

## Money does grow on trees



A farmer in Ngai, Oyam district shows off his trees (*Terminalia superba*) that he intercropped with rice to ensure maximum benefits from his land

A recent activity based case study on tree planting under the Biodiversity and Ecosystem services project implemented by NatureUganda and partners, Tree Talk and Tropical Biology Association in mid-north districts of Apac, Oyam, Kole and Gulu estimated the overall survival of trees planted by farmers at over 80%.

The majority of the surviving tree seedlings are fruit trees at over 95%. Other major tree species (apart from fruits) planted include indigenous trees

of multipurpose uses like timber, soil and water conservation and medicinal values and a mixture of exotic species for commercial, firewood and agroforestry purposes like; *Maesopsis eminii* (Musizi), *Markhamia lutea*

(Musambya), *Terminalia superba* which has been naturalized as an agro-forestry species, *Cordia africana*, *Eucalyptus* and *Pine* among others.

So far, over 200 farmers have been supported with over 500,000 tree seedlings. Over 80 farmers are

currently engaged in growing of fruits trees. The mid-north being one of the areas with high poverty levels having suffered from a protracted civil strife that damaged peoples livelihoods for over 20 years,

the communities are now eagerly looking to mend their livelihoods and are now cultivating the land that was once left to fallow while continuously looking for opportunities to

>>> pg 3

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Community Vulnerability ..... pg3
- Executive Committee visits LVCEEP. pg4
- LEP Project Partners visit ..... pg5
- Exciting visit to home of gorillas..... pg6
- White-throated Blue-Swallow.....pg6
- Unusual Sightings ..... pg7

## “Big Birding Day 2014”

*Birds & People, Friends for Life*

The Annual Big Birding Day (BBD) in Uganda is gaining momentum ever since its commencement in 2009. BBD is a day when bird watching enthusiasts, tourism promoters and conservationists come together to enjoy Uganda’s diverse bird species from known and unknown birding sites with an intention of promoting and appreciating bird (avian) tourism and conservation.

NatureUganda together with Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Uganda Birds Guides and other players in tourism and conservation organised a series of events for the Big Birding Day 2014. The activities for the BBD 2014 included the launch, birding race and the festival. These events linked all bird watchers, tourism promoters and conservationists with a common goal of appreciating and promoting bird tourism and conservation. BBD 2014 was organised under the theme; ‘Birds and People, Friends for Life’.

>>> pg 2



## Chairman's Message



Dear Member,

With great Pleasure, I welcome you all to our last issue of the year 2014, the NatureUganda Newsletter, The Naturalist. My sincere appreciation to you all for the support you showed through out the year as we continued to promote the Understanding, Appreciation and Conservation of nature. You realise that our environment and natural resources have continued to face seroius threats but because of your contribution in ensuring that such threats are addressed there is continued hope for a better and healthier environment for our future.

NatureUganda continues to address a number of environmental challenges through her programs that are implemented all over the country and in this issue, you will find more on the implemented activities that have made this year quite a busy one. We have continued working with the local communities whom we believe are the the best custodians and beneficiaries of the environment and its natural resources. This partnership has empowered community members and equiped them with best knowledge and practices to monitor and sustainably use the natural resources.

On another note, NatureUganda has continued to advocate for policies that are fevorable to the environment through organising public forums including Public talks, Conservation conferences, Bird races and other Nature trips that are designated to different priority sites. We are are happy that these interventions have greatly contributed to an improved mind set of many people and NatureUganda pledges to continue serving you in this same way. As a membership-based organisation, we call upon everyone to adhere to this call and become a member. We do request that you bring on board other people to join us and to also ensure that your status is updated annually to anable us serve you better.

Lastly I thank all our members, partners, supporters and staff for being with us throughout this year and request that we all keep the fire to conserve our environment burning. I wish you good reading and a Happy & fruitfull year 2015!.

*Paul Mafabi*

Chairman, NatureUganda.

<<< pg1

## Big Birding Day (BBD) 2014



*Northern Masked Weaver*

The BBD 2014 was launched on 27th November at Kasenge Forest Resort where a team of renowned international birders, Dominic Mitchell, the managing editor of Bird Watch - Europe's leading monthly birders magazine; Tim Appleton - co-founder and organiser of the British Birding Fair, and Bill Thompson – editor of the Bird Watcher's Digest and director of the Ohio Ornithologist Society were introduced and graced the birding exercise, which they were to participate in.

The birding race was conducted on 29th November and coordinated by NatureUganda. The race attracted an incredible competition from 37 birding teams and over 375 participants across the country. This emanated from the eagerness and excitement, eventually producing an outstanding and unmatched 731 bird species. This is due to the eminence this event has gained over the years among the dedicated souls of birders, tourism promoters and conservationists in Uganda. The highest record for the day was 308 species from Queen Elizabeth National Park, followed by 242 species from Budongo Central Forest Reserve and Murchison Falls National Park, Lake Mburo followed with 221 species and Fort Portal area with 209 species. The sites included 21 sites inside protected areas (National parks and forest reserves) and 16 outside protected areas. Although the teams and participants were fewer, this was one of the best Birding days as seen in this summary table.

### BBD PAST RESULTS IN SUMMARY

Year	Bird species	Highest species record	Participants	Teams
2009	386	156	317	21
2010	622	175	404	40
2011	569	207	366	36
2012	657	246	311	58
2013	708	275	489	73
2014	731	308	375	38



## Community Vulnerability Impact Assessment: An Opportunity To Build Resilience

NatureUganda is implementing an Ecosystem based approaches to climate change adaptation around Echuya CFR at Kalengere using Lower Local Governments (LLGs) planning units of Muko Sub-County in Kabale district to demonstrate the application of this theory.



Part of the community group during the VIA consultations

The project is being implemented in four countries; Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi. In each of the countries, different ecosystems have been chosen. This ranges from wetlands to forest estates, with a unitary site on dry land landscape. The ecosystem chosen in Uganda combines forest, and wetlands in a ragged landscape. This provides good opportunity to learn from a range of ecosystems.

A number of stakeholder meetings have been held to identify and map resources and hazards with this community. The product which included resource maps, hazard maps, community vulnerability plan and social indicators to address the effects of climate and help build community resilience were identified. Consequently, vulnerability action plan developed provide opportunity for community members to make substantial contribution to building

own resilience to climate change. Sensitisation and action planning held provide training and opportunity to demonstrate some interventions. To start with SWC groups in the parishes of Karengere offered to demonstrate soil and water technologies that will reduce silt load in the valleys and streams used as water collection points.

With the effects of climate change becoming pivotal in every area of development, partners around Muko sub-county in Karengere parish have appreciated that climate change effects has contributed to the ecosystems' resilience and therefore, agreed to combine efforts to help community build adaptation options for resilience.

*Joel Wako, NU*

## Money Does Grow On Trees

<<< pg1

supplement their efforts. This project provides a unique opportunity to boost agricultural production while improving the state of the land and conserving biodiversity on which these communities depend.

Most of the farmers participating in the project were driven by the project's ability to create resources that can transform their households. The most important message for these farmers was about "what would happen at the end of it in terms of financial gains" and therefore it was important for the project to come up with economic projections of trees planted in farmer gardens other than 'intangible' benefits like biodiversity conservation that some farmers could not appreciate. Olong Solomon of Ngai Sub County in Apac district was one of

the farmers impressed by the future financial benefits of tree planting. Eucalyptus is known to thrive in all weather conditions and that is why most farmers preferred it to other species. *Grevillea robusta* was one of the species farmers liked because of its ability to resist dry conditions.

Some farmers were lured by the integration of crops with trees with a prospect of boosting their crop production. In this symbiotic relationship crops and trees are integrated to boost production and growth while competing for nutrients. Ocen Joel, Inomo, Apac district planted *Grevillea* within his banana plantation and thinks this has led to better growth of his bananas, he says; I have started harvesting banana from my mixed garden of *Grevillea* and banana

but I don't know whether the good performance of bananas is related to planting *Grevillea* there. Now I can eat bananas as I wait for my trees to mature'

Although the trees are still too young to be harvested and even impact on ecosystems, farmers are optimistic regarding the potential these trees have to boost their income. Otim jwinya, Ngai, Oyam district has a two year eucalyptus plantation; Jwinya says "these trees give us renewed hope, I have already started earning from my woodlot and there are birds that I enjoy seeing when they come to my woodlot". And who says money doesn't grow on trees!

[http://www.natureuganda.org/money\\_does\\_grow\\_on\\_trees.html](http://www.natureuganda.org/money_does_grow_on_trees.html)

*Jonathan Mwanja, BATBP, NU*



## NatureUganda Executive Committee Visits LVCEEP Sites



L-R: Mr. Geoffrey Akule (Finance and Administration Officer), Mr. Deo Nkuningoma (member), Dr. Robert Nabanyumya (chairman finance committee) and a community member

**N**atureUganda is implementing the Lake Victoria Catchments Environmental Education–Education for Sustainable Development programme in the Masaka, Kyenjojo and Kampala peri-urban regions in Uganda. The programme is part of the wider East African programme being implemented in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. The beneficiaries include schools, youth and community groups whose actions have a negative impact to the environment but could take some actions to mitigate them.

In 2013 – 14 the programme worked with six schools - Mugongo p/s, Nanziga SDA p/s, St Joseph’s Maya p/s (all in Kampala peri urban), Humura p/s, Kiburara p/s and Nsinde p/s - in Kyenjojo district. The schools received training and material support from the programme all aimed at transforming them into strong Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) model schools through projects that demonstrate sound environmental and natural resource management, food security improvement and also in income generating activities. The programme has also worked with youth groups to train them and enhance their

Simple & Medium Enterprises (SME) levels. Training to the youths has largely been in the areas of SME development, policy advocacy with regard to natural resource management, youth conservation leadership, marketing and market linkages, value addition and business planning.

NatureUganda’s Finance committee

visited the project sites with the aim of getting a better understanding of the impact of the project towards conservation and livelihood improvement. The team comprised of Dr. Robert Nabanyumya, (chairman finance committee), Mr. Nkuningoma Deo (member) and Mr. Geoffrey Akule (Finance and Administration Officer) guided by Mr. Jimmy Muheebwa (LVCEEP Project Executant and Mr. Tony Mutagubya (project assistant).

**Visit to St. Joseph’s Maya primary school:** The school is based in Maya about 1 km from the Kampala–Masaka road. It is demonstrating sustainable development initiatives such as greening activities, water harvesting, hand washing, waste management, food security improvement and energy saving (solar power harnessing and energy saving stoves use).

**Visit to TDI youth group:** Based in Lukaya town, the group is involved in tree planting and advocating for the conservation of the shores of Lake Victoria and River Katonga catchments which are being degraded with sand quarrying and rice growing. It diverts the youth from dependence on the wetland by providing them with Alternative SMEs like poultry, crafts, briquette making and herbal medicine

growing and production.

**Visit to Nkobazambogo Youth group:** Located in Mpugwe trading centre, Masaka district, Nkobazambogo deals in agricultural business especially by raising and selling cultured banana tissues. Mpugwe being a low rain belt/ zone, often suffers a water scarcity problem and this had curtailed the group’s operations. The ESD project then provided the group with support in rain water harvesting and storage which is now being used for continuous irrigation to promote sucker growth all the year around. The group also raises coffee seedlings which they give out to the wider community. In regard to environmental conservation, the group advocates for the conservation of the Kadugala wetland, Lake Birinzi and Nakiiga landing site at the shores of Lake Victoria. These are biodiversity hot spots and very important breeding sites for the endangered Grey Crowned Cranes and the sitatungas.

**Visit to Kaswa Zinda groups:** This is an ESD village in Kasswa trading centre, Lwengo district. The group reaches out with ESD initiatives to four schools. The group is engaged in energy saving technology (briquettes) with a machine provided by the ESD programme. Not only are they able to raise income through briquette making, but also they ably demonstrate to the wider community the idea of energy saving through local technologies. The group also carries out advocacy for the conservation of the Nabajuzzi wetland and Ramsar Site, enhanced conservation of the Kyojja wetland, wetland restoration initiatives and integrating environmental concerns into the planning and decision making at various levels in the district.

*Jimmy Muheebwa*  
Project Executant LVCEEP



## Local Empowerment Programme partners hold an exchange visit to communities in Uganda

The BirdLife Africa partners organized an exchange visit to Site Support Groups in Uganda in November 2014. Participants were from Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature (ABN), Association for the Conservation of Nature in Rwanda (ACNR), Nature Kenya and NatureUganda together with members from Site Support Groups (SSGs). This was aimed at sharing experiences and learning from each other on institutional management, networking, conservation and eco-businesses. Both Mabamba and Lutembe bay SSGs were visited. Challenges were discussed and solutions to further conservation and growth of the SSGs.

Lessons from waste management project in Lutembe involving sorting rubbish in classes of; biodegradable, glass and plastics especially bottles. This technology was introduced to the SSG through a training held by one of the community members at Confidence Eco-Model Yard. Upon sorting, the polythene waste is burnt and the plastic bottles left in a pile where people who want them come and pick. The biodegradable was composed for manure and making briquettes. The glass waste is however still a challenge though as the community has to find somewhere to keep it.

On this project, the community was advised to procure an incinerator instead of burning polythene in the



*After the workshop*



*The team in a Cave along the tourism trail in Mabamba -Bagiya making project at Mabamba*



*The Vegetable garden*

open. The lack of equipment such as gloves, nose and mouth masks could be offset by getting market for plastic bottles other than giving them away for free. The community training on paper mart and how to make jewelry from the glass waste collected from the garbage was encouraged. However, the team

noted poor waste disposal habits among community members and raised the need for advocacy within and outside the SSG members. The team advised the community to carry out awareness campaigns in neighbouring communities about solid waste management e.g market places where they can get tenders for collecting the waste in these places, which could earn the community some income.

Other projects visited in Lutembe community were Eco-tourism, tree nursery and vegetable gardens while those visited in Mabamba community were Liquid soap and Shampoo making, Bar soap making, crisps making, Bagiya making, Agro forestry trees and eco-tourism projects. The most popular challenges noted in the livelihood projects visited were lack of enough equipment, lack of packaging technology and materials for the products as well as lack of markets for the products. This activity was supported by the Local Empowerment programme funded by The Aage V Jensen Charity foundation entitled "Conservation of the birds and biodiversity of the Lake Victoria Basin (the Greatest of Africa's Great Lakes) through community-led action and sustainable development.

<http://www.natureuganda.org/lep-exchange-visit-to-uganda.html>



## FROM THE WILD

### An exciting visit to the home of gorillas!

The visit to the home of Gorillas was the dream of the year 2014, and yes this dream came to pass on the 12th-14th Dec. With all the anxiety, participants set off at 7:00am for the very long trip to Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in Kisoro. Despite the tiring endless journey, the fun of old stories and tales plus the munching of the parked lunch kept the team awake until the last destination.

As we got a little tired, the sighting of the beautiful scenery as we approached the hilly places in Ntungamo called for a stopover that lasted for about ten minutes. The cold breeze was so refreshing and tempting but the promise of



*Infant Gorilla*

more and better things to see got us all back to our van to tackle the remaining bumpy stretch to the park.

When we entered the park, we couldn't hold our excitement at the huge smiles from the attendants who welcomed us. We were later directed to our cozy rooms which were getting a bit cold but

we managed to beat the coldness with the warm showers. We were later invited to dinner with coffee or tea as a must-starter.

The following day, gorilla tracking was our first activity. The tracking lasted 2-3 hours with intense climbing, another body building activity it was! Later in the afternoon we had a visit to the Batwa and a forest walk. The day was so exciting and everyone was happy to rest at the end of it.

The next day, was our return to Kampala via Ishasha in Queen Elizabeth National Park where we saw the tree climbing lions giving us the anticipated climax to our trip.

*Sandra Sayuni, NU*

### Quest for the White-throated Blue-Swallow

Having attempted and failed on three occasions to reach the Semliki River and its "Blue Swallow", due to rain on two visits and exhaustion the other time, I resolved to make it my goal this time. So on 11th December 2014 the task began. I was with one of the resident bird guides Tadeo and told him of my quest. He told me it was a long walk but that he had done it three times previously and had not failed to see the Swallow. So we set off at 7:30am, I tried not to stop too often!

It is a long way, the GPS says 14km but with all the turns and switch-backs must be closer to 16km and then you have to come the same way back! To make matters worse heavy rain had disturbed sections of the trail making it very difficult terrain to walk, indeed the last



*White-throated Blue-Swallow*

section nearing the river was very bad, with grey mud slopping over my wellies and sapping what little strength I had left.

Eventually just after mid-day we reached a small fishing camp overlooking a large tree lined lagoon attached to the main Semliki River. As I scanned over the water I could see hirundines flying above the lagoon, Barn Swallow's and Sand Martin's. Then I noted a small blue swallow perched on a cane in the water

(attached to underwater fishing nets). This looked interesting, and it is what I was looking for! Although distant, sure enough it took off and flew around, low to the water and returned to the same perch. In flight it could be seen to be all dark blue on its upper and underside with a small white throat patch which was not easy to see, and very prominent white patches in the spread tail. Soon I located another bird which was using a different perch. This strategy of using canes or small branches as perches in the water I have already noted before in Cameroon where I had last seen this species.

After some five minutes of the joys of viewing these birds, the reality of the return journey crept back and we slowly returned.

*Roger Q Skeen, NU*



## UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

Welcome to the unusual bird sightings in Uganda. This section brings you the interesting bird records for the period and keeps track of the new birds for the Ugandan bird list. In this bulletin, we bring you two first records for the Uganda Bird list and for East Africa; one is a single individual of the **Akun Eagle Owl** sighted in Semliki National Park on September 27th and the single individual of the Long-tailed Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) sighted soaring in Munyanyange on 5th December 2014. These, if confirmed by the East African Rarities Committee (EARC) will be added to the Ugandan list.

In other records, a male **Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** was seen entering gardens on the edge of Lutembe Lagoon in early October. This bird is far from its preferred habitat of good forest. In the same site, a pair of **Bat Hawk** was seen flying at dusk with three African Hobby. This bird is rare in this site and it worth noting.

A pair of **Northern Masked Weaver** was seen breeding in a swamp just

north of Fort Portal during the period 4th-10th October at least. The pair was still present on 29th November, but had left by 15th December. The outcome is unknown. Around the same area, Small numbers of the distinctive **Banded Prinia** race *melanops* (Black-faced Prinia) were recorded in remnant forest on 24th October and 14th December. Still in the same area, an individual of the **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** and a **Semi-collared Flycatcher** were discovered in Tooro Botanical Gardens from 4th November to the end of December.

On 19th October at least 18 **Great-crested Grebe** including displaying pairs and a pair with two small young were seen on Kigere Crater Lake behind Lake Saka. On the same trip, at least four pairs of the **Red-knobbed Coot** were seen on small Crater Lakes behind Lake Saka.

In a different area, four **Red-winged Grey Warbler** were seen near Hoima on 30th October which shows a southerly extension of their known range.

In an area adjacent to Semliki National Park, two individuals of the **Simple Greenbul**, showed well at the roadside on 10th December where there are just a few records for Uganda. In the same site, three individuals of the **Orange-cheeked Waxbill** were discovered in the grass verge adjacent to Semliki National Park on 10th December, with seven on 19th December. This bird has just a few records for Uganda. Still in the same area, two individuals of the **White-throated Blue Swallow** were seen at the Semliki River on 11th December, and an immature **Hartlaub's Duck** on Kirumia trail on 18th December appear to be the only third documented records of these two species for Uganda.

The **single Yellow-footed Flycatcher** seen well in Semliki on 18th December is an interesting record as most of the records of this species occur in Budongo.

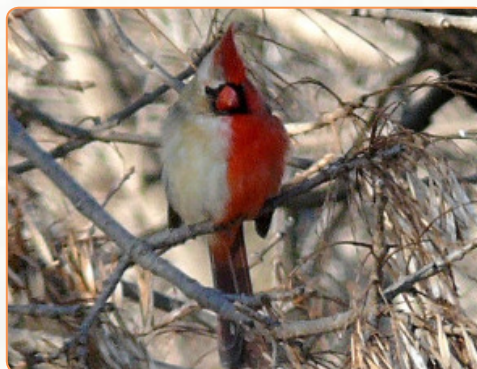
*Dianah Nalwanga & Roger Skeen*

## WEIRD SCIENCE FACTS

### This half-male, half-female bird has very peculiar plumage

Red Northern Cardinals are male and brownish-gray ones are female. But what about a *Cardinalis cardinalis* that sports red feathers on one side of its body and brownish-gray feathers on the other? Why, that cardinal is half-male and half-female, of course-and just such a rare bird has been observed in northwestern Illinois.

An example of a phenomenon biologists call bilateral gynandromorphism, the bird was observed for more than 40 days between Dec. 2008 and March 2010-and it certainly caught the attention of the scientists who spotted it. "It was amazing! When the bird was viewed from one side it appeared as a normal male and from the opposite side it appeared as a normal female,"



Dr. Brian D. Peer, a professor of biology at Western Illinois University. He said "It wasn't until you could see both halves of the bird did you realize it was a truly unique individual."

If the bird looked weird, it also exhibited weird behavior. As Peer and his collaborator wrote in a paper published in the Dec. 2014 edition of the *Wilson*

*Journal of Ornithology*, it was never heard vocalizing or seen to pair up with another cardinal. "It never acted like a typical male or typical female cardinal," Peer said in the email. The bird's bizarre plumage arose because its sex chromosomes didn't segregate properly after fertilization, according to New Scientist. The researchers tried to capture the cardinal to take DNA samples but were unable to do so.

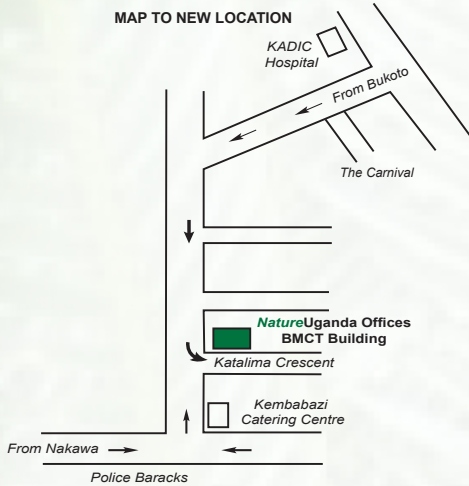
Peer said there has been at least one other published account of a bilateral gynandromorph cardinal but its plumage was reversed-male on the right side and female on the left. Really Weird!!

Obtained from: *The Huffington Post* |  
By David Freeman



# MEMBERSHIP

## MAP TO NEW LOCATION



## Upcoming Events

- Jan – Feb: Waterfowl / Bird Population Monitoring
- 14th Feb: Expedition to Kibimba Rice Scheme
- 21st March: Naturewalk to Malakai Eco-site, Lutembe
- 9th April: Annual General Meeting
- 3rd – 6th April: Easter Excursion to Semliki NP

## Upcountry Branches

- Eastern Uganda based at the Islamic University in Uganda, and Busitema University
- Western Uganda based at Mbarara University of Science & 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

## How to become a Member

Pay or renew your membership subscription by; writing a cheque to *NatureUganda*; paying at the secretariat in Naguru or at any of our upcountry branches; sending your fee to MTN mobile number 0777 147 367.

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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



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- Sandra Sayuni
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- Mbogo High School
- Kitante Primary School
- Balibaseka Secondary School
- Bwindi Bird Club
- Mabamba Wetlands Eco-tourism Association (MWETA)
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