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The Nature Kenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org August 2001

REPORTING

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

under environment act named

Kenya's Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act is beginning to take on shape and form. The National Environment Council, responsible for policy formulation and direction under the Act, was established in February 2001. On July 13, the members of the Public Complaints Committee were gazetted.

They are Dr Smokin Wanjala (Chairman), Mrs Gladys Bass Shallei, Mr Nigel Sandys-Lumsdaine, Mr Hesbon Mwendwa Aligula, Dr Eric Chenje Mwachiro and Mr. Ejidius N. Barua (Secretary).

The functions of the Public Complaints Committee under the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act include:

"(a) to investigate -

(i) any allegations or complaints against any person or against the [National Environment Management] Authority in relation to the condition of the environment in Kenya;

(ii) on its own motion, any suspected case of environmental degradation, and to make a report of its findings together with its recommendations thereon to the Council;"

You can write to the committee at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.



NATURE KENYA HINDE'S BABBLER VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT, MUKURWE-INI 19 - 21 JUNE '01

A three-day Hinde's Babbler volleyball tournament in Mukurwe-ini, Central Province, brought together many young people to play and watch this popular sport and to learn about this endemic bird species.

Hinde's Babblers (*Turdoides hindei*) forage in dense shrub growth (including dry lantana thickets) found in Mukurwe-ini valleys.

They have become scarce due to the reduction of range, which has resulted from increased agricultural development. The Hinde's is now restricted to the eastern and southern edges of the central highlands from 1300 metres to 1500 metres.

The tournament helped to raise awareness on this globally threatened species and on the need to urgently do some conservation work for its habitat.

Nature Kenya takes this opportunity to congratulate the following teams on their performance:

NGORU second runners-up
ICHAMARAAS first runners-up
MATHARE who won the tournament

EXCURSIONS

WATCHING BATS AT OLOOLUA FOREST CAVE

Friday 10 August '01

• Inquiries and bookings to the Nature Kenya front office.

• Please indicate when booking, if you are able to give rides (limited transport will be available)

• Meet at Museum car park at 1:30 p.m.

• Organised by the Nature Kenya Mammalogy Committee in conjunction with the Mammalogy Department of the National Museums of Kenya

Action for Biodiversity Conservation

NATURE KENYA, P. O. Box 44486, 00100 Nairobi. Tel: 749957 / 746090 Fax: 741049 E-mail: eanhs@africaonline.co.ke

NATURALIST CORNER

CHEMICAL WARFARE BY DINO MARTINS

One of our modern world's greatest fears is the threat of chemical warfare. Humans, however, are not the first species to use chemicals as a means of defense. Nature, it turns out, as with most things, thought of it first.

A few weeks ago, I pick up one of the widespread 'rose beetles' from a blooming spray of wait-a-bit thorn bushes. These black and yellow beetles will be familiar to anyone who has ever tried gardening in Nairobi. I want to examine the underside of the insect for pollen - could it possibly be inadvertently pollinating the bush as it despoils the flowers? I turn it over, peering at the glossy, ventral abdomen for grains of pollen. Suddenly, the beetle squirts out some yellow liquid. Due to the proximity of my nose, I receive a full blast of the most foul-smelling, acrid fumes. With a surprisingly fast reflex, I flung the beetle away. I have just learnt an important lesson in the defense mechanisms of rose beetles.

Rose beetles are not the only insects that resort to chemical defense when threatened. Many thousands of other species also use various gases, acids, poisons, caustic liquids, dyes, etc. These are delivered by a wide array of anatomical adaptations, including spraying, squirting, fuming, bubbling, bailing, frothing, zapping, foaming and rubbing. A type of beetle, known as the bombardier or blister beetle can blast its attackers with up to fifty jets of caustic vapour from a boiling chamber in its abdomen. Whip scorpions also shoot acidic vapour onto would be attackers. Some species of Giant Millipede (Tanganyika Trains) can spray cyanide from a series of pores along the length of their bodies.

Other users of chemical weaponry are subtler. Rainbow locusts, and other brightly coloured grasshoppers, silently secrete a potent mixture when alarmed. The mixture includes complex phenols and quinones, both constituents of man-made insecticides.

BirdLife
**World
biRD
festIVAL**
**WORLD
BIRDWATCH**
6-7 October 2001
Update

Team Entry Form

Request your team leader to collect or send for the team entry form and information pack from the Nature Kenya office.

The organising committee can place with a team, individuals who wish to enter the competition. Please contact the Birdwatch coordinators.

Pledge Form

World Birdwatch provides the opportunity to raise some funds for Nature Kenya programmes. Funds raised previously have gone to research on particular bird species and to produce an Introductory Bird Guide to be distributed to groups across the country.

There will be a prize to be won by the birdwatching team or Nature Kenya member that raise the highest amounts of funds. Please use the enclosed form (photocopy as necessary) to raise funds for conservation! Use the **Pledge form** to help raise funds towards our environmental education programme!

Stink bugs foul the air if crushed, one whiff, and you'll never repeat the mistake.

Perhaps the most advanced users of chemical defenses are the ants. Many varieties of ants have the ability to spray copious quantities of formic acid into the air. This acid, in sufficient quantities, can cause a violently painful condition known as 'formicosis'-where the acid enters into the lining of the nose and throat. Few animals that survive this will mess with the ants again! Sometimes, walking through the bush, a slightly irritating odour might point to the scene of a battle, where a colony of ants have successfully defended themselves against attack once again, all thanks to **NASTY CHEMICALS**.

GET ACTIVE!

BASIC GARDENING COURSE at the Nairobi Arboretum 28 September '01, 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Come and learn how to turn kitchen, lawn and garden waste into useful compost manure and get basic hands-on training on gardening techniques.

Meet at the Arboretum main gate at 9:00 a.m.

To book, call Lillian Igweta at Nature Kenya. Cost: 600/- per person

Organised by Friends of Nairobi Arboretum (FONA), all proceeds are used to support the maintenance of the Arboretum.



Youth
Committee on
their recent fun
trip
to Hell's Gate
National Park

Here they are
tracking 'Mut'
the
Lammergeier
with Simon
Thomsett

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Sunday Birdwatch (Pot-Luck Outing)

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, i.e. 19 August. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the last Monday of every month i.e. 27 August from 9:30 a.m. Meet at the FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ. Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDCALLS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

ARABUKO SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. 4 August, at 6:30 a.m. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month i.e. 18 August, at 4:30 p.m. from Ratna Square, Nyali

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

AUGUST DIARY

Sat 4	ASF Birdwalks
Fri 10	Bat Watching
Sat 18	FFJ Birdwalk
Sun 19	Pot Luck Outing
Mon 27	Tree Walk
Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning	

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

Bird Hotline 749957

Please note the records below are unconfirmed

Lemon Dove

Nairobi Arboretum/ July
Nairobi Ringing Group

Small Ostrich,

African Orange-bellied Parrot
Lewa Wildlife Conservancy/ July
Shailesh Patel

White-naped Raven, Lammergeier,
Peregrine Falcon, Verreaux's Eagle,
Lanner Falcon, Common Scimitarbill
Hell Gate N. Park/ L. Naivasha/ June
Youth committee trip

pair of Grey Crowned Cranes with three
young UNEP near Peace Garden/ June
Sandy Paul, Debbie Nightingale, Anjali Saini

Spotted Ground Thrush, East Coast
Akalat, Red-capped Robin-Chat,
Terrestrial Brawnbul, Eastern Bearded
Scrub Robin and Forest Batls
Arabuko Sokoke Forest/ June
Colin Jackson

Grey-headed Silverbill

Mpala Ranch, Laikipia/ June
Bernard Chege, Peter Okomwa

Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Grey-headed
Negrofinch, Hinde's Babbler, Yellow-
bellied Waxbill, Green-headed Sunbird
Wanjee Camp, Mihuti, Nyeri/
Brawn Woodland Warbler, Chestnut-
throated Apalis, Black-throated Apalls,
Brown-capped Weaver, Mountain
Greenbul, White-tailed Crested
Flycatcher, Black-collared Apalls,
Mountain Buzzard

Kieni Forest Thika District/ May
John O'Sullivan, Nicodemus Nalanyana,
Shailesh Patel, Kuria Ndung'u

Please send details to
Kenya Birds, c/o Nature Kenya
or kbirds@africaonline.co.ke

NOTICES

ADVERTISING IN NATURE NET

Reach over 1000 members
by advertising in Nature Net

Rates for Classifieds:
Upto 25 words 250/-
Upto 50 words 500/-

1/4 page @ 1750/-

CLASSIFIED

FOR SALE

36X power telescope with 200m
facility, adjustable tripod and carry
case. Ideal for birdwatching
Ksh 19500/-

Contact Bryon Harris on 341527 or
712138 (after hours) or the Nature
Kenya office for viewing

BIO NEWS

BIODIVERSITY GIVES CARBON SINKS A BOOST

OVERVIEW & COMMENTARY
by Forests.org

A new study published in the scientific journal 'Nature' found that more diverse plant ecosystems were better able to absorb carbon dioxide (CO2) and nitrogen, both of which are on the rise due to human activities and industrial processes.

These findings have implications for proposed efforts to use carbon sinks - vegetation that absorbs carbon dioxide - as a mechanism for addressing climate change. The study lends further credence to arguments that intact ecosystems do a better job of regulating environmental problems than do manmade landscapes - such as plantations. 'These findings suggest that protecting biodiversity worldwide will contribute to safeguarding the capacity of ecosystems to capture a larger fraction of additional carbon and nitrogen entering our environment due to industrial processes' stated one co-author.

Another recent study highlighted that soils in old-growth forests continue to remove carbon even when the forests are fully mature, and that old and wild forests are better than plantations at dependably removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The carbon sequestration abilities of commercial plantations are hypothetical and have not been conclusively demonstrated in the long-term.

Responsible climate change policy-making must ensure that protection and restoration of old growth, diverse forest ecosystems is pursued as a priority carbon sequestration strategy, and that any eventual climate change agreements be free of incentives to pursue plantation forestry in ancient forest stands.

Glenn Barry

Forest Networking a Project of Forests.org,
Inc.
<http://forests.org/> — Forest Conservation
Portal
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Links

