

Project Update: May 2012

1. Site Conservation Group formed and trained at Ruma NP

Participants drawn from local stakeholders were invited at the KWS Ruma headquarters for a workshop that was organised by the project team in close collaboration with the KWS and local provincial administration. The project participants were carefully selected to represent the local villages where the park falls in. The workshop's objectives included trainings on group formation and biodiversity conservation. Topics covered during the training workshop were varied but emphasis was put on group formation and dynamics; IBA conservation, monitoring and management; basic ornithology and birdwatching; and field demonstrations on bird identification. Following this training, an interim committee was elected among the participants who formed **Ruma Site Conservation Group**. The groups' official registration with relevant authorities is underway. The main aim of the group includes among others spearheading environmental conservation and promotion of livelihood options locally. The group will use blue swallow as an entry point to biodiversity conservation at Ruma and will engage in broader environmental issues in collaboration with wildlife and conservation institutions, and act as their link with the local community.

2. Assessment of habitat threats and local conservation perceptions

Detailed open ended interviews were conducted in Busia. Two field assistants, Edwin and Douglas who are members of BECEP were trained on interviewing skills. Together with the project team they mainly targeted private land owners whose lands the moist grasslands fall into. This was followed by focus group discussions with relevant local stakeholders. Questions asked included among others background information; socio-economics of grassland use and threats; blue swallow presence and local hunting for food; and willingness to sell privately owned land for conservation of the grasslands. The respondents were drawn from various localities where the grassland patches are found to occur. Currently, analysis of focus group discussion data is ongoing. This analysis will give an indication on the species and habitat threats, and local people's perceptions on conservation of the blue swallow and its locally threatened moist grassland habitats.

