

nature net

The Nature Kenya Newsletter

October 2000



WHAT'S NEW!

Your Opportunity to be

HEARD!

Members Lunch Hour

Conservation issues making news!

An amazing place you have discovered!

Interesting birds others have recently seen!

Documented animal behaviour observations!

The new publication everyone is talking about!

Bring News You Would Like to Share!

Join this informal discussion group on **Wednesday 25 October, '00, 1:00 p.m.** and share with other members your thoughts about wildlife and the environment.

Bustani Cafeteria, National Museums of Kenya.

Cost of Lunch: 100/-

Fundraising Ideas Competition

This is one for all you members working in Marketing and all other members who think they have some interesting, foolproof fundraising ideas!

Membership alone does not fully support all Nature Kenya activities. In the past we have had the support of a BirdLife partner, the RSPB. In future we will need to do our own fundraising. The fundraising can be for running the office or sponsoring *Nature Net*, the birdwalks, or a particular project.

Write a brief outline of your proposal and send it by post, fax or email to the Office Manager, Nature Kenya.

Members whose entries are short listed may be requested to come to the office and meet with the Development Subcommittee.

The winning entry will win a prize!
Entry deadline: Thursday 30 November '00

TALKS & VIDEOS

**Important Bird Areas (IBAs) -
How the programme is working in Kenya**



Important Bird Areas (IBAs):

- * are places of international significance for the conservation of birds,
- * are practical tools for conservation, recognised worldwide,
- * are chosen using standardised, agreed criteria applied with common sense,
- * should form part of a wider, integrated approach to conservation and sustainable use that embraces species, sites, habitats and people.

Speaker: Paul Matiku

Advocacy Manager, Nature Kenya

**Monday 9 October '00, 5:30 p.m. at the National
Museums of Kenya, Louis Léokey M. Holl**
Transport to town available.

Kenya Rainwater Association (KRA) Rainwater Harvesting Exposition

During this event, public institutions, private firms, non-governmental and community based organisations involved in rainwater harvesting will exhibit their activities.

Manufacturers and suppliers of materials and technologies associated with rainwater harvesting will also display their products. Professional advice on rainwater harvesting technologies will be available.

For further information contact KRA on 720269 or 718473 or email kra@net2000ke.com

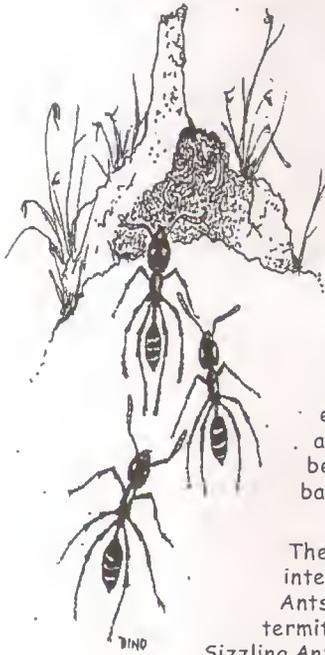
**Friday 13 & Saturday 14 October, '00
at the National Museums of Kenya**

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

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NATURALISTS CORNER



The Dawn Raiders By Dino Martins

Slowly the light of dawn seeps onto the parched plains. Herds of zebra and scattered Tommy shuffle slowly forward into the new day. It seems to be just another morning of the drought. Except for the occasional song of a red-naped lark it is very quiet on the plains, but the sense of empty vastness is deceptive, for amongst the fractured rocks and bent grasses an army is preparing for battle.

They are organised and determined, intent, even eager. These are Singing Ants preparing to raid an unsuspecting termite nest. Singing Ants, also known as Sizzling Ants, are named for the hissing sound that they produce when alarmed. This sound comes from a special ridged structure located between the second and third abdominal segments known as the stridulatory organ. The sound is meant to alert other ants to any danger and put them on the defensive. Singing Ants are members of the Family Ponerinae or Primitive Ants. This group is characterised by stinging workers and they are all carnivorous.

The Singing Ants march in a long column. The scouts or soldiers run ahead in loops, touching everything with their feelers, then rush back, reporting their findings to the lead ants. Similar scouts also watch the columns' flanks, responding aggressively to any threat. The termites meanwhile, are repairing their nest, fixing the damage from a five day-old aardvark attack. They are very vulnerable as a large part of the nest is wide open.

The Singing Ants know this, and they move in for the kill. The column simply pours into the nest, grabbing termites left and right. Some termite soldiers resist, but against the speed, numbers and strength of the Singing Ants, it is futile. By the time the alarm has spread through the rest of the nest, and reinforcements have arrived, the raiders are long gone.

The column reassembles and moves on across the plains, the soldiers and larger workers at the flanks. Workers at the centre of the column carry the spoils, their jaws are empty, free for defense, but their stomachs are full. Some of this food will later be regurgitated for nestmates. Their efficiency is remarkable - if you can't carry food in your jaws, then keep it in your stomach. This forms a vast, mobile (and secure) communal food store.

They march on, passing other species of ants, whom they ignore altogether. A few minutes later they come to an abandoned hole in an old termite nest. Here they file in, past the gruesome sight of their dead nestmates. This is the Singing Ants' temporary home. Many species of ant dispose of the dead in special heaps. The Singing Ants simply toss them outside, their nomadic lives have no time for ceremony. After the queen had been fed, they reassemble and emerge. Time for the next raid.

Questions/Comments? Please email dinomartins@usa.net

RESEARCH AWARDS

Declining Amphibian Population Task Force (DAPTF) Seed grants for year 2000

Applications from developing countries are highly encouraged to improve on the number of research projects on herpetology. Joint applications are also accepted. Please note that DAPTF funding does not exceed \$2000. Projects addressing emergency situations for Amphibians are considered any time.

For details about this funding please write to Tim Halliday, Dept of Biological Sciences, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, UK or email: daptf@open.ac.uk

Bats Conservation International (BCI): Student Scholarships

Each year, BCI sponsors graduate students in conducting conservation-related research on bats. Individual awards range from \$1000 - 2,500 and students are encouraged to source matching grants to supplement these funds. BCI interest lie in ecological & behavioural questions, solving economic problems which will further conservation tolerance, documenting key ecological or economic roles of bats, and educating people who are directly relevant to conservation success.

For more details write to: Bat Conservation International, Scholarship Program, P O Box 16203, Austin, TX 78716 - 2603 or email: aengland@batcon.org or visit their website at: <http://www.batcon.org>. The application deadline is 15 December.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Swedish Biodiversity Centre - International Master of Science Programme in Biodiversity

The target groups for the course are graduates of natural science programmes, professionally active university teachers, biologists, agronomists, foresters, NGO and project workers, nature conservationists and biodiversity managers. Competition is very high. Full scholarships, covering travel and the cost of living are provided to participants from developing countries.

They are now accepting applications for the next course start, 2001-2003 (lectures 3 Sep. 2001 - 10 June 2002). Applications must be received by 31 January 2001.

To apply contact: Veronica Areskoug, Course Administrator, International Msc. in Biodiversity Admissions, The Swedish Biodiversity Centre, Box 7007, SE - 750 07 Uppsala, Sweden.
E-mail: Veronika.Areskoug@cbm.slu.se

Know Kenya Course

Tuesday 7 - Thursday 16 November '00
Cost per person: 7000/-

Registration at the Kenya Museum Society, National Museums of Kenya, open from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

POT LUCK OUTINGS

Members meet at the National Museum car park 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, i.e. **15 October**. They decide where to go and what to do - usually observing birds and nature in general. Bring lunch.

TREE WALK

Arboretum guided Tree Walks on the last Monday of every month i.e. **30 October from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks of sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

ARABUKO SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **7 October, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

OCTOBER DIARY

Wed 4	Birdwalk
Thu 5	TDC Trip
Sat 7	Arabuko-Sokoke birdwalk
Mon 9	IBA lecture
Wed 11	Birdwalk
Sun 15	Pot Luck
Wed 18	Birdwalk
Wed 25	Birdwalk & Member Lunch
Mon 30	Tree Walk

PUBLICATIONS



Traditional Food Plants of Kenya

This illustrated book exhibits the wealth of plant resources and the cultural traditions behind their use in Kenya. Medicinal, ethnoveterinary, cultural, household and other uses are mentioned.

Available from the Nature Kenya office for 1000/-



Kenya Birds - Volume 8 Issue 1 is now available and is free to all members.

Special Offer to Nature Kenya Members

Have a meal at 'Shan E Punjab' and get **10% off** your food bill!

This vegetation restaurant is located at Bishan Plaza, Mpaka Rd, Westlands, opposite 'Steers' and next to 'Open House'.

This opportunity is given to Nature Kenya members, on presentation of their valid membership card.

Bird Hotline

Please note the records below are unconfirmed

Abyssinian Scimitarbill (one adult),
Green Park, Naivasha/ Atlas Square 63 C/
Sept/ Patrick Plumbe

Black-fronted Bush-shrike,
Forest edge, near Meru Tawn/ Atlas
Square 52 C/Sept, Delos & Hazel
McCauley and Henry & Phyllis Paltridge

African Swallow-tailed Kite,
African Green Ibis
The Salient, Aberdare N. Park/ Atlas
Square 62 C/Aug
Mwaki Kioko

Rufous-bellied Heron at Musiara Swamp
Ross's Turaco & Schalaw's Turaco at
Mara River/ Atlas Square 74 A/Aug
Philip Hechle, Heather Elkin and
Alex Millar

White-crested Helmet-shrike
(flock of 17)
Patterson's Safari Camp/ Tsava East N.
Park/ Atlas Square 73B/Aug
Chris Hill

Pectoral-patch Cisticola
Kitengela/ Atlas Square 75B/Aug
Nature Kenya Saturday Outing

Black-bellied Bustard, Common
Scimitarbill, Black-throated
Wattle-eye, Red-headed Weaver,
Malewa River Lodge/ Atlas Square 62 C/
Aug/ Shailesh Patel

African Firefinch, Malachite Sunbird,
Lanner Falcon
Ngong Racecourse/ Atlas Square 75 B/
Aug/ Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

Silverbird, Rosy-breasted Longclaw,
Grey Kestrel
Olanana Camp, Masai Mara/ Atlas Square
73 B/Aug/ Elly Gathungu

Count UP

**1168 (members)/
2000 (target)**

We need your support!
Recruit **one** other member!

