

## Project Update: January 2011

The last 3 months have been marked by a severe drought which has seen limited conservation activity. The major activity at the wetland was the marking of the World Wetlands Day which is celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> February each year throughout the world. In Kenya, the national ceremony marking the WWD was held at the Lake Nakuru National park. Lake Nakuru, famous throughout the world for its millions of flamingoes, was among the first wetlands to be designated as a Ramsar site. The others are Lakes Naivasha, Baringo, Bogoria and Elmenteita. All these have been designated wetlands of international importance, mostly because of their rich avian biodiversity. However, since all of us could not make it to the national celebrations, I decided to have a separate celebration for the Ondiri Wetland Community in the banks of the Swamp. We started our celebration at about 10.00am Kenyan time and it went on for about 3 hours. During the occasion, we planted several trees and a number of bamboo shoots. However, we planted a few because of the drought that is currently ravaging the country. Our members came out in force to mark this important day and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Both young and old gathered together and almost everyone present planted at least one tree.

During the national celebrations, the Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources assured Kenyans that the country will soon have a wetlands policy. To date, this policy is lacking and wetlands conservation has been conducted on a more or less *ad hoc* basis. In the run-up to the WWD, a workshop was held at the National Museums of Kenya' Louis Leakey Memorial Hall. I attended the workshop which was well attended by the country's conservation fraternity. Present were the Director-General of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), and representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources, the national museums, Birdlife International, IUCN, Wetlands International, Kenya Forest Service, Nature Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service, universities and conservation bodies. The participants were assured that plans to publish a Kenya Wetlands Atlas were at an advanced stage and the same would be ready by June this year. Many decried the lack of a national wetlands policy but the NEMA DG allayed these fears and said that plans were also afoot to come up with one.



