



## A new site for Grauer's Swamp Warbler in Uganda confirmed



Grauer's Swamp *Bradypterus graueri* is restricted to highland swamps in the mountains around Lake Kivu and Edward in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, South-Western Uganda, Rwanda and Northern Burundi. The Grauer's Swamp Warbler is described as globally endangered by the global Red data list of IUCN.

The species is endemic to the Albertine rift and can be identified by its

medium sized dark brown plumage with white spots on breast. Its outstanding trill for a song cannot be

missed in its swamp habitat. Little is known about their population, size, feeding behaviour, and there is scanty information on breeding biology. Until recently, the species was only known from Muchuya swamp in Echuya Forest Reserve, Mubwindi Swamp in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and

*This is probably the highest number of individuals ever to be recorded from one site making these two patches of the swamp globally important and critical for the survival of the species.*

Kagezi swamp in Mgahinga National Park. NatureUganda monitors the population in Echuya forest and a survey of the swamp early this year, recorded 65 individual birds in 10 days. In the same period, Zoreka Keresi one of the field based

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### The Annual General Meeting (AGM), 2013

This was the first AGM since the approval and promulgation of the new NatureUganda constitution. The meeting was held on the 24th May, 2013 at the Uganda Museum. It began with a positive remark from the Executive Director NatureUganda, echoing out that the society (NU) had progressed well with all its activities and that it had expanded its scope whereby many of the activities, especially Conservation, advocacy and research activities had been reached.

In his report, the Chairman highlighted the new Institutional operating system under a new constitutional mandate and further mentioned the Institution's hope to maintain its regional partnership with Nature Kenya. The report also indicated that the Society's mission will remain the same as well as its priorities but noted

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## Chairman's Message



Dear member,

Greetings from NatureUganda and welcome to Volume 17.2 of the NatureUganda Newsletter, The Naturalist. This issue highlights what we have been doing in some of the projects we are running and a few general things that you need to know about. For example there is an article about the Queleas that made headlines in the press sometime back, so you need to be enlightened on this. There is also an interesting and unbelievable fact about ducks in the section of "Did you know?" There is also a call for you to participate in one of our projects called the Spring Alive project under which any interested person who can identify any of the five migratory birds considered can participate. So do not miss out, read this issue.

On a different note, allow me thank the Executive Director and the whole secretariat team for all these successful stories. Over the years, the secretariat has developed into a committed conservation organisation that looks beyond the pay-cheque to ensure that we meet our goals. We also remain indebted to our Executive Committee members, our donors and partners for their continued support to our programmes. There are still many challenges to nature conservation in the country but with our resolve and commitment, we shall continue with our contribution to make this world a better place. Remember we do not have another world!!

I wish you good reading as we continue Promoting the Understanding, Appreciation and Conservation of Nature.

*Paul Mafabi*  
Chairman, NatureUganda

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## A new site for Grauer's Swamp Warbler



staff of NatureUganda reported of hearing calls of the Warbler from two degraded swamps of Mukinombe and Kinyarushenge along the Kashasha stream that flows from Echuya Forest down to Lake Bunyonyi.

### Swamp degradation

A team from NatureUganda headed by Achilles Byaruhanga visited the two remnant swamps on 11th August 2013 to confirm the earlier observation. Twenty eight (28) individual birds were recorded from Mukinombe swamp. This swamp that measures about 5-6 acres is highly degraded with less than two acres of vegetation above 3ft. The birds were easy to see or flush from the vegetation. At several occasions the warbler flew from the swamp into the sorghum gardens that provided better cover. This particular patch is heavily encroached on despite the fact that it is believed to be community owned and protected.

At Kinyarushenge area, the swamp measuring about 3 acres looked more degraded like it had been cultivated before. Although the swamp is dominated by

Cyperus species, there was hardly any water. The swamp is partly owned by an individual and a Primary school. Here the birds were even more exposed preferring to hide in marginal bushes between gardens and the wetland. At this swamp 16 individuals were counted.

In both (Mukinombe and Kinyarushenge) swamps, the birds were calling an indication that there was breeding activity and probably explaining the high number of individuals recorded as well as the fact that birds are restricted to a small area. This is probably the highest number of individuals ever to be recorded from one site making these two patches of the swamp globally important and critical for the survival of the species. These new sites could be host to a lot more individuals considering the individuals that were not seen and thus not recorded and that Kashasha river belt continues to join Lake Bunyonyi with wetland pockets of similar habitat to those that were visited.

*By Achilles Byaruhanga,  
Michael Onige &  
Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire*  
NatureUganda

## One of NatureUganda's Women recognized for leadership in conservation

**D**r. Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire, the Research and Monitoring Coordinator – NatureUganda, was one of the outstanding women recognized for contributing to conservation leadership in Uganda during the inaugural awarding ceremony of this kind. The women awarded were those who have shown exemplary leadership in the field of conservation and who have chosen to take on careers in conservation and shown that they can match and even surpass men in making key contributions to this important field. These women also mentor young women in conservation career paths. USAID / Uganda Tourism for Biodiversity Program implemented by African Wildlife Foundation in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority launched a 'Women in Conservation Leadership Program' to celebrate and recognize outstanding women involved in conservation and wildlife fields in Uganda. This was among the key highlights of the celebrations to mark 50 years of



Dr. Dianah Nalwanga during the Kidepo @50 Celebrations where she was recognized as one of the outstanding women greatly contributing to conservation in Uganda

*The women awarded were those who have shown exemplary leadership in the field of conservation and have chosen to take on careers in conservation and shown that they can match and even surpass men*

Kidepo Valley National Park on 22nd August, 2013 at the Kampala Serena

Hotel. The function was graced by the minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Hon. Dr. Maria Mutagamba, the US ambassador to Uganda Mr. Scott DeLisi and many distinguished personalities.

*By Phionah Alwesige*  
NatureUganda

## The AGM, 2013

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Members voting during the AGM

## NU Executive Committee 2013/2014

Chairman:	Mr. Paul Mafabi.
Vice Chairperson:	Ms. Pauline Nantongo
Treasurer:	Dr. Robert Nabanyumya
Publicity Secretary:	Mr. Deo Kateizi
Secretary:	Mr. Achilles Byaruhanga
Committee members:	
	Dr. Arthur Mugisha
	Prof. William Banage
	Mr. Deo Nkuningoma
	Dr. James Kalema
	Dr. Robert Kityo

that the biggest change will be more independence and autonomy. The treasurers' report covered the audited income and expenditure of the society for the period of 12 months from January 1st 2012 to Dec 31st 2012. It also covered the

projected income for the period January 1st 2013 to December 31st 2013.

He discussed in detail the overall performance, giving the various donors, research projects, membership subscription and projects whose

funding had ended.

Like on all AGMs, a new EC was elected to serve the society for the period 2013/2014.

*By Sandra Sayuni*  
NatureUganda

## Birds as pests in Uganda BUT who is to blame?

There have been several media reports recently about some Quelea bird species that have devastated sorghum farms in Kween and Kapchorwa areas in eastern Uganda. It is true that birds especially Quelea that occur in large flocks can cause damage by eating, trampling or even roosting and some Quelea species which are mainly grain eaters are known to flock in large numbers and can cause damage to crops.



Red-billed Quelea (*Quelea quelea*) one of the notorious quelea bird pests

The Quelea species belong to the Ploceidae family, commonly known as weavers. In Uganda, there are three species of Quelea, that is, Red-billed (*quelea quelea quelea* - in photo above), Cardinal Quelea (*Quelea cardinalis*) and Red-headed Quelea (*Quelea erythroptera*). Among these three species, it is the Red-billed Quelea that occurs in very

large flocks, though seasonally and during migration. They are common in Uganda but do not normally breed regularly in Uganda but only with sporadic breeding activities, have been recorded. The breeding occurs mainly in wet and dry areas but most abundant in semi-arid regions. The migratory behaviour may provide an

opportunity to farmers to avoid seasons when this particular species appears in large flocks in a region. This explains why the people of Kween and Kapchorwa have not had similar experiences before and they seem to have been invaded by these birds now. It is also important to the various sectors in government concerned not to rush to quick solutions such as spraying before we understand the origin and movement of these flocks of quelea birds.

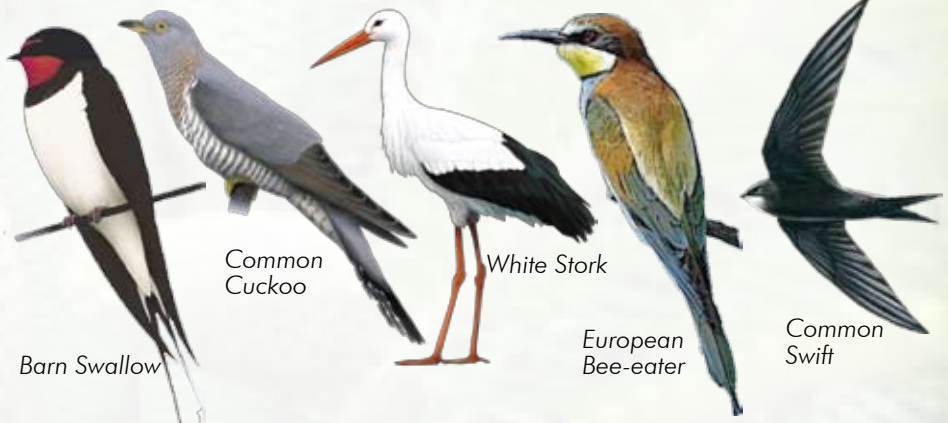
Queleas appear to prefer easy feeding grounds such as cultivated millet or sorghum because it is easy to get and they would spend less time looking for food than forage for available wild seeds.

*By Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire*  
NatureUganda

## Help us discover spring: Africa welcomes feathered globetrotters!

One of the ways to study the climate changes that are taking place is by observing the arrival dates of migratory birds: that is precisely the idea behind the Spring Alive Project! Because of climate change, birds return earlier from their wintering sites and lay their eggs sooner. This means that some of them can have problems finding food, for example, insects or fruits, as these may not have appeared yet. They may also find that their usual habitats are no longer suitable because they have become too wet, too dry or too warm, so they may be forced to move instead to new areas.

The Spring Alive project is a simple birdwatching survey organised by BirdLife International and NatureUganda, being the BirdLife partner in Uganda heads this project in the country. The "Spring Alive bird species", which we consider are those that migrate between Africa and Europe crossing many borders. They are the **Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo, White Stork and European Bee-eater**.



We are interested in your personal first observation of these birds.

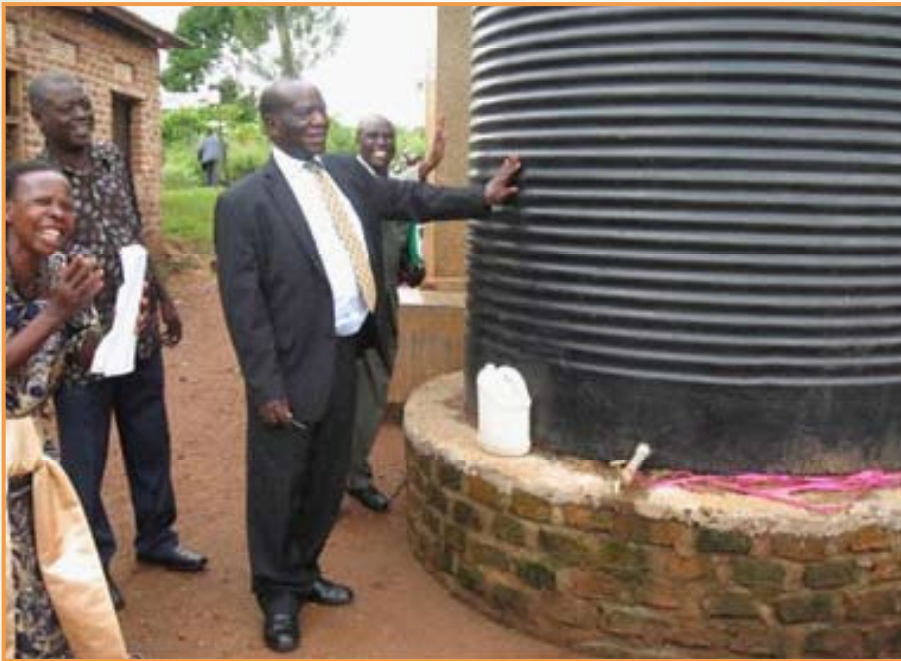
*"The Spring Alive initiative provides a unique and interesting educational platform for African children, youth and bird lovers to learn more about the value and beauty of nature through its 5 flagship species. The project's focus on outdoor activities in particular makes it very attractive to African children who have a strong feeling for nature"* – explains Callistus Akachabwon Agbaam of BirdLife International African Division.

**Participation:** This is very simple and can be a great fun. All you need

to do is register your first sightings of the birds above on-line starting September 1st at [www.springalive.net/en-ug/migrations/addnew](http://www.springalive.net/en-ug/migrations/addnew). The results are analyzed to follow how spring is coming together with birds every year and to find the week when the most of people have seen their first birds. When you see or hear the bird, all you need to do is remember the date and region where you saw it. You don't have to remember the number of birds you saw or the exact place.

*By Phionah Mwesige*  
NatureUganda

## Vice President Supports Community Groups in Masaka



*H.E Vice President E. Ssekandi commissions a water harvesting tank*

NatureUganda is implementing a project on environmental education and conservation of Lake Victoria in the districts of Masaka, Kalungu, Bukomansimbi and Lwengo in the lower catchments and also in Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa in the upper catchments of the Katonga River. Several communities, youth groups and schools are being supported during the project phase in Masaka district. The community groups are involved in various conservation oriented activities which include apiary, agriculture – coffee and maize growing, among others. Among the groups are Zinunula Omunaku – Kyamula community group and Konoweka Youth Group in Kyanamukaaka sub-county, Masaka district.

Through the Lake Victoria Catchment Environmental Education Programme (LVCEEP) project by NatureUganda, the groups underwent training on environmental management and greening ventures, Small and Medium Enterprise Development (SMEs) as well as material support by procuring them a 5000 litre water

harvesting tank. These items were handed over to the groups during a ceremony graced by His Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of Uganda, Edward Ssekandi, who is also the area member of parliament which took place on 8th May, 2013 at Kyamula village in Kyanamukaaka, sub-county.

In his remarks, the vice president thanked NatureUganda for the support it is giving to communities and the development partners for their financial support. He stated that, “we need to live on and use this earth but leave it better for those who will come after us because we all found it here” adding that he learnt conservation attributes from his father who vehemently condemned indiscriminate tree cutting. He expressed concern for Lake Kijanebalola in Rakai district whose name meant “came as all were seeing” in 1927, but was being threatened with disappearance due to human activities. He emphasized that while NatureUganda has provided the bee hives and water tanks, the communities should make good use of them and get more of these on their own.

He pointed out that Vision 2040 will only be realized through such interventions as demonstrated by NatureUganda and that communities should learn how to diversify their income bases. He further emphasized the need for Value Addition so as to access better markets and attract more income.

NatureUganda is complementing on the government programme of alleviating poverty, addressing environmental degradation / Climate Change impacts and contributing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the government’s recently launched Vision 2040. He sent special thanks to the district Local Government for the support given during the design and implementation of the programme, the government of Uganda for a good political climate that enables well intentioned civil society organisations to operate smoothly.

*By Jimmy Muheebwa*  
NatureUganda



*H.E Edward Ssekandi inspects the art and craft exhibitions by the community groups*



*Jimmy Muheebwa, hands over bee hives to H.E Edward Ssekandi for commissioning*

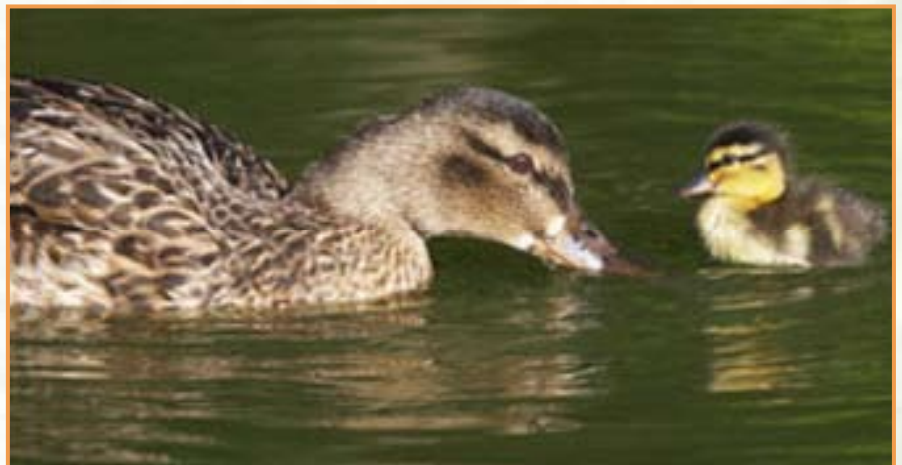
# WEIRD SCIENCE FACTS

## DID YOU KNOW? Newborns Can Bond to a “Mother” from a Different Species

Often all you need to do is stick around to convince a baby animal that you are its mother

If you saw *Winged Migration* or *Fly Away Home*, which delivered the first true bird’s-eye views of the world, you may have wondered how they got those wild geese to wear tiny camcorders on their heads. In fact, the cameras were in ultralight aircraft, which the birds accompanied—by choice. The crafty filmmakers took advantage of one of Mother Nature’s tricks called imprinting: If you had grown up thinking your mom was inside that noisy plane—or was that noisy plane—you would have gladly tolerated it, too.

Lorenz’s little geese are the most well-known example of cross-species imprinting, but it can occur between other species, too. Any animal born relatively independent—not entirely relying on a parent to provide food or protection, so-called precocial species—needs to be able to discriminate between its parents and other members of its (or other) species, lest they get lost or attacked. A gosling, or other precocial animal, accomplishes this with an instinct to approach and follow a moving target after birth as well as a vague preference for objects that have particular features, such as



*Often all you need to do is stick around to convince a baby animal that you are its mother*

a head and neck. In the wild, this guides a gosling to favor its mother. In the absence of an appropriate stimulus, however, practically any object can become a source of comfort to the newborn. Because recognizing and bonding with a parent are more dependent on exposure and learning than on a genetically programmed response, it’s conceivable that any animal exposed exclusively to a member of a different species might happily

call it mom—witness the children purportedly raised by wolves in India and the orphaned chipmunk adopted by Buffy the Chihuahua as well as a tiger in Thailand’s Sriracha Tiger Zoo suckling piglets—after being suckled as a cub herself by, naturally, a pig. Without such a promiscuous capacity for trust, an infant whose mother abandoned it or died shortly after its birth would face certain doom if it were unable to swap preferences for an adoptive parent.

Source (<http://www.scientificamerican.com>)

compiled by  
*Dianah Nabwanga Wabwire*  
NatureUganda

### NatureUganda Publications



## Unusual Sightings

Jan Arras reports a mega-rarity from East Africa on 24 July 2013. He photographed a Franklin's Gull on the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park! We are aware of a previous record by Jonathan Rossouw on 8 June 2011 along the Nile River in Murchison Falls NP and would be interested if there are other records for East Africa? For details, please write to Jan at [myriam.jan@belgacom.net](mailto:myriam.jan@belgacom.net)



For more details and a photo, please see:

<http://birdingafricacapetownpelagics.wordpress.com/>

In early August Hottentot teals were seen at Lutembe Bay by Kaj Ostergaard one of the keen birders. This species is rare at the site as well as other sites in Uganda.

Over 44 individuals of the Grauer's Swamp Warbler were recorded on 11th August in degraded Mukinombe

and Kinyarushenge swamps outside Echuya Forest Reserve, Kabale district in Western Uganda by a NatureUganda team led by Achilles Byaruhanga. Such a large number of individuals in one day is an unusual record for Uganda as

is the occurrence of the species in degraded swamps.

Compiled by  
*Dianah Katwanga Wabwire*  
Research & Monitoring Coordinator  
NatureUganda



## BIG BIRDING DAY 2013

Connecting Birds to People and Nature

Launch of the  
**BIG BIRDING DAY**  
Friday 18th Oct  
Uganda Museum

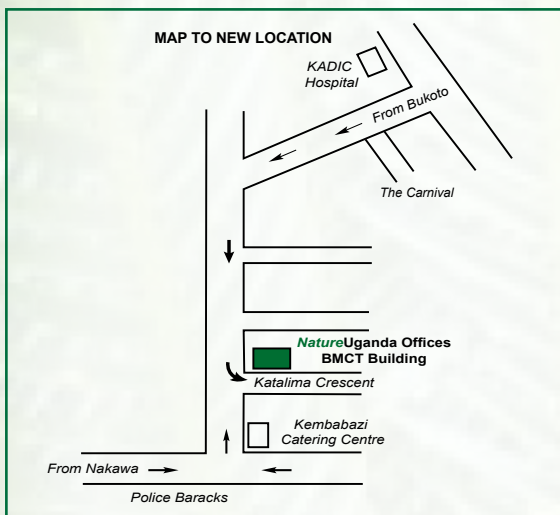


**BIG BIRDING DAY**  
24 Hour Birding Race  
Saturday 19th Oct  
All over the country

**BIG BIRDING FESTIVAL**  
Saturday 26th Oct  
Ndere Cultural Centre



# MEMBERSHIP



## How to become a Member

You can join by paying subscription fees by cash or cheque to *NatureUganda* Secretariat in Kamwokya or at any of the three 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

- 18<sup>th</sup> October: Big Birding Day Launch
- 19<sup>th</sup> October: Big Birding Day
- 26<sup>th</sup> October: Big Birding Festival
- 23<sup>rd</sup> November: Spring Time Children's Festival
- 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> December: Excursion at Kidepo National Park

## 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

## Working Groups

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

## 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
- Destination Jungle
- Discovery travel bureau
- Drywood Safaris
- GeoLodges Uganda
- Jane Goodall Institute
- Kisoro FM
- 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
- Ssesse Island Beach Hotel

## 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
- Bwindi Bird Club
- Balibaseka Secondary School
- Green Hill Academy
- Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association

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