

# **World Migratory Bird Day Celebrations in Kenya, May 2012**

**By**

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World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is an annual international awareness-raising event that was initiated in 2006 aiming at highlighting the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. The day also aims at inspiring people to take action for the conservation of migratory birds and encourages national authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), clubs, societies, universities, schools and individuals around the world to organize events and programmes, which help draw attention to migratory birds around a central theme each year.

This year's theme was "*Migratory birds and people – together through time.*" It aimed at enhancing the participants' understanding of migratory birds and the birds' relevance for mankind. Throughout time and across cultures humans have relied on birds, be it to supply food, to deliver messages, or to serve as symbols of power and prestige. Migratory birds provide essential ecological benefits and services such as pollination and seed dispersal, and the phenomenon of bird migration is crucial to the web of life. This year's celebrations in Kenya were held on the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> of May at various sites by the Nature Kenya Site Support Groups (SSGs).

This report summarizes the major happenings at the sites that took part especially the number of people reached and the major activities of that day.

Nature Kenya works in all the 61 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Kenya. However, due to the prioritization of the sites, 18 have been considered to be of more critical concern based on the threats they face hence the need to work with the SSGs. The celebrations were held at: Dakatcha Woodlands, Tana Delta, Taita Hills, Dunga Swamp, Yala Swamp, Mt Kenya, South Nandi, North Nandi and Kakamega Forest. The groups at these sites did participate by engaging themselves in bird watching, tree planting, conservation talks on birds/migratory birds, video shows on birds, drawings and a football tournament bringing together the young and the old in the community.

In Dakatcha Woodland, the Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group (DWCG) celebrated the day by initiating the first edition of the Nature Kenya Clarke's Weaver football tournament that was held at Marafa. The football tournament was used to raise awareness, not only on the migratory birds but also on the endangered Clarke's Weaver. The tournament will be repeated annually. Dakatcha primary emerged the winners in the tournament and in the environmental conscious schools, after being voted the school that had planted the highest number of trees. The event brought together around 300 people.



In Yala swamp, the group participated in Bird watching along Nyadorera Sidundo road and managed to spot 18 bird species within one hour. Later, the SSG members joined standard six pupils of Sidundo primary school in planting 100 trees around the school compound. A total of 25 students and 14 SSG members took part.





In Taita Hills, Eleven SSG members together with 48 students and three teachers shared talks on migratory birds, bird identification and the importance of geography as a subject in relation to migratory species. The 11 SSG members did a birdwalk the in Ngangao forest on 13<sup>th</sup> May where 28 species were recorded.



In Mt Kenya, over 100 SSG members attended the celebrations with a visit by five Birdlife Africa secretariat staff. The activities here included bird watching with 700 tree seedlings being planted within the IBA.



At Dunga, three schools participated with a total of 45 students, three teachers, three members from the Ministry of Tourism-Kisumu Branch and four SSG members. The celebrations here included talks on causes of migration, migratory birds and on how they interact with different cultures along their long journey to various places, the need to conserve their habitats and their importance to human and environment. They also did a bird walk where a few species were recorded. Time was allocated to the students where they held their own discussions on issues concerning their efforts towards conservation. They cited inadequate support by their parents,

elder people, inadequate resource and knowledge etc. Lastly, the students had a chance to see a documentary on migratory birds within the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya hall.



In Kakamega, many people already had the knowledge about migratory species like the White and Black Storks which they do see during certain seasons. The celebrations in Kakamega included bird watching, discussions on birds especially the challenges and solutions facing migratory species, factors causing migration, types of migration and drawing sessions for the pupils. General bird ecology was also taught to the pupils. A total of 150 pupils/adults attended with 64 bird species having been recorded in the Southern section of the forest while 143 bird species in the Northern site of the forest, with four migratory ones. A video show on migratory species was also shown later in the day.



In Tana, prior to the celebrations day, various awareness campaigns was done reaching four schools with a total of 1013 and 27 teachers. They were informed about the WMBD and why it's celebrated and the importance of birds. On the material day, environmental education through audio-visual was done. The importance of birds and their protection was discussed, threats affecting the wetlands and forests within the Tana Delta. The celebration was attended by about 400 people, 250 pupils and 150 community members.

Thus a total of 800 tree seedlings were planted and 1706 people were reached during the two days to mark the WMBD in Kenya.