



## NatureUganda Launches Busitema University Branch



Busitema University became the fourth NatureUganda branch, after Gulu University, Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. On 19th February 2014, NatureUganda launched Busitema university branch at Nagongera campus. The launch was graced by the Vice Chairperson of NatureUganda, Ms Nantongo Pauline. She also handed over office equipment to support the coordination of activities to Busitema and IUIU branches. The equipment included; computers, binoculars, books among others. Speaking on behalf of the Vice

Chancellor, Prof. J. N. Mary Okwakol, Dr. Samuel Baker Kucel the Deputy Vice Chancellor said that the partnership between the University and NatureUganda will stimulate sustainable developmental issues which are in line with the University's mission. He added that the community as well as the region will benefit from this partnership since some of the outreach programs are intended to meet the needs of the community. The day's program included a nature walk to Tororo Golf course and a hike to Tororo rock were a total of 29 bird species

*...the merger between NatureUganda and Busitema University will improve on the environmental conservation drive within the university campuses and the neighbouring communities.*

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## NatureUganda takes lead in development and formation of Wetland Management Plans with district leaders

NatureUganda with support from the Tropical Biology Association (TBA) and British American Tobacco-Uganda and in partnership with Tree Talk Foundation, are implementing a project in Mid Northern Uganda in the districts of Gulu, Oyam, Kole and Apac with an aim of "Addressing sustainable management for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in tobacco growing regions of Uganda". Under this project, a three days technical workshop was organised in November 2013 during which, technical district staff members in Natural Resources Management from the four districts benefiting from the project were called upon to develop Wetland Management Plans. This

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## Chairman's Message



Dear member,

I send you greetings and hope that 2014 will be a productive year for NatureUganda. In keeping with her mission, NatureUganda has for many years promoted the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature in Uganda. Many of us have enjoyed participating in the NatureUganda membership, research and conservation activities that are now key drivers for the conservation of our dwindling natural resources. We have all observed the threats that our environment and natural resources are facing currently in all parts of the country. Nevertheless, with combined effort, we have hope that we will reach out to the public and communities directly benefiting from these Natural Resources to sustainably use and manage them for better and longer term benefits.

At NatureUganda we believe that local communities are the best custodians and direct beneficiaries of the environment and natural resources. It is for this reason that we directly involve local communities in our projects and programmes which focus on the conservation of natural resources. The local empowerment programme for example focuses on equipping the communities around Lake Victoria with the skills and capacity to monitor and use their natural resources sustainably and at the same time conserve them for future generations. In the same way, the Echuya Community livelihood and the BAT/BP projects aim at working with the National Forestry Authority to put in place structures like Management plans which guide the communities living around these forests on the wise use and conservation of Forest resources for sustainable use.

I am pleased to note that NatureUganda has continued to gain support and confidence in promoting the appreciation of birds especially by Ugandans. This is accomplished through organising nature walks and excursions that have continued to gain popularity, as well as organising the Big Birding Day, which is now recognised by the country as an important tourism event. I encourage you to participate in these events and be part of the cadres who will mentor the future conservation leaders in the country.

I thank you all our members, partners, staff and supporters for wholeheartedly supporting our efforts to conserve nature with which we hope to build a better future for all of us and our future generations.

*Paul Mafabi*  
Chairman, NatureUganda

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## NatureUganda takes lead...



team will help to advocate for their integration into District Development Plans, which will contribute towards wetland restoration and sustainable management across demonstration areas. The workshop was facilitated by resource persons from the Wetlands Department under the Ministry of Water and Environment and Nature Uganda. In his remarks, the acting Executive Director of NatureUganda Mr. Michael Opige said that implementation of the Management plans in the four districts will start in 2014.

It was observed during the meeting that wetlands in Uganda have dwindled from 13% to about 10.8 % by 2011. The Kole District Fisheries Officer, Lemoekol John said that time for implementation of the two wetland management plans is now. He pledged to inform and sensitise the public on

what had transpired during the technical planning workshop and called on NatureUganda to organise the same in other areas in the northern region of the country.

Mr. Afai Sylvano from Wetlands Department who represented the Commissioner said that the only way of engaging communities and the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), is through planning processes. He noted that NatureUganda and Ministry of Water and Environment are in a process of working on strategies to see how things trickle down to the communities especially on wetland related issues. This will be through engaging other CSOs in surveying and demarcating wetland boundaries. He said this implementation will save government time and money, since the government contracts the private sector to implement activities on its behalf.

*By Isaac Kinja*  
Project Officer, BAT/BP



## Local Empowerment Programme boosts the concluded Sound Approach Bird Fund project by NatureUganda in conservation of wildlife in Mabamba



NatureUganda with funding from the Sound Approach Bird fund empowered the Mabamba community Site Support

Group (SSG) with materials and the capacity to improve their livelihoods as well as conserving the biodiversity on which they highly depend. Above

is one of the two boats secured for tourism improvement for the Mabamba Wetland Eco-Tourism Association (MWETA), an SSG in MabambabayonLakeVictoria under the project, which ended last year but still benefiting the community. Such initiatives have helped in the community conservation of resources as communities see the direct tangible benefits from their conservation efforts. This project has been boosted by the Local Empowerment project that has come in to add on to what the community has by giving them the capacity to sustainably use and conserve their biodiversity on which they highly.

*By Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire*  
Research & Monitoring Coordinator

## NatureUganda Launches Busitema University Branch

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was recorded. NatureUganda operates through branches which are set up in various institutions of higher learning across Uganda. Membership is NatureUganda's constituency and strength where conservation, research and information dissemination is done by members.

The patron of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programme, Mrs. Margaret Ujejo Suubi said that, the merger between NatureUganda and Busitema University will improve on the environmental conservation drive within the university campuses and the neighbouring communities. The student chairperson of ESD, Mr. Ivan Oyege said that the outreach programmes, sensitisation and awareness campaigns that include

sanitation and hygiene, career guidance, HIV/AIDS counselling, tree planting, as well as garbage collection and cleaning will improve with NatureUganda on board. He outlined the future and general plans for the ESD programme which will involve extending ESD to other campuses and creating a strong bond between Busitema University campuses and NatureUganda.

Dr. Edward Andama, the dean faculty of Science and Education, and coordinator of NatureUganda activities at Busitema University, thanked the organisation for launching a branch at the University. He said that the partnership will have a great impact on natural resource conservation. He noted that the ESD programme is not for learning purposes alone, but to

show how important the campus is to the adjacent communities.

The Ag Executive Director Mr. Michael Opige thanked Busitema University for their support and pointed out that the partnership between NatureUganda and Busitema University will propel conservation programs.

Busitema University is the first multi-campus public University established by the Act of Parliament of Uganda in the year 2007. The main campus is located at Busitema, along Jinja-Malaba Highway, about 27 kms South West of Tororo Town. The University has five operational campuses and one Study Centre located in Tororo Municipality.

## Mt Elgon NP wins the Big Birding Day race 2013



In a drive to promote domestic avi-tourism in Uganda, NatureUganda in collaboration with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other stakeholders organised the Big Birding Day (BBD) 2013 events under the theme “Connecting People to Birds and Nature” and subtheme “Birding; Our Livelihoods, Our Economy”. The events started with a launch during a public talk on 18th October at the Uganda Museum. The guest of honor was Ms Aulo Mbabazi Mary Grace, the Commissioner, and tourism development at Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities who pledged full support from the ministry towards NatureUganda in

promoting tourism in the country. The guest Speaker, Mr. Raymond Engena, the director for Tourism and Business partnership at the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), mentioned that UWA has pledged to fully support 5 foreigners who will visit Uganda specifically to participate in the BBD 2014. He promised that starting January 2014, UWA will reduce on charges paid by foreigners to the National Parks and Forest reserves from US\$ 100 to US\$ 30. He emphasized that adults should take the sole responsibility of educating the young generation about birds and nature and thanked NatureUganda and other partners for their contribution to this effect.

*As part of the NU's explorer programme which is intended produce a cadre of young nature lovers among Ugandan schools, seven schools participated in the Big Birding Festival.*

The 24hr-birding exercise took place on 19th October in all parts of the country including National Parks, Wildlife reserves, Important Bird Areas, Ramsar sites, Forest reserves and many areas around Kampala. Free entry for all participants bird watching on this day was granted in all National Parks, Wildlife Reserves and Forest Reserves by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and National Forest Authority (NFA). Results from the birding exercise were announced during the Big Birding Festival on 26th October, which is the climax of the BBD events held at Kitante Primary School play Grounds. There were 487 participants in the 2013 birding exercise and they traversed 73 birding sites across the country. Mt. Elgon National Park was victor with 275 recorded bird species. This is the highest number of bird species recorded at a single sight since the BBD event started in 2009. The perennial winners and favourites, Queen Elizabeth National Park, came in at a shocking 3rd position. As part of the NU's explorer programme which is intended produce a cadre of young nature lovers among Ugandan schools, seven schools participated in the Big Birding Festival. The children were involved in an art competition where they illustrated how they think birds can be helped by humans. These schools were rewarded by Mr. Raymond Engena, Uganda Wildlife Authority for their interest in the Big Birding Day and nature conservation as a whole.

## A trip to Kidepo Valley NP, Crowned our year



The year 2013 closed with the long awaited excursion to Kidepo Valley National Park, which was attended by a group of 15 NatureUganda members. The trip was based on four main objectives; enhancing member's knowledge of priority species, sites and habitats, building member's knowledge of the natural history, enabling members to understand and appreciate nature and enhancing member's participation in the conservation of nature.

The first sighting for the trip was of a mother Porcupine crossing the road with its little baby on its back at around 12:00am! You should have been there! The first activity was an early morning nature walk guided by Zachary a ranger guide at the site. A number of bird species including the Superb Starling, Eurasian Hoopoe and mammals including the Zebras, Jackals, warthogs were among the species.

We later visited the Lorkuru community and by the help of the community representatives we were taken through their culture and activities around their home stead, and were privileged to meet with their King. We were later entertained with their cultural dances which require one to have enough strength to jump very high up, an indication of how strong one is as a marriage partner.

Most exciting was the sight of an Ostrich running through the bushes in the park like it's dancing to some unheard music. We also got a chance to see the king of the jungle, the Lion on our way out of the park. It was a big one and at close range that we had countless photos taken. This sighting crowned our visit to the Park. Make sure you are on the next team that goes out in the wild!

*By Sandra Sayuni*  
Membership Assistant

## Musambwa: Threats & diminishing populations

Recent surveys at two of our Waterbird counts at Musambwa Islands and Air strip ponds in Rakai district have revealed disturbing evidence of diminishing populations of species. Often these counts can differ if different observers are involved but the counters for the past three counts have been stable. The most critical is Air Strip Ponds. This artificial wetland was formed over thirty years ago when an air strip was created and the removed murrum produced seven sizeable ponds. The count in January 2011 revealed species as diverse as Rufous-bellied Heron, Lesser Jacana, White-backed Duck and breeding Lesser Moorhen all uncommon in a Ugandan context. Events in this area recently have since altered and the air strip is now home to at least 10,000 displaced

refugees. These people have been up-rooted from their homes in neighboring Tanzania and forced to return to Uganda where a make shift camp has been provided. Obviously the pressures on the flora and fauna have been radically affected with shrub clearance, water removal and burning of the dried ponds, while lesser threats include brick making and plastic waste. This has resulted in none of the special birds being present, Crane numbers down to two and only single figures of the fish loving kingfishers indeed only a single Malachite was recorded. Unfortunately, the problem is showing no sign of improving and probably more people are still arriving, this will eventually lead to the destruction of these ponds as the people create more farms to feed themselves and

build more stable housing.

Musambwa Islands have been counted for many years and numbers of breeding Grey-headed Gulls have remained relatively stable with counts in 2011 of 89955 and 89480 in 2012 while this year's count on 11th February 2014 revealed only 62240. The main threat to these birds has traditionally come from semi-resident fishermen who supplemented their diet with gull eggs. Judging by the drop in numbers and the fact that very few young birds were seen on the Island, this may be continuing. More monitoring of these Islands will be required to prevent a crash in the population, while affording more protection to the main gull Breeding Island should be a priority.

*Roger Q Skeen,*  
NatureUganda

## Sustainable resource utilization and conservation boosted by Local Community Empowerment Programme (LEP)



Women making mats from palm leaves for sale, one of the ways they can get livelihoods outside fishing and tour guiding

NatureUganda together with the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat (BLAPS) and other BirdLife partners in Rwanda, Kenya and Burundi are implementing a project on “Empowering local communities for the conservation and sustainable development of the birds and biodiversity of the Lake Victoria Basin” funded by AAGE V. Jensen Foundation. In Uganda, the project is being implemented through NU Site Support Groups (SSGs) in Mabamba and Lutembe bays on Lake Victoria with the main aim of empowering such local communities to ably conserve biodiversity on which they highly depend for their livelihoods. This requires that the communities are equipped with the required tools for biodiversity monitoring and conservation.

Participation of local communities at all stages of implementation is key if success is to be achieved. Initial participatory community capacity assessment was conducted. This was to identify capacity gaps that need to be strengthened. Subsequently

a community resource map was developed highlighting status of natural resources in the community. This was highly participatory and synthesized threats, interventions and plans to address pressing needs. These great ideas are therefore being translated into a community action plan.

There is great enthusiasm and zeal in the communities and hope for successful delivery of identified milestones. There is commitment for collaboration between NatureUganda and the community especially the leadership who pledged support to all endeavours by NatureUganda. Many of them were quoted saying “Thank you

NatureUganda for the effort you put in to support us, we will always be indebted to you”. And others were saying “NatureUganda, you need to come and help us fight the many investors who are finishing up the wetland. It is our livelihood and we need to defend it”. Such pleas put on your table are very difficult to ignore. But as NatureUganda, we can only do as much.

Our target is to empower and equip these communities, get them organized into recognizable groups and let them know that in such groups, they are so much bigger than NatureUganda and they can ably defend and protect their resources. A good example is the Mabamba SSG, which now has the capacity to stop and report any illegal activities to the respective authorities. The LEP project is here to make all community members able to do that kind of monitoring and action. Through the management plans recently developed by NatureUganda together with the communities under this project, these SSGs will be able to sustainably conserve and develop their sites for better livelihoods.

*By Dianah Nalwanga Wabwire*  
**Research & Monitoring  
Coordinator**



Grey-headed Gulls on Lutembe bay. Such bird congregations are a big tourism attraction for the site

## UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

On 13th October, a Greater Flamingo was seen on the mud flats of Lutembe Bay by Judith Goddard. It was feeding and seemed to be quite content amongst the other birds. When the other birds flew off, it continued to walk up and down the shore line of the mud flat, quite content. It was being viewed from a wooden canoe paddled by two local lads. This is the only time the species has been seen on Lutembe Bay.



sun, so it was not possible to see the red or black under the wings in the photo. This bird, which is rare in the country, has not been recorded on the bay so far and this is its first record. It has been recorded once in Airstrip Ponds-Rakai and Murchison falls in January 2007.

A Grey Plover was sighted by Roger Skeen and team on Kazinga Channel in QENP on 23rd January 2014. This is a very rare sighting for the country.

Also on the same trip, a White-fronted Plover was sighted at Kazinga Channel, making this the third sighting for the species at the site.

The 41 Great White Pelican seen on Kikorongo Crater by Roger Skeen and the NatureUganda team are an interesting sighting as the Lesser Flamongos are the commonly recorded species for the site.

Compiled by:

*Dianah Nabwanga Wabwire*  
Research & Monitoring Coordinator

On Saturday November 23rd hundreds of breeding Great cormorants, Long-tailed cormorants, Little egrets and Cattle egrets among other species were spotted by Kaj Ostergaard on an Island off Lutembe Bay. The Island is 5 km from Kaj's house, and he can see it from the terrace. He was seeing a lot of birds around the island and guessed there could be something so he went and found it. The island is by locals called Paradise Island,

and Idi Amin used it as a refugee. There are a few buildings, which have almost fallen apart, and a few people are staying there. There is one watchman employed to guard the island. This island could be promoted as an IBA or Ramsar site.

On 24th November, a Black-winged Pratincole was seen on Lutembe Bay by Kaj. There were three of them but unfortunately they flew against the

## WEIRD SCIENCE FACTS

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The mortality rate if bitten by a Black Mambo snake is over 95%.
- A cockroach can survive for about a week without its head before dying of starvation.
- Mosquitoes are attracted most to the color blue.
- Some frogs are able to be frozen and then thawed, and continue living.
- A snail can sleep for 3 years.
- Giraffes have no vocal cords.
- Elephants have been known to remain standing after they die.
- The fastest bird, the spine-tailed swift, can fly as fast as 106mph.
- A newborn kangaroo is about 1 inch in length.
- In 1872, a virus epidemic killed a quarter of all the horses in USA
- A woodpecker can peck 20 times per second.
- A mosquito has 47 teeth.
- Cojo, the 1st gorilla born in captivity, was born at the Columbus, Ohio Zoo in 1956 and weighed 3 1/4 pounds.
- Camels have three eyelids to protect themselves from blowing sand.

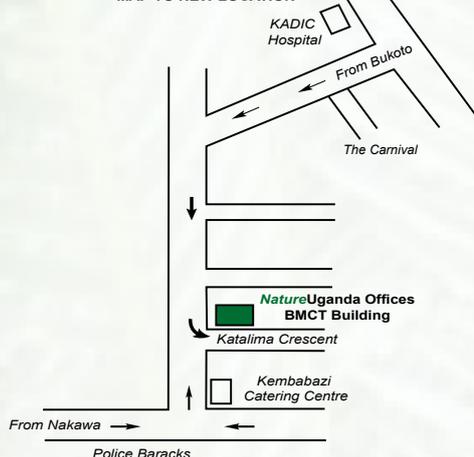
Source: Internet

### NatureUganda Publications



# MEMBERSHIP

## MAP TO NEW LOCATION



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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 |
|--------------|---------|----------|
| Honorary     |         |          |
| Life members | 100,000 |          |
| Sponsor      | 500,000 |          |
| Corporate    | 200,000 | \$350    |
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| 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

- 4th April-AGM
- 18th -21st April-Excursion to Mt.Elgon National Park
- 15th -16th May Conservation Conference

## 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

## Corporate Members

- Accolade Explorers
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- Pride Microfinance Limited
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- 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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