

Project Update: November 2008

The first part of the project was to conduct a baseline survey of the flora and fauna of Ondiri Swamp with a view to establishing the biodiversity of the bog. So far, this has been completed and a comprehensive inventory is under way.

I was also supposed to establish the threats facing the swamp and this has also been done although it is an ongoing exercise. New threats that had not been foreseen have been established. Among these is the construction of a road bypass, known as the southern bypass that will run over the swamp at the point where it breaks to form a source of the Nairobi River. This is shown in one of the photographs. It is too early to say what the implications of this road are but it may be significant in the development of the bog as an ecotourism facility. This is because there will be a lot of vehicular traffic along the road and this will expose the swamp to many people who did not know about it before.

There was a big shock when I walked along the edges of the swamp and discovered a plantation of Cannabis sativa, popularly known as marijuana (See Photo Number 2)

This is a clear indication that some criminals are already using the swamp to grow this narcotic which is widely used in Kenya. It is still not clear who is growing the Cannabis and I have already reported this finding to the local police who are in the process of investigating who is/are behind the plantation.

Among the other threats facing the swamp is the growing of Eucalyptus trees along the edges of the swamp as seen in Photo number 3. Eucalyptus growing is big business in Kenya but this tree species is not suitable for this area. It consumes a lot of water and is normally used for draining swamps. It is recommended that it should be planted at least 30 metres from water sources but in this case, it is being grown right next to the swamp edge which is illegal. I am in the process of consulting with the officials of the Athi Water Services Board for which the swamp is a catchment area and they will advise accordingly.

Tree and bamboo planting can not be carried out now because the short rains have been inadequate and cannot support the growth of these. That means that tree and bamboo planting will have to wait until April/May when the long rains are expected.