



A ROCHA KENYA'S NEWSLETTER

Nature conserved, people transformed

ISSUE 05—April 2015

Wader Ringing in Coastal Kenya



Philomachus pugnax

Kenya is important for tens of thousands of wintering waders. While some species like the Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) and Caspian Plover (*Charadrius asiaticus*) prefer the fresh water bodies inland, many others target the coastal zone. The rich inter-tidal mud of Mida Creek, Sabaki Estuary, Tana Delta and Lamu are essential for their survival. After breeding in the Arctic Region, in places such as East Kazakhstan and Mongolia, vast numbers of waders migrate southwards spending their non-breeding season in India, East and Southern Africa. Between September and May, they feast on worms, shrimps, crabs and other invertebrates along the coast.



Arenaria interpres

Wader ringing forms an important part of A Rocha's research programme. Monthly monitoring, annual counts, anthropogenic disturbance, nutrition and moulting strategy are part of our research efforts which have been carried out on over 5000 waders which have also been ringed and measurements taken on them. We have demographic data of different species which has helped in designation of IBAs and general habitat conservation which local communities can access. We are working with conservation partners to safeguard wader habitats and migration corridors. The ringing itself creates excellent opportunities for training as it is a way of establishing environmental education knowledge of wader ecology in their non-breeding habitats. Early this year local bird guides and students from Pwani University joined A Rocha Kenya for an overnight wader ringing session next to the ASSETS board walk at Mida. With a more than 200-meter-net supported by long bamboo picks slightly above the neap tide, the team caught and ringed more than 100 birds belonging to 11 species. The catch included Crab Plovers (*Dormas ardeola*), Lesser Sand Plovers (*Charadrius mongolus*), Curlew Sand Pipers (*Calidris ferruginea*), Terek Sand Pipers (*Xenus cinereus*), Grey Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*). The team managed to catch, for the first time ever at Mida, a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and a juvenile Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*). Our lead scientist, Colin Jackson, is currently in the process of preparing a number of publications on collected data.



The team at the ringing table

ASSETS; The Story of Hope



An ASSETS beneficiary being interviewed

founding couple, Peter and Miranda Harris, said that they are encouraging other A Rocha organisations to initiate such a programme. In February, this year, ASSETS committee, including Mr. Maghanga (Gede Station Forester) approved 34 new beneficiaries, bringing the number of students that we are currently supporting to 123. It is a story that brings hope, both to the young generation and to the forest ecosystem.

Over time, ASSETS has proved to be one of the best conservation strategies that A Rocha Kenya has used to restore ecosystems. Using eco-tourism proceeds, the scheme has funded secondary education of more than 500 bright, needy students who hail from around Arabuko Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek. A Rocha

In pictures



Peter Harris; A Rocha founder giving a talk on Conservation and Faith at the All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi.



Teachers from Dakatcha Schools enjoying themselves during a snorkeling session after attending Environmental Education training conducted by A Rocha Kenya at Mwamba Field Study Centre, Watamu.

Acacias: Kenya's ecological savior?



About 80 percent of Kenya is arid and semi-arid. Predominant in this ecosystem is savanna grasslands with acacia trees. Due to the thorny nature of African acacias, they are rarely used in forestation. A Rocha Kenya runs vibrant tree nurseries with over 6 different

preparation of acacia seedlings at Karara

species of acacia. Communities are trained on how to grow them and especially to use them in conservation agriculture's evergreen farming. In the sahelian countries such as Niger, acacia (*Faidherbia albida*) is associated with improved crop yield since it has been used to reclaim marginal land. In agro-forestry, it shields plants from excessive sunlight. It produces foliage for animals, fixes nitrogen, a habitat for birds and insects, bee keeping, medicinal uses and source of gum Arabic. We are promoting the propagation of acacia and thousands of seedlings are on display at our Karara office in Karen, Nairobi.



Community Forest Association members during one of the training sessions at Mwamba Field Study Centre.



A Rocha Kenya with other conservation stakeholders during anti-poaching campaign in Arabuko Sokoke Forest.

Training at Karara Centre

Farming God's Way (FGW) principles: crop rotation, agro-forestry, mulching and zero tillage conserve moisture, reduce weeds and enhance soil fertility leading to a better crop. FGW opens doors for nature on our farms. Butterflies, bees, birds. Worms, termites among others are all an important help to farming. As nations struggle to feed starving populations, Farming God's Way can be a great answer. Over the last couple of years A Rocha Kenya has engaged in training farmers in conservation agriculture through Farming God's Way. In March, this year, a group of 23 farmers received intensive training at Karara; our site located in Karen, Nairobi. Farmers learnt about biblical basis for creation care, ecological interactions and natural ways of controlling pests and diseases, household energy saving strategies, grafting, composting and making of liquid fertilizer from plant material.



A Rocha Kenya's National Director Dr. Raphael Magambo demonstrating grafting

The most amazing thing is that three farmers had come for the training for the second time after realizing how the method had greatly improved their production. At the end of the training, William, a farmer from Machakos confessed, "When I came for the training I was very skeptical. This is the fifth training on farming that I am receiving, this year, by different organizations. This training has given me what I was looking for in the other four". Margaret from Kisumu said, "A Rocha, you have the solution to our dying farms, reefs, rivers and birds". Muiruri, who is a farmer and herbalist based in Kiambu said, "My pastor must come for this training. It has a potential to bring a revolution to our congregation back at home"

The next training is scheduled for 25th and 26th June 2015. A Rocha Kenya sites in Karen (Nairobi), Watamu and Marafa (Dakatcha) are always open to visitors.

Stella Pekeshe's Story

Stella Pekeshe, who is a mother of five children, is one of the Dakatcha farmers who underwent training in conservation farming by A Rocha Kenya. She is now one of a group who work together on each other's farms.

Stella says "I have always wanted to go to church, but my husband won't allow me or the children to go". However, she adds, "The practice of kneeling and praying for the land before and after work in the FGW plots has made me very prayerful: I always do it. When wild pigs attacked the plot, I prayed. Surprisingly the plot was not attacked again as the pigs turned on my other (less productive, traditional) plot! Her FGW plot is one of the best in the group, much to the surprise of her husband." When he saw the difference in the maize, he suggested that we should have done FGW for the whole farm. One day, my eight-year-old daughter, Martha, brought some maize from the plot to roast. It had been dropped during a monkey attack. I told her that the first harvest was to be taken to church as thanksgiving before any use".



Stella with her tall crop of ripe maize, a result of Farming God's Way, which gives better yields and thus reduces pressure to clear more forest.



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MWAMBA FIELD STUDY CENTRE

Mwamba Field Study Centre is located on the Watamu Peninsula and has a dazzling beach in front of the Watamu Marine Park. It is equipped with a guest house, camping facility, a boat, a wet lab and nature trail. The nature trail, with labeled trees, is home to birds, lizards, other reptiles, amphibians, Sengi, Sykes monkeys and insects. The conference hall and the self-contained rooms have free WIFI internet. Our cuisine comprises delicious meals with restaurant services to supplement meal packages. Beach barbecue, swimming, beach volley ball, snorkeling and low-tide rock pooling is part of the amazing beach experience. We have a library with books whose fascinating stories range from real-life, including A Rocha's history, to fictional.

Mwamba is ideal for terrestrial and marine research projects as well as holiday making. Staying at Mwamba either on holiday or on volunteer or internship positions are all great ways of experiencing our work. One hundred percent of the income that A Rocha Kenya generates from Mwamba is ploughed back into environmental conservation.



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HOLIDAY

stay at Mwamba Field Study Centre,
Book with us on:

mwamba@arocha.org

FUN-TIME

Visit our Eco-facilities:-

Karara Nature Trails

Mida Creek Board-walk

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VOLUNTEER

Volunteer with us, apply at
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FRIENDS of ARK

Become a Friend of ARK, Registration fee—Ksh 500

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