

## NatureUganda's Contribution towards Conservation in Uganda



Kapir and Magoro community members during Biodiversity monitoring in Kibale Association for rural and Environment Development (KAFRED)

NatureUganda is a national, membership, non-profit-making Non-Governmental organization. It was set up in 1909 as a scientific organization with the primary aim of documenting the diversity of wildlife in East Africa. Over the past 20 years, the activities of the organisation have diversified to embrace biodiversity conservation and sustainable Natural Resource Management. The organisation implements research, conservation, and advocacy programmes with particular focus on priority species, sites and habitats in Uganda. This is achieved through conservation projects, environmental education achieved in partnership with government lead agencies, local governments, local communities and membership programme activities such as; Public talks, excursions and Nature walks that are key advocacy and public awareness tools.

Over the years, the activities of NU have included identification of areas important for conservation, biodiversity research, monitoring and management of priority species, sites and habitats through development of sites and species action plans. It employs the practice of community conservation by involving communities in the conservation of the surrounding natural resources while sustainably utilizing them as a livelihood improvement option.

*NU strongly remains committed to environmental education and awareness through the monthly nature walks and advocacy forums (public talks) which remain key environmental awareness activities in Uganda*

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## The Community Based Conservation of Wetlands Biodiversity Project

In 2008, GEF through UNDP provided funding to address the challenge of Wetland destruction and degradation in Uganda through a four-year project on Community Based Conservation of Wetlands Biodiversity in eastern and western Uganda (COBWEB). The main goal of this project is "Extending wetland protected areas through community conservation initiatives". This project is implemented by The International Union for Conservation of nature (IUCN) in collaboration with the Wetlands Management Department (WMD), Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), NatureUganda (NU) and Uganda Wildlife Society (UWS).

The project aims at strengthening the Ugandan Protected Area (PA) network >>> pg 2

## Chairman's Message



Dear members,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Vol. 16.3 of the *Nature Uganda* (NU) news letter *The Naturalist*. I extend my sincere greetings and gratitude for your continued support to the growth of our society.

On behalf of the Executive committee (EC), I specifically wish to thank the secretariat and all our esteemed members for the wonderful work in advocating for the conservation of species, sites and habitats as a way of promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature. The Society has formed strong partnerships with various partners in policy advocacy issues such as the oil and gas exploration campaigns, among others.

On a positive note, I would like to inform you that the new projects that we managed to acquire early this year including a Darwin funded regional Birdlife project on ecosystem Based Approaches to climate change adaptation (EBA), and Spring Alive which was intended to observe the arrival dates of Palearctic migratory birds in Africa have started implementing their activities and the society continues to strengthen its fundraising ventures with hope to achieve better projects in the coming year.

Finally, allow me to wish you a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and also wish you good reading.

*Paul Masabi*  
Chairman

## ...The COBWEB Project



*The Visitor Information Centre at Kapir along Lake Bisina as part of the COBWEB project*

by expanding the coverage of the PA network to include the country's biologically important wetland ecosystems. The project also aims to develop, pilot and adopt suitable PA management models in two respective wetland systems adjacent to two terrestrial PA networks in Eastern and Western Uganda. Management is geared to the specific needs of wetlands and will allow for development of protection and sustainable management strategies that shall be implemented by rural communities and be adoptable to others.

This is a joint project with the project partners above but NU work in the Opeta-Bisina wetland system. Activities at these sites so far include training of community groups in conservation and

*The main goal of this project is "Extending wetland protected areas through community conservation initiatives"*

livelihood improvement strategies. Communities have been trained in Eco-tourism and Community Conservation groups have been set up to manage the eco-tourism sites at the two wetlands. The community group at Lake Opeta is Lake Opeta Conservation and Community development Association, while the one at Lake Bisina is Kakor Community Wetland Development Association. Information Centres have been built at both of these sites and they are to be managed by the community groups.

*Michael Opiye & Sandra Sayuni*

## ...Nature Uganda's Contribution

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NU also works in close collaboration with partners such as the Wetland Management Department, IUCN and various district local governments to address the current threats faced by the wetland systems in the country. This is mainly through its research and monitoring programme that provides the data and information needed to advocacy as well as informing the decision making partners on the best management options for these systems. The main advocacy tool employed by NU is Public Education and awareness. NU strongly remains committed

to environmental education and awareness through the monthly nature walks and advocacy forums (public talks) which remain key environmental awareness activities in Uganda.

From NU's perspective, changing peoples' attitudes and practices for the better and making them active agents for a safer and better environment is possible. You are welcome to contribute to environment conservation in Uganda by joining NU's membership and taking part in its activities.

*Phionah Mweziye*

## The Research and Monitoring Programme



Researchers during biodiversity monitoring on Kaku swamp in Masaka

Inspired by the original purpose of the East African Natural History Society to document natural history of East Africa, NatureUganda's work is hinged on scientific information generated through well laid down research and monitoring programmes. Considering that 90% of Uganda's GDP is derived from Natural Resources (tourism, forestry, fisheries), biodiversity conservation is a priority for this country. NatureUganda supports this through its research and monitoring programme, which provides quality scientific information to guide the government and other decision makers to make informed decisions based on quality scientific data. In this NatureUganda works with partners like UWA, NFA, NEMA, WMD and others, who are directly involved in decision making in this country.

### Important Bird Areas and Ramsar sites Monitoring Programme

This programme focuses on monitoring Waterbirds in the 34 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Uganda. NatureUganda identified Important Bird Areas in 2001 and these sites have become priority areas for conservation in Uganda. Subsequent studies have shown that the 34 Important Bird Areas in Uganda contain over 87%

### NatureUganda's main Research and Monitoring programmes include;

1. Important Bird Areas and Ramsar sites monitoring programme,
2. Bird Population Monitoring Programme,
3. Raptor road counts,
4. Vulture counts
5. Working group activities
6. Threatened Species Monitoring Surveys like for Blue Swallow monitoring, Grauer's Swamp Warbler and Cranes Monitoring;
7. Promoting wise-use concept of natural resources like in Kasohya Kitomi CFR, Nabbaajjuzi wetland and Echuya CFR;
8. Support to Government to fulfil international obligations and conventions for biodiversity like the CBD, Ramsar Convention etc
9. Generation of information to advocate and inform policy change like the case of Mabira CFR, among others

of Uganda's biodiversity. In 2005 Uganda government recognized 10 of these sites as Ramsar sites i.e. wetlands of international importance. Monitoring in these sites is done in January and July every year in the 34 sites across the country. Out of these, 26 sites have been consistently

monitored and have substantial data. The data assumes total counts within defined areas. These sites fall under different national protection status and management regimes eleven of them being in Protected Areas (PAs) and 15 sites in non-protected areas. This monitoring also involves using the standard Status-Pressure-Response model in monitoring the IBAs. This is done by volunteers trained for the particular sites who use pre-designed forms

### Bird Population Monitoring

The Bird Population Monitoring Scheme formerly known as the Common Birds Monitoring Scheme is an international programme aimed at monitoring trends in the population of common and widespread bird species in the World. In Uganda, this scheme has been running for four years since 2009 across all parts of Uganda in and outside Protected Areas. Counts are done twice a year in January and July. Numbers of birds for all species seen along 2km transects are counted in all sites. Data so far gives a total of 691 species from the 88 sites monitored through a network of 112 volunteers. It also shows that the most common and wide spread birds in Uganda include, the Common Bulbul, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Red-eyed Dove and Speckled Mousebird. The most species rich site in protected areas was in Kidepo Valley National Park followed by Queen Elizabeth National Park and then Murchison Falls National Park.

Results also indicate that many of the most species rich sites are privately owned small-scale mixed agricultural sites outside Protected Areas. This is an indication that much of the common and widespread birds are outside protected areas and need some form of protection. There is thus a need for promoting community conservation in the country to protect such sites. Data from this programme is fed into the WorldBirds database, where it can be used by the public.

*Dianah Katwanga-Wabwire*

# CONSERVATION

## Addressing sustainable management for biodiversity and ecosystem services in tobacco growing regions of Uganda

The British American Tobacco Biodiversity Partnership (BATBP), led by the Tropical Biology Association (TBA), has been working closely with BAT Uganda (BATU) since 2007 to help them address their biodiversity impacts and improve their management of the natural resources upon which they depend for their leaf growing operations. Past work undertaken in partnership with local NGOs and local communities, centred on sustainable forest management and restoration, awareness raising, freshwater monitoring and the conservation of riverine habitats in Western Uganda.

In the 3rd five-year BATBP term (2011-15), we will use the experience from these past activities in Western Uganda and will work with BATU to develop effective strategies for the long-term sustainable management of leaf growing operations in the Middle North tobacco growing region; in the face of rapid population growth, climate change and increasing pressures on the natural environment.



Tobacco barn - in Inomo subcounty one of the tobacco growing areas in the Middle Northern Uganda

The project will achieve this goal through the better understanding and maintenance of ecosystem services and biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, working in partnership with local stakeholders.

The purpose of the this project is to develop a sustainable agricultural system in tobacco growing regions of Uganda, by promoting, demonstrating and implementing measures for the conservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. It aims to demonstrate a range of benefits

for a more sustainable agricultural landscape, by enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services, whilst providing BATU and other stakeholders with the capacity to expand successful initiatives across tobacco-mixed agricultural landscapes elsewhere in Uganda

The five demonstration areas were chosen following a planning visit to the Middle North by NatureUganda and

Tree Talk, lead by BATU. The demonstration areas are located in the districts of Apac (Kolo-Obia, Bala South), Oyam (Gung Gung, Icheme) and Gulu (Opit) and have the following characteristics: Central and Local Forest Reserves in proximity, tobacco farming amongst a mixed agricultural system and wetlands. This project is led by TBA and BATU in collaboration with NatureUganda, Tree Talk Uganda and Fauna & Flora International East Africa (FFI).

*Achilles Byaruhanga, Michael Cyige, Dianah Nalwanga-Wabwire*

## The Mabamba Eco-tourism Sound Approach Bird Fund Project

Mabamba Bay wetland is over 17,000 ha on the shores of Lake Victoria. It contains open water with a large open marsh of miscanthus and papyrus that makes the swamp high species rich including the globally threatened shoebill, large congregations of migrants such as blue swallow and papyrus endemic birds such as papyrus gonolek and papyrus yellow warbler. The wetland is designated as a Ramsar site; a wetland of international importance and an Important Bird Area. This is one of the community conservation sites under NatureUganda and is managed by the Mabamba Wetland Eco-Tourism Association (MWETA). MWETA is a Site Support Group (SSG) at Mabamba, voluntarily run by its members and registered with the District Local

Government. It is aimed at conserving Mabamba bay wetland for sustainable utilisation of natural resources and at the same time, improving livelihoods of the community through alternative income generating activities. The group is involved in a wide range of conservation activities including eco-tourism, crafts, transport facilities, education and awareness plus species and habitat protection.

The Sound Approach Bird Fund project aims to support and strengthen community institutions for long term conservation of the wetland through developing a community biodiversity monitoring system to mitigate wildlife trade. The goal of the project is to conserve Mabamba Bay wetland system as a key site for the globally

vulnerable species such as Shoebill (VU), listed in the IUCN red list as vulnerable for the benefit of other birds and local communities; support local communities living around Mabamba Bay wetland to enhance tourism opportunities that would generate income to improve livelihoods of local communities, improve communities' awareness to biodiversity and establish a community based monitoring of species and their habitat; empower community members to undertake basic site monitoring to track status – threats – and conservation actions within the site; and to empower the community to conserve and protect the site from all forms of threats including wildlife trade, fires and indiscriminate fishing.

*Dianah Nalwanga-Wabwire*

## Improving Livelihoods through Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in and Around Echuya Central Forest Reserve



Bamboo helps to provide alternatives to forest resources

Echuya Central Forest Reserve lies between 1°14'- 1°21' S and 29°47'-29°52' at the heart of the biodiversity rich Albertine rift eco-region. The forest is surrounded by areas with a very high rural population density that depends entirely on natural resources and forest products for their basic livelihood needs e.g. firewood, bamboo for construction, medicinal plants etc. Most of the landscape around Echuya has been deforested, leaving the Central Forest Reserve as the only source of forest products. The forest surrounding communities have been using forest products unsustainably due lack of alternative sources of livelihoods hence degrading the forest biodiversity resources.

In July 2011, Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DoF) and NatureUganda

*Environmental education and awareness programmes have helped in shaping the attitudes and practices of the local people and to engage in activities aimed at sustainable natural resource management*

(NU) started the project "Improving livelihoods through sustainable management of forest resources in and around Echuya Forest Reserve, Uganda". The project is implemented in collaboration with National Forestry Authority (NFA), United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU) and, Kisoro and Kabale District Local Governments. The project is a four year project targeting women and men in Forest Adjacent Communities (FACs) in 9 parishes

surrounding Echuya Central Forest Reserve (ECFR). It seeks to promote multi-pronged approaches towards forestry resources management, including setting up a Collaborative Forest Resources Management (CFM) system that would serve as a demonstration to Uganda and beyond. The Goal of the project is "Forest adjacent communities (FACs) around Echuya Central Forest Reserve (ECFR) provide a national demonstration of how to develop a sustainable source of income through Collaborative Forest Management (CFM).

So far, the project has managed to achieve a number of successes which include; Increased collaboration between NFA and Local forest adjacent communities through CFM associations; Environmental education and awareness programmes have helped in shaping the attitudes and practices of the local people and to engage in activities aimed at sustainable natural resource management; Income Generating Activities such as mushroom growing, bee keeping, fruit growing, Sustainable Organic Agriculture (SOA) activities; Capacity of local communities including the UOBDU and the CFM associations to advocate for local rights, benefits and participation in natural resources have also improved among others.

*Zeneb Musiimwe & Dianah Kalwanga-Wabwire*

### NatureUganda Publications



## The Spring Alive Programme



The seventh edition of Spring Alive, an educational campaign of BirdLife International that focuses on the observation of migratory birds, ended on the 30th of November 2013.

Spring Alive participants on two continents, Europe and Africa, observed the arrival of five migratory bird species in their countries. During this year's Eurasian season, from February to June, and African season, from September to the end of November, the participants made over 173,140 observations, which means a 36 % growth compared to the last year. That growth shows the increasing interest of children and youth in nature and bird observations.

Michael Opige, programme manager, NatureUganda says: "Bird watching gains in popularity year by year. Spring Alive 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 and of the connectedness of the two continents. We invite every bird lover to join Spring Alive next year."

This year friends of Spring Alive from 8 African countries, where BirdLife International Partners work, for the

first time registered their observations of White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and Eurasian Bee-eater on the project website [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net).

As in previous years, Barn Swallow turned out to be the most frequently observed bird (35% of observations) with the Common Swift taking second place with 33% of the observations. The rarest seen of the Spring Alive species is the Eurasian Bee-eater. It counted

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*Spring Alive 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*

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for 5% of the observations. The reason of such a small observation number is because this is not a very common species. That richly coloured bird lives only in warm climate: in Europe mainly in the southern and south-eastern part of continent, in Africa - in a tropical region south of Sahara. Bee-eaters have to also cope with the reduction in insects (their food) because of pesticide and with the disappearance of breeding sites.

Children and teenagers willingly participate in Spring Alive every year as it integrates fun and education. This season they attended many activities regarding birds, e.g. field trips and other different outdoor events, lessons about project species, drawing and photo contests in which photo cameras were prizes. Spring Alive fans enjoyed as well bird connected games and had a possibility to write "Spring diary" on [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net).

Spring Alive is a campaign designed to promote children's interest in nature and its conservation through the arrival of spring.

The core component of Spring Alive is the website [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net) with contributions from participants in over 40 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. All citizens, but specifically children and families, are encouraged to observe and record the arrival of 5 migratory bird species each year: White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and Eurasian Bee-eater.

The Spring Alive project is originally from Germany. In 1987 in Bavaria, the first programme campaign was led by the German Birdlife Partner. Since then, Spring Alive unfolded both in terms of number of countries involved and observations made. At the moment the project is conducted by BirdLife Partners in over 40 countries.

The whole project would not be possible without the great support of The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa (MCFEA), Spring Alive's main sponsor. The aims of the MCFEA are to encourage the appreciation and conservation of flora and fauna with an emphasis on endangered species. The campaign is also financially supported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK).

African countries participating in Spring Alive are: Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Republic of South Africa, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe

*Phionah Mwesige*

## FROGS AND TOADS

“What is the difference between Frogs and Toads?”

Most people are surprised to hear that all Toads actually are Frogs!



“True Frogs” are members of the family Ranidae, containing more than 400 species. These include the bullfrog, common frog, green frog, leopard frog, marsh frog, pickerel frog, and wood frog.

True Frogs are characterised by:

- two bulging eyes,
- strong, long, webbed hind feet that are adapted for leaping and swimming
- smooth or slimy skin (frogs tend to like moister environments)

They tend to lay eggs in clusters.

Frogs from this family can be found on every continent except Antarctica. They are referred to as the “true frogs” because of their generalized body form and life history: the so-called generic frog.



“True Toads” are members of the family Bufonidae, containing more than 300 species. Besides Bufo, the family includes 25 genera, all of which, like the frogs, are anura!

True Toads are characterized by:

- stubby bodies with short hind legs (for walking instead of hopping)
- warty and dry skin (usually preferring dryer climates)
- paratoid (or poison) glands behind the eyes
- The chest cartilage of toads is different.
- Toads tend to lay eggs in long chains.

True Toads can be found worldwide except in Australasia, polar regions, Madagascar and Polynesia.

## UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

• **Namaqua Dove**; seen at Ishasha near Ntungwe bridge on 28th August 2012. This species has always been recorded at Murchison Falls area but not in this site (Martin Okoth).

• **Pel's Fishing Owl**; recorded in Chobe at Murchison Falls NP in August 2012 is an interesting sighting for this site. It is likely that Pel's breeds below the falls, where there are many large trees; and it quite likely occurs all along the Nile in the park – about 100 km of river – but apart from the river below the falls, the rest is rarely if ever visited (Herbert Byaruhanga).

• **Frazer's Eagle Owl**; seen very well on its roost in Bwindi in August 2012 is an interesting sighting as this species is rare (Harriet Kemigisha)

• **Peregrine Falcon**; An adult flying in Lubowa and then perching in a tree on 12th September 2012. The distinctive barring on the under-parts and the thick moustache were clearly seen. In size it seemed smaller than the one I saw this summer in Scotland; I therefore took it to be of the resident race (minor) (William Dunlop).

• **African Goshawk**; seen circling above the Aga Khan Nursery School at Kololo about 300 m from NatureUganda Offices in Kamwokya on 14th September 2012 (Derek Pomeroy)

• **Little Button Quail**; 2 individuals seen on Kasenyi Plains, QENP on 5th June 2012 (William Dunlop)

• **Painted Snipe**; 1 individual seen at road-side puddle in Kasenyi Plains, QENP on 6th June 2012 (William Dunlop)

• **African Crake**; 4 individuals seen on Kasenyi Plains, QENP on 5th June 2012 (William Dunlop)

• **Elliot's Woodpecker**; 1 male seen in Kalinzu Forest on 6th June 2012. This species has been rarely recorded in this site (William Dunlop).

• **Yellow-streaked Greenbul**; 1 individual recorded in Kalinzu Forest on 6th June 2012. This species is an interesting sighting as it is rarely recorded where it occurs. I had good views of the greenbul; the bird was repeatedly flicking one wing, which

the field guides say is characteristic of this species. It has previously been recorded in Bwindi many times, but not in Kalinzu (William Dunlop).

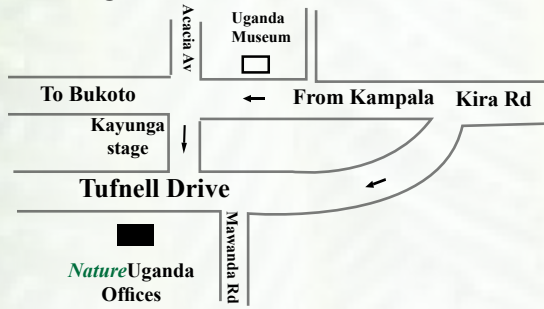
• **Blackcap**; Single male seen in a scrub next to our house in Lubowa-Kampala on two dates, 4th and 21st November 2012. I took these to be two different birds. Both appeared after very heavy rain and were only seen once in an area that I watch almost daily. These are palearctic winter visitors that are not all that common in Kampala/Entebbe area as they prefer higher elevations. These birds might have been migrating south but were forced to land by the widespread rain on these two days (William Dunlop)

• **Garden Warbler**; ten individuals feeding close to one another in same patch of scrub land in Lubowa-Kampala was an interesting sight. This concentration of Garden Warblers is quite unusual (William Dunlop)

*Dianah Natwanga-Wabwire*

# MEMBERSHIP

## NatureUganda's Office Location



## Upcoming Events

- Waterfowl Counts / Bird Population Monitoring 2<sup>nd</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> Jan
- World Wetlands Day 2<sup>nd</sup> February
- Nature walk to Mabamba 16<sup>th</sup> February
- Earth Hour Day 23<sup>rd</sup> March
- Dudus Expedition at Mpanga Forest 29<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> March
- Our city Our future 27<sup>th</sup> April

## 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

## 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

- Adventure Trails Uganda
- Acacia Safaris
- Access Africa Safaris
- Africa Adventure Safaris
- African View Safaris
- African Birding Journeys
- Bird Uganda Safaris
- Bunyonyi Safaris Ltd
- Chimpanzee Sanctuary & Wildlife
- Conservation Trust -Ngamba
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Credit Uganda Tours Ltd
- Destination Jungle
- Explore Uganda Tours & Safaris
- Humanitarian Care Uganda
- Impact Associates
- Park Alexander
- Pride Microfinance Ltd
- Primate Watch Safaris
- Rwenzori Bottling Company Ltd
- Rwenzori Mountaineering Services
- Rwenzori Trekking Services
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- Uganda Wildlife Authority
- Uganda Wildlife Education Centre
- Venture Uganda Ltd
- Jane Goodall Institute Uganda
- Shoebill Stock Foundation
- Geo Lodges Uganda
- SMS Media
- Visit Uganda Ltd
- Cycads Safaris
- Discovery Travel Bureau

## 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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