

NBC Report No. 1

Nyahururu Bird Club: Feb. – Aug. 2009



Wanyoike Wamiti

2009

This is an update report for the **Nyahururu Bird Club** since our departure from Nyahururu training camp in January 2009. It has been six months this August and would therefore be good to pick on a few things that have happened that shows what has been going on.

The following are the highlights for the reporting period Feb-Aug 2009:

1. Forest fire fighting at Uaso Narok Forest

Three members of the Club actively contributed efforts together with Kenya Forest Service staff and local community towards fighting a fire that gutted nearly half the forest's 1973ha of native vegetation in March-April 2009. The devastating drought, whose effects continue to be felt to date, deserved a study on birds' fauna at its peak to see if there were any changes in diversity. One observation was a Brown-crowned Tchagra, a species characteristic of the savannah ecosystem.



2. Participation in an ornithological field project (April-May 2009).

In the months of April and May, I had an opportunity to enjoy the company of four NBC members (coming in pairs) to join me as field assistants in an expedition that took us to Mt. Kenya and Aberdares National Parks (Samuel Karanja & Timothy Mwangi) and Mpala Ranch and Samburu National Reserve (Amina Njoki and Peter Karani). We spent 3 to 4 days at each site. The objective of the trip was to give them a chance to experience different habitats and bird species as they enjoyed wildlife. This really boosted their species lists.



3. Kenya Wetlands Forum/ IUCN-Netherlands EGP Project

The Kenya Wetlands Forum has received a grant from the IUCN-Netherlands Ecosystem Grant Programme to implement a sixteen months (March 15 2009 to 15 June 2010) project focusing at Lake Ol' Bolossat (an Important Bird Area) and her catchment. The project 'supporting livelihoods, enhancing nature conservation: a case for Lake Ol' Bolossat wetlands, Central Province, Kenya', overall objective is enhancing conservation of Lake Ol' Bolossat wetlands ecosystem by diversifying and improving sustainable income generation activities and empowering community institutional capacities.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following main activities are being implemented are:

- Tree planting and reforestation of the deforested catchment area
- Expansion and modernization of beekeeping enterprise
- Capacity building of local project beneficiaries
- Enhancing understanding of the various legislation
- Establishment of individual woodlots
- Identifying and developing nature friendly and sustainable investment opportunities, and
- Facilitating information exchange and experience sharing.

Participants are brought in from the Lake's catchment area, from either local community-based conservation groups or individuals running private enterprises e.g. tree nurseries. At least three Nyahururu Bird Club members (Amina Njoki, Peter Karani and George Muigai) are some of the twenty-six beneficiaries of this noble project.

As of end of August 2009, 100 bee hives, 7 bee kits, 7 clearer board and catcher boxes have been purchased from African Bee Keepers Ltd ready for distribution; Twenty-six members were trained in modern bee keeping, book keeping and marketing skills was conducted in May/June. In July, a seminar was held for community representatives and leaders on wetlands policy, regulations and other relevant legislation. More than 14 tree nurseries are currently being supported to raise over 175,000 indigenous tree seedlings for planting in the c.1,200 hectares of deforested catchment by November 2009.

The following are the **project's outcome**:

- Health of Lake Ol' Bolossat ecosystem improved through reduced dependence on the catchment area forests and other natural resources.
- Established modern bee farming as a lucrative alternative nature based enterprise.
- Rehabilitated Lake Ol' Bolossat catchment area through increased tree planting.
- Accessible and functional environmental information repository centre established at the site.

4. Avian ectoparasites sampling and bird ringing in Nyahururu.

In late July, Kuria Ndung'u and I made a trip to Nyahururu for a one-week sampling of avian ectoparasites and bird ringing. Percy Sladen Memorial Fund (UK) supported the study while Rufford Small Grants (for Nature Conservation) provided some additional support for transport. We enjoyed the company of Amina Njoki and George Ndung'u at Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and Nyakariang'a Water Pump for two days. Catherine Wambui and Peter Karani joined us at Uaso Narok Forest for two more days. Kuria Ndung'u, a veteran member of Nairobi Ringing Group and founder of Kajiado Bird Club, shared his enormous knowledge on Kenyan avifauna, bird ringing, hand-held and field identification skills. Surely, the four NBC members will always remember this time they shared with Kuria. The following photos: Wamiti (left of first photo) demonstrates sampling of avian ectoparasites to Peter and Catherine at Uaso Narok Forest and Kuria (right of second photo) with George and Amina at KARI. We are grateful to KARI, Nyakariang'a Water Pump and Uaso Narok Forest staffs for granting us permission to conduct the research and training on their grounds.



5. Athlete and World Champion, Kamau Wanjiru, is NBC's Patron

On July 30, 2009, Kuria Ndung'u and I were lucky to meet the local resident, 2008 Olympic Marathon Champion Mr Kamau Wanjiru at his residence. Nyahururu Bird Club member George Muigai and his fellow athlete, Macharia, arranged this honored meeting. Although we discussed several items, among the key things we deliberated upon conservation initiatives locally, possibility of organizing a Nyahururu marathon championship and founding of a Nyahururu Athletics academy to nurture young talents from the area. Mr. Wanjiru (as he is popularly known) promised to take a lead in shaping athletics to have a focus on conservation. Further, he also kindly accepted the invitation from NBC membership to be our patron.



Mr Wanjiru (right in the above photo with Wamiti) won a gold medal in the 2008 Beijing China Olympic World Marathon (42km). This elevated him to a local and international celeb. He is also holding the following titles in athletics: Current world record holder in Half Marathon (21km) and the 2009 London Marathon Champion. As one of us, we celebrate him. NBC is proud to have him join us as a patron.

6. AfWC July 2009 participation at LNNP

This activity was possible through recognition and invitation from the Coordinator of the African Waterfowl Census (AfWC) based at the National Museums of Kenya. One member, George Muigai, represented the Club at Lake Nakuru National Park on the weekend of July 18. Two other members had been invited to join other volunteers at Lake Naivasha during the weekend of 25 July. We hope that the Coordinator will keep giving them a chance to take part each year.

7. Monthly meetings and bird walks: NBC logo and catchphrase adopted

Prior to all meetings, a joint bird walk is organized. These have continued to enrich the checklist of birds of Nyahururu that will contribute to forthcoming publication of the checklist in our future projects. The bird walks are enriching NBC member's skills. Among the records they are keeping includes nesting, seasonality and general bird behavior. One June 25 2009, Karani and George were invited in a chief's baraza to address a community gathering where they sensitized and motivated them towards environmental conservation and associated benefits.

The Club has also settled on a logo and catchphrase (slogan). Given her presence in large numbers and great diversity in plumage colours, we have agreed to adopt a **Hartlaub's Turaco** as our logo while our catchphrase now becomes '**the future is today**'. This slogan replaces the one used previously '**on safari with a purpose**'. The photo below (left) gives an impression of how the logo may look like once designed properly. The other photo shows (L-R) NBC's Chairman Samuel Karanja, Treasurer George Muigai, Kuria Ndung'u (Kajiado Bird Club) and Secretary Catherine Wambui during an afternoon visit to the now dry bed of Lake Ol' Bolossat (in the background).



The future

We hope that we shall be able to secure funding to enable us conduct a thorough biodiversity survey in the forest and the grassland plains of Lake Ol' Bolossat besides acquiring an intensive training in bird ringing as we settle for an enterprise in conservation through avitourism.