

Project Update: January 2012

1. Pilot surveys at Busia Grasslands and Ruma National Park

Reconnaissance surveys were conducted at Busia Grasslands and Ruma NP IBAs. This was done primarily to let the project team get acquainted with local biodiversity and habitats. Relevant local stakeholders were sought for future conservation activities related to the project at both sites: local provincial administration, subsistence farmers, private land owners and members of a local conservation group. Two guides were identified for future project activities at Busia. The project team also got the opportunity to meet members of a local site support group at Busia Grasslands and laid a foundation for formation of a local site conservation group at Ruma where no conservation group was present. At Ruma National Park we acquired the area map and established contacts with local stakeholders including the Park's Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Assistant Warden local Chiefs. KWS was happy with the project and expressed willingness to collaborate with the project team during the project period.

2. Establishment of Site Conservation Groups at Busia Grasslands and Ruma National Park

The project team established the presence of a site support group for Busia Grasslands by the name Busia Environmental Conservation and Education Programme (BECEP). However, we realised that BECEP lacks training on basic conservation issues and no capacity building has been conducted for the group in the recent past. Hence, no meaningful conservation work is ongoing here while local threats continue to affect the critical grassland and wetland habitats of the Blue Swallow at Busia. We identified field-based on-site conservation training as an opportunity for future capacity building for the group to help save and monitor the local habitats here. We facilitated the establishment of a SCG at Ruma National Park IBA. This followed two meetings held between the project team, local provincial administration and KWS. Interim office bearers of the Ruma SCG were elected to spearhead conservation activities locally and in close collaboration with the project.

