



THE BOG

ONDIRI WETLAND NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT RUTO'S CLIMATE CHANGE AGENDA

Dr. William Samoei Ruto, the 5th President of the Republic of Kenya is an accomplished environmentalist and the most educated Kenyan president. The President who attained the bachelor's degree in Botany and Zoology from the University of Nairobi went further and pursued a master's and doctorate degree from the same university. The President was at the School of Biological Sciences and his doctorate thesis was on: Influence of Anthropogenic Activities on Land Use/ Cover Changes and Environmental Quality of Saiwa Wetland Watershed, Western Kenya.



In his inauguration speech the president highlighted his climate change agenda before numerous African and international leaders who graced the historic event at Kasarani Stadium. *"Among the central concerns of my government will be climate change"* the President said. He went further to say; *"In our country, women and men, young people, farmers, workers and local communities suffer the consequences of climate emergency. It is not too late to respond. To tackle this threat, we must act urgently to keep global heating levels below 1.5C, help those in need and end addiction to fossil fuels. Africa has the opportunity to lead the world. We have immense potential for renewable energy... Kenya is on a transition to clean energy that will support jobs, local economies and the sustainable industrialization. In Kenya, we*

will lead this endeavor by reaffirming our commitment to transition to 100% clean energy by 2030. We call on all African states to join us in this journey. As members of the international community, we shall support a successful Climate Summit in Africa in November, by championing delivery of the finance and technology needed for Africa to adapt to climate impacts, support those in need and manage the transition."

This gives the climate agenda in the Republic of Kenya a new lease of life.

Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan 2018-2022 has identified; disaster risk management, food and nutrition security, water and the blue economy, forestry, wildlife and tourism, health, sanitation and human settlements, manufacturing and ener-

gy and transport as the priority areas with a goal to further Kenya's sustainable development by providing mechanisms and measures to achieve low carbon climate resilient development and create a link with priority areas.

Wetlands play a critical role in climate change mitigation and absorbs 30 per cent of the atmospheric carbon.

In Kenya the Wetlands falls under several multi agencies such as National Environment Authority (NEMA), Water Resource Authority (WRA) Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) among others based on the nature of the Wetland. The six wetlands that are recognized as Wetlands of International Importance under Ramsar falls under KWS.

We hope his administration shall establish the Directorate of Wetlands Management since Wetlands are disappearing ten times faster than forests.

In Kenya there are over nine hundred Wetlands and only six are established as the Ramsar sites.

NEMA has played a significant role in the conservation of Wetlands around the country and has managed to work with local communities in establishing the management plans the latest being Ondiri Wetland Integrated Management Plan 2022 –2027.

By David Wakogy—Founder & Coordinator Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya

The Waterfowl of Ondiri Wetland

There are at least 22 species of water-fowl in Ondiri Wetland. These are; the Black crane, Common moorhen, Sacred ibis, Yellow-billed duck, Hadada ibis, Malachite kingfisher, Black-headed heron, Grey crowned crane, African water rail, Yellow-billed stork, Long-tailed cormorant, Spur-winged goose, Little bittern, Squacco heron, Hamerkop, Purple heron, Little grebe, African spoonbill, Black-crown night heron, Hottentot teal, and African marsh harrier. Each occupies a specific niche to exploit resources while minimizing competition.

The most numerous and the most vocal of these is the black crane. Long before you see one, you will be alerted to a duet composed of throaty chattering *krrok-kraaa* and rippling *weet, eet, eet, eet*, and a series of loud wheezing sounds from



Black Crane
Amaurornis flavirostris

dense cover. The tiny bird's physique is perhaps what makes it so successful in the habitat. It effortlessly navigates its way between the dense growth of typha, sedges, and water margins. When it encounters open water, it makes expert use of floating water lilies and other vegetation without making so much as a ripple. If there aren't any, with a quick flap of its wings and elongated toes dangling from behind it crosses the obstacle. Such scenes are not so common anymore as the peat continues to spread and the water level reduces.

I have once sighted a family of the endangered grey crowned crane that comprised of two adults and a juvenile. The family was foraging on aquatic animals on the sedge grass. That makes Ondiri Wetland quite special as it could be a breeding area for the grey crowned crane.

The presence of the malachite kingfisher and the occasional long-tailed cormorant is an indication of presence of fish. The former however, can subsist on other diets such as frogs and insects. The kingfishers could also be playing out there last dances before they can

no longer access the fish beneath the floating mat.

Nothing is as impressive as the camouflage capabilities of the little bittern. Only the trained eye can spot the little bird as it stands motionless within the reeds in the swamp. It hunts fish, frogs, insects, and other aquatic creatures within the swamp. Little bitterns can be pale-arctic or sedentary. The former will migrate to Africa in the winter months and fly back to Europe when it's warmer to breed.

A flock of sacred ibis will often be sighted looking for morsels of food on the floating grass. Did you know the bird borrowed its name from Ancient Egypt where it was revered? It was worshiped as the god Thoth as his living incarnation on earth. They were also often mummified as an offering to the god. This was done to protect the kingdom from plagues and diseases. Unfortunately and rather surprisingly, the bird is extirpated from the country where up to 8 million were mummified while the rest fell to habitat loss, insecticides, and poaching. So south of Egypt, Kenya continues to appreciate the numerous sightings of the bird and should not be taken for granted. The bird is also a farmer's friend, often feeding on those pesky pests in their fields. Moving on to their extremely loud and noisy cousins are the hadada ibises. They too are occasionally found in the wetland, however, they are less dependent on water.

Ondiri Wetland continues to offer a rare opportunity for people in this metropolis that have fallen in love with bird watching to come and watch birds. It is important that we continue advocating and putting in place measures that will see this unique bog continue to thrive for many generations to come. There are many more treasures to be discovered here.

By Stephen Kiringo



Grey crowned crane
Baleaica regulorum gibbericeps

COP 27 (Conference of Parties) United Nations Climate Change



Ondiri wetland has been and is still the water service providing bog for Kikuyu town and its environs. The swamp has exhibited vital roles in the local community and the business community living and working along its riparian. The current pressure for clean water, sustainable waste management solutions and the drought that has taken a toll in the country's forestry resources, wetlands, soil, local economies and wildlife has had tremendous impacts on this vital resource. As a result of unpredictable weather, Kikuyu experienced heavy rains early 2022 that resulted to deposition of silt down Nyongara River, the outlet of Ondiri swamp. It has taken the efforts of Friends of Ondiri wetland Kenya government institutions, conservation volunteers and other partners to try to control siltation through tree planting along the affected areas.

The 27th Convention of Parties (COP 27) on United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Egypt, Sharm El Sheikh between the 8th to 20th November 2022 will bring together tons of natural resources stakeholders for negotiations and agreements in thematic areas and the global crisis of climate change. FOWK has volunteered to join other climate champions to participate in a foot march from Kwale to Sharm El Sheikh in partnership with March For Our Planet Kenya chapter to raise awareness on non-violent economy, social injustices, eradicating poverty, eradicating social injustices, biodiversity loss, habitat loss, soil loss among others. Ahead of the foot march, FOWK conducted a community breakfast meeting at Ondiri swamp on 30th June 2022 to understand resource availability at Ondiri swamp, circular economy, waste management and successes of FOWK

in restoration and protection of biodiversity at the swamp.

FOWK conducted interviews on the local community members during the meeting and the recordings have been shared to the March For Our Planet communication docket for airing during COP27 and they will assist in negotiations with partners for support of the conservation efforts at the swamp, in partnership with FOWK. FOWK has continued and will continue to partner with sister organizations for restoration work, litter management and outreach programs.

The Author of this article is Lydia Kalekye who is a Climate Champion and a Volunteer at Friends of Ondiri Wetland. She has worked closely with the National Museums of Kenya in identifying the species of invertebrates that are found at Ondiri Wetland and played a significant role in empowering the community on the importance of Environmental Conservation.

She will be among the young people attending the COP27 in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt.



ONDIRI WETLAND RUN 2023
will take place on Saturday the 28th of
January 2023.

Contact us if you would like to partner with us: friendsofondiriwetland@gmail.com

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"The run aims at raising awareness on the importance of Conserving Ondiri Wetland"



The Drying up of Nyongara River and Ondiri Wetland

Human induced climate change has been treated as an emerging issue for some decades now. Many have talked about it but very little has been done about the same.



Nyongara River at Ondiri Wetland which has dried from the source.

Well, climate change and its devastating effects have now caught up with us.



David Wakogy at Mura area where Nyongara River has dried up completely.

As if that is not enough, its effects have now been coupled up with an explosion in the human population and its' subsequent insatiable appetite for natural resources and economic drive. This problem has gradually but finally caught up with us right here in Kikuyu Municipality with the drying up of Nyongara River.

In what is surely an unfortunate event of our own doing, Ondiri Wetland no longer has a surface outlet from the wetland. Nyongara River- a permanent water outlet- is now but a dry river bed. The main reason for this is the unregulated abstraction of water from the wetland and the failure of the rains due to climate change. Where the outlet once stood is a murky quagmire of an algae laden water puddle which also signifies high eutrophication within the wetland. This is an event that by no means should be ignored. It is an indication of an unfolding serious water problem that will impact us in the near future.

Almost all Kikuyu residents and a minority of Nairobians rely on this subterranean supply of water and have done so for decades. It is so reliable as a source of water such that there are no records of water failing to reach our taps because our reserve has run dry. In the scenario where that is to happen, it would be quite chaotic indeed. We have grown a reliance on this supply.

It is therefore a matter of urgency that some thing be done on illegal water abstraction as well as limitations of the same to a sustainable level. We cannot keep talking about it anymore but rather do more about it. Other than that, the replanting of indigenous vegetation on the land will have a positive impact on improved water retention by our soils.

Further down River Nyongara, more damage has been carried out by the construction of the sewer system that has essentially dislodged the stable river bend into a heap of lose rocks, rubble, soil, and mud, a catastrophe waiting to happen. In what is nothing but utter disregard for the environment, after the construction of the sewer system, the contractors did nothing to observe the rehabilitation of the riverine and riparian land as the law demands. On the onset of heavy rains, the valuable to soil will be carried away in a slurry of mud and rocks that will cover the plantations of people further down the stream as well as overwhelm aquatic life with silt, eventually it will dam the river, block it with undesirable consequences. In what was a cool, and tranquil waterfall, it is now an unsightly scene.

NEMA AND ITS SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE CONSERVATION OF ONDIRI WETLAND.



National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Director General and other senior Government officials during World Wetlands Day National Celebrations which took place at Ondiri Wetland.

The theme for 2022 World Wetlands Day was; "Wetlands Action for People and Nature."

Ondiri Wetland has undergone massive transformation since the entry of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). The port of entry for NEMA into Ondiri Wetland was through the Directorate of Wetlands.

Under the able leadership of NEMA Director General Mr. Mamo B. Mamo and the Senior Directors at the Directorate of Wetlands and Kiambu County NEMA office, Ondiri Wetland has benefitted greatly since the Authority has not only empowered the community with the best practices for the wetland management but has also constructed a modern Eco toilet which runs on solar, donated park benches, trash bins, bee hives and brought together various stakeholders for the preparation of Ondiri Wetland Integrated Management plan 2022—2027.

NEMA has also ensured pollution at the Wetland has become a thing of the past since Ondiri suffered greatly from the environmental impunity which ranged from use of chemical fertilizers some of which contained very dangerous metals, dumping of solid waste and the seepage of raw sewer from Kikuyu Town. The rate of degradation that the wetland was subjected to would have seen it disappear by the year 2040 as experts had warned. On February 2nd 2022, Ondiri Wetland played host

to the World Wetland's Day National event which was organized by NEMA and other stakeholders. The colorful even was the first national event of its kind to take place at Ondiri Wetland.

NEMA also made some nature trails around Ondiri Wetland since the Wetland is also an important ecotourism space given that it hosts over seventy six species of birds and is also the biggest green space in Kikuyu town.

NEMA has also been at the forefront in ensuring that the petition to Gazette Ondiri Wetland has successfully undergone through all the stages.



Ondiri Wetland Eco toilet which was fully funded by The National Environment Authority (NEMA)

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY AND SAVE OUR PLANET

Are you familiar with the parable of the Humming Bird? If not, let me summarize it for you as it was narrated by Professor Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmental and political activist, writer, and Nobel Laureate.

A big fire once ravaged the forest engulfing and destroying the home of the animals that lived in it. The animals were transfixed powerlessly as it devoured everything in its path. However, the tiny Humming Bird decided that it would do something about it. It rushed to the nearest stream, came back with a drop of water in its tiny beak, and poured it over the flames. It flew back and forth doing that. Bigger animals like the elephant with a big trunk continued to stand there helplessly.

The animals were baffled at this failing cause and advised the hummingbird that it was a worthless effort. Its reply was succinct and powerful, "I am doing the best I can."



In these days of climate change, modernization, economic development, and environmental degradation, it is a daunting task to reverse the damage that we have caused to our environment. If you are not familiar with some of the apocalyptic projections from our environmental watchdogs, let me get you up to date with some of them.

New Scientist reports that if the average global temperatures rise by five degrees Celsius, 60 percent of all fish species will be extinct by 2100.

The World Food Programme projects that 189 million more people will experience hunger from a global temperature rises of 2°C and the figure could rise by a staggering 1.8 billion if it rose by 4°C. At the moment we are 1.09°C warmer but it has had such significant climatic changes as recently witnessed by the floods in Pakistan. The Sixth Amendment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has confirmed that greenhouse gas emissions since 1750 will see irreversible warming of seas for the next hundred or thousand years. While in our backyard Mt. Kilimanjaro has lost 80% of its snow since 1912.

Up to date now? Indeed we are looking at a bleak future for the planet we are leaving to our children. There



is hope, however. If we can keep temperatures below 1.5°C, these projected losses can be reduced.

How can we do this? Well, we can be that hummingbird by living sustainably. Here is how;

Plant more native trees.

Avoid single-use water bottles.

Minimize wastage of water and food, especially by proper storage.

Embrace alternative energy like solar, wind, and geothermal, and replace combustion engines with electric ones.

Minimize the use of single-use items and move towards zero waste.

Ann-Marie Bonneau says, "We don't need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly." If you apply just two of these sustainability tips you'll be doing your part to make the world a better place. That is how you can be that Humming Bird!

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Trees for birthdays!!!!

Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK) gives you an opportunity to plant a tree during your birthday as you share your special moment with mother nature. If you have a birthday and you would like to visit Ondiri Wetland and grow a tree, please contact us and you will be assisted.

Guided Tours of Ondiri Wetland

We also give guided tours of Ondiri Wetland (The only highland bog in the Republic of Kenya) where you get to interact with the biggest natural trampoline!!! Ondiri Wetland is covered with peat with vegetation growing on top of it covering a big lake which the early visitors called "old lake" and where the name Ondiri is derived from. Whether you are planning to visit as an individual, a family, a group or even an educational institution or corporate, we are happy to host you.

THE BOG CELEBRATES AND RECOGNIZES DR. JOHN CHUMO



DR. JOHN CHUMO the Secretary of National Environment Complaints Committee (NECC)

For being one of the most dedicated environmentalists in the Republic of Kenya. He has worked tirelessly and selflessly to help communities around the country with environmental issues and has also helped organizations like Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK) in the Wetland restoration and rehabilitation. When FOWK approached NECC due to the alarming cases of degradation that was happening at Ondiri Wetland, Dr. Chumo provided great leadership and support which has seen Ondiri Wetland being recognized as one of the best conserved Wetlands in the country. Dr. Chumo is the Secretary/CEO of National Environmental Complaints Committee (NECC).

The National Environmental Complaints Committee (NECC) also known as the environmental ombudsman is the body charged with the task of investigating complaints or allegations regarding the condition of the environment in Kenya and suspected cases of environmental degradation. NECC also undertakes public interest litigation on behalf of the citizens in environmental matters.

NECC was established under Section 31 of the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act, 1999. It was formerly known as the Public Complaints Committee (PCC) but its name changed in the EMCA (Amendment) No. 5 of 2015). It is an important institution in the assessment of the condition of the environment in Kenya. It plays an important role in the facilitation of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms relating to environmental matters. The NECC makes recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary and thus contributes significantly to the formulation and development of environmental policy.

Dr. Chumo has been a true paragon of efficiency and dedication in executing NECC's mandate in his role as the CEO and we celebrate and recognize his great efforts in making Kenya a better country as far as environmental matter are concerned.

OUR PARTNERS



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Blue Springs Water