paying cash at our office premises on Plot 1 Katalima Crescent, Lower Naguru or on our MTN mobile money number 0777 147 367.

Crane conservation enhanced as Nyamuriro wetland integrity improves through active restoration



Nyamuriro before restoration



Between 2006 & 2008, NatureUganda implemented a project on the Conservation of Nyamuriro wetland while improving the livelihoods of the communities around the wetland in Kabale district. At the beginning of this project, there were only wetland traces, if any, at the site. One of the project activities was to restore the severely degraded areas of the wetland, yet the whole of it was virtually totally modified into crop gardens which almost extended into river Ruhuma. The banks of this mighty river had been widened by farmers who opted to open it up for quick flow of water to free their gardens of flood waters.

Loss of human life was common as people drowned into the river as they worked near its loosened banks with no vegetation support. Local communities who worked in the Biodoro mines adjacent to the Nyamuriro wetland found it hard to cross the river because the bridge that had been put up, often got washed away by the fast running waters collected from the adjacent steep bare slopes. The collapse of the bridge was being aided by the loosened and unsecured river banks.

NatureUganda's efforts to implement a conservation project were

at first resented by the local communities who deemed it a trick and soft ploy to have them evicted from the wetland. Confidence building gradually yielded results of acceptance. An idea of formation of wetland management committees who would represent the rest of the farmers on the management of the wetland was established and implemented. Capacity building was conducted to help the communities understand the underlying issues from wetland destruction such as loss of lives, the collapsing of the bridge and occurrence of brown waters in the wetland and how these could be overcome.

This resulted into the need for restoration of the wetland, starting with the river banks. The idea

was accepted by the communities and sooner than later, restoration commenced with vigor. Several hectares of the degraded wetland were replanted with papyrus stumps which took no time to sprout into flush growth. As restoration works proceeded, the wetland management committees jealously guarded the restored parts from encroachment by some errant farmers and livestock owners who at times derailed the progress of the activities. It is now about 7 years since restoration work was first instituted at Nyamuriro wetland and the results are evidently clear as indicated in the photograph below.

Read more about this on www.natureuganda.org/craneprogramme

Jimmy Muheebwa.



Nyamuriro after restoration

Globally endangered Grauer's Swamp-warbler (*Bradypterus graueri*) sited in a swamp outside Echuya Forest



Mukinombe swamp site in Murago village Kashasha parish



With 152 bird species, including 18 Albertine Rift endemics and the endangered Grauer's Swamp-warbler, Echuya Central Forest Reserve (ECFR) is ranked as the most important forest in the country for the rarity of its fauna and flora. RSPB, DOF, the Ugandan BirdLife partner, NatureUganda and NFA have been working with local communities to ensure Echuya's long-term survival.

In the course of working with communities around ECFR in Murago

village of Kashasha parish in Bufundi sub county, one field officer (Zoreka Keresi) sited a pair of the Grauer's swamp warbler. This prompted NU staff from Kabale office to go to the field for an assessment of the presence of the rare species outside the forest. During the field visit, two swamps, a small distance apart were found to host the endangered bird - Grauer's Swamp warbler. The swamps are Kinyarushenje (in Mushanje village) and Mukinombe (in Murago village), all located in Kashasha parish, Bufundi sub-county. Kinyarushenje swamp is

located next to Kinyarushenje Primary School. The two swamps are about four (04) km from Muchuya swamp and located near a stream (Kashasha River) draining out of Muchuya swamp. Kinyarushenje swamp is very small and measures about 0.25 ha, while Mukinombe swamp is relatively bigger measuring about 3ha. The vegetation in these swamps in particular Mukinombe swamp is similar to the one in Muchuya swamp except that there are no shrubs in these swamps.

Niwamanya Rogers Mwine

WEIRD SCIENCE FACTS

DID YOU KNOW? Male seahorses can get pregnant

Seahorses reproduce in an unusual way: the male becomes pregnant. Pipefishes and seahorses are the only species in the animal kingdom to which the term "male pregnancy" has been applied.

The male seahorse has a brood pouch in which he carries eggs deposited by the female. The mating pair entwine their tails and the female aligns a long tube called an ovipositor with the male's pouch. The eggs move through the tube into the male's pouch where he then fertilizes them. The embryos develop in ten days to six weeks, depending on species and

water conditions. When the male gives birth he pumps his tail until the baby seahorses emerge.

The male's pouch regulates salinity for the eggs, slowly increasing in the pouch to match the water outside as the eggs mature. Hatched offspring are independent of their parents. Some spend time developing among the ocean plankton. At times, the male seahorse may try to consume some of the previously released offspring. Other species (*H. zosterae*) immediately begin life as sea-floor inhabitants (benthos).

Read more at http://www.oddee.com/item_63950.aspx



FROM THE WILD

Camping for Dudus in Mpanga Forest

I should have been too fatigued to get on the road. But a camping night in Mpanga forest, Mpigi, sounded like one that won't be coming around again in a long time. "The Dudus Expedition", they called it. But even after I had my slot booked, once or twice I wondered what there was to explore about insects. The program from NatureUganda, read that at some point in the evening we would be setting up insect traps. I drew images in my head; we would have basket-like traps, which we would put all over the forest trail, and come hours later to check what we had caught. So when the dudus expert Ms. Akite Perpetra, showed up with a single net-like sheet, I was a bit disappointed. That was before she hung it up, tied it with strings to a branch on each side, and set up a strong ultra-



violet light bulb atop. First, the moths trickled in, then they came in pairs, then they came in droves! I had never seen so many moths in their varied species, array of colours, shapes and sizes.

By about 09:00 pm on March 29th, we looked like a bunch of excited, shrieking children at a bouncing castle, except we were marveling at nature's winged bounty. Akite pointed out species, genders, lazy fliers (which, for photography reasons, were our favorites), and explained the science of moths in a way that made us reflect upon the fact that exploring nature is not only about seeing the Big Five, the water bodies, the mountains and the like. In her words, "these little things are the ones that run the world". You realize that they do, if you so much as pause to remember that science lesson about pollination.

Patience Atuhaire,
NU Member.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

- On the evening of Sunday 3rd Feb 2013 - Herbert Byaruhanga saw the Pygmy Sunbird at Murchison Falls National Park. He last saw this bird 7 years ago in this same area; on the road to Bulisa, just a km from the park gate, inside the park.
- On that same visit, Herbert saw thousands of Caspian plovers, in the delta area. This is a very exciting unusual sighting!
- Lately, Kaku wetland in Kyazanga, just after Masaka on the road to Mbarara, has become one of the hottest spots for birding in that area. The best part of it is the number of cranes and ducks recorded in this site. On the evening of 23 February, Dianah Nalwanga and Phionah Mwesige recorded 342 Grey Crowned cranes, 108 White-faced Whistling, 63 Fulvous whistling, 27 Yellow-billed and 10 Knob-billed ducks at this site. But the highlight was the 15 Red-billed Teal recorded in the site. This kind of congregation of ducks is very unusual!
- Here is another unusual record by Derek Pomeroy— on the morning of 28 February, 16 Hamerkops were seen resting in a row along a roof top at Livingstone Hall, Makerere University, all calling loudly and displaying! Only lasted a few minutes, then they dispersed.
- In March 2013, Robert Kityo encountered an interesting congregation of birds at the Valley Dam in an area called Kobebe in Karamoja area. This included; 50 Little egrets, at least 300 Abdim's Stork, about 180 Yellow billed stork and 118 Sacred Ibis.
- Now, another very interesting record comes from William Dunlop who had good views of a low-flying European Honey Buzzard travelling north over Mutungo on the south side of Kam-pala (the Mutungo near Lweza) on 7th April 2013. It was an immature bird with several rather faint bars on the under-tail, rather than the bold sub-terminal bar on the tail of the adult bird. This is a nice record because we have only three records for Kampala and this makes the fourth.
- Have you been to Murchison Falls National Park and seen a flock of birds passing over your head in the evening light and you think; well, these are egrets going home to sleep, only to realise that actually, they are a very interesting species? A flock of over 500 Black-winged Pratincole was seen by a Achilles Byaruhanga, Deo Muhumuza and George Senior on 17th April flying over the road past Pubaku Airfield in Murchison Falls National park on the Northern side of the river. This is a very rare species and seeing it in large numbers makes a birder develop goose pimples from over excitement!

Compiled by Dianah Nalwanga

Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*



The Shoebill (Whale-headed Stork) *Balaeniceps rex* is the only member of the family Balaenicipitidae of the order Pelecaniformes. The Shoebill is unique with no any other bird like it. It has been noted to be similar to other water-bird families like storks, pelicans, herons and Hamerkop. Standing at 140cm in height, the Shoebill is a large long-legged grey bird of African swamps with long toes and an enormous bulbous bill which ends in a sharp hook. The Shoebill is globally and regionally Vulnerable according to the IUCN Red data.

Movement

The Shoebill is not migratory, but it is capable of covering long distances in flight, as evidenced by occasional vagrants recorded outside the core distribution area. It does make seasonal movements, especially in larger floodplain systems, where large variations in water levels have significant effects on their habitat.

Distribution

The Shoebill is considered as having one biogeographic population. However, the population, like its principal wetland habitats, is fragmented, and it has a disjointed

distribution across its range. Its status in some areas is not well known. The main sub-populations are distributed in South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. In Uganda, it can be found in Lakes Opetta, Bisina, Nabugabo and Nakuwa, Lutembe and Mabamba bays, Nabajjuzi wetland, Queen Elizabeth, Lake Mburo and Murchison Falls National Parks and Semliki and Ajai Wildlife Reserves among other sites.

Foraging Behaviour

The Shoebill usually forages solitary in flooded shallow grasslands dominated by hippo grass, African wild rice, sedges and rushes within 50m of an active fish weir. It usually flies past a candidate site or perches on tallest tree to observe the activity in the candidate site. Hunting consists of stalking, squatting/ambush but Shoebills tend to stand and wait for their prey, often for long periods, and thus require relatively undisturbed habitats.

Prey preference

The Shoebill usually considers the prey catch-ability as the overriding factor in prey selection. Its principal prey is fish, though other swamp prey is also taken, including frogs, snakes and other birds. The Shoebill's preferred fishing sites are in either shallow water or deep water with platforms of floating vegetation, in swamps that are low in oxygen and with an abundance of fish. Fish such as lungfish, bichirs (Polypteridae) and catfish are important prey, these fish often surfacing to gulp air in stagnant water.

Threats

Habitat destruction and degradation is the main threat to the species across its distribution range. The Shoebill has an affinity for human dominated habitats yet lack of a natural predator means it is not shy and is largely approachable. Its foraging behaviour focuses on lung fish also consumed by man and so it is vulnerable to habitat disturbance from the fishing community. Its lack of predators means that it has evolved low nest protection and so susceptible to nest predation. There have also been reports of capture for the bird trade – especially to Zoos in Japan. Proliferation of horticulture farming and other economic activities have made suitable habitat targets for cultivation and agribusiness areas lowering their value for Shoebill habitation.

Shoebill and the economy

The Shoebill is economically important for tourism revenue, income to local guides and local communities in sites where it occurs through activities like shoebill trekking and boat rides, business to tour companies; it being one of the major birding attractions in Uganda.

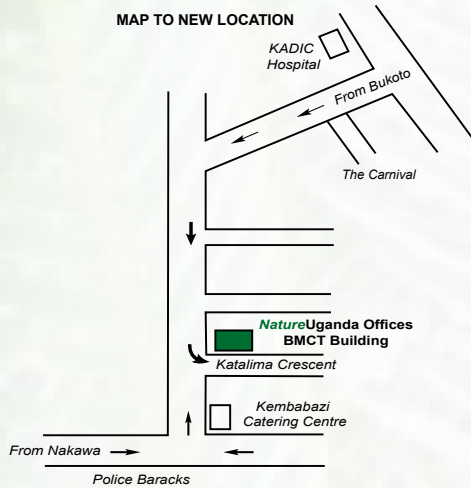
What you can do to conserve the Shoebill

Do your part in protecting the most threatened habitats in Uganda, the wetlands, where the species occurs. Sensitise the communities in its sites about its values and importances and encourage them to conserve it and its habitats. Report any Shoebill trafficking seen or suspected in the sites to NatureUganda, Uganda Wildlife Authority or any other authorities in the area.

Compiled by Dianah Nalwanga

MEMBERSHIP

MAP TO NEW LOCATION



How to become a Member

You can pay or renew your membership by; writing a cheque to NatureUganda; paying at the secretariat; Sending to MTN mobile money number 0777 147 367; at any of the upcountry branches.

Join us in **Promoting the Understanding, Appreciation and Conservation of Nature.**

Membership Rates Per Annum

Category	Local	Overseas
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



Editorial team

- Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire
- Sandra Sayuni
- Phionah Mwesige

Upcoming Events

- Annual General Meeting 24th May
- Overnight Camp at Nabugabo Beach 22nd -23rd June
- Excursion to L.Mbuho NP 9th -11th August
- Kampala Vulture Counts 7th September
- Big Birding Day 18th, 19th & 26th October

Upcountry Branches

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

Corporate Members

- Africa Adventure Safaris
- African View Safaris
- Adroit Consult Int
- Bird Uganda Safaris
- Birding Journeys Uganda
- Bunyonyi Safaris Limited
- Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Cycads Safaris
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- Park Alexander
- Pride Microfinance Limited
- Primate Watch Safaris Limited
- Rwenzori Trekking Services
- Rwenzori Bottling Company Ltd
- Shoebill Foundation
- SMS Media
- Tours and Safaris Uganda
- Tour Guide Publications
- Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Uganda Wildlife Education Centre
- Venture Uganda Limited
- Visit Uganda LTD

Working Groups

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

Institutional Members

- Bishop Barham University College
- Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust
- Children's Rights Advocacy & Lobby Mission Africa
- Gorilla-Land Guest House
- Makerere University Conservation Biology Association (MUCOBA)
- Mbogo College School
- Mbogo High School
- Ndegeya Core PTC
- Kalinabiri Secondary School
- St. Joseph's Girls S. S. Nsambya
- St. Joseph's S. S. S. Naggalama
- Uganda Coalition for Crisis Prevention

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