

The BOG

JUNE 2026

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
FRIENDS OF ONDIRI WETLAND KENYA

Sitatunga Antelopes

*The African Amphibian Antelopes
that once roamed at Ondiri Wetland.*



Ondiri Wetland is a haven of life and a legacy worth restoring. Together, we nurture nature, sustain communities, and inspire the future.

THIS ISSUE:

- World Environment Day 2026
- Interacting with Nature around Kikuyu
- Nairobi River Regeneration project at Ondiri
- The African Water Rail
- FOWK Tree Nursery and Herbal Garden



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THE LOST ANTELOPE OF ONDIRI: A SILENT DISAPPEARANCE FROM KENYA'S HIGHLAND WETLANDS

A recent conversation with renowned Kikuyu scholar Prof. David Ngugi offered a fascinating glimpse into a forgotten chapter of Kenya's environmental history. As he reminisced about his years at Alliance High School in the 1960s, he recalled how their marine biology teacher would regularly take students on educational excursions to Ondiri Wetland in Kikuyu. Those field trips exposed young learners to one of Kenya's most unique ecosystems and, unknowingly, to a species that has since disappeared from the area.



According to Prof. Ngugi, Ondiri was a very different landscape then. Large expanses of open water dominated the wetland, giving it the appearance of a shallow lake rather than the peat bog that exists today. The wetland teemed with life, attracting numerous bird species and supporting wildlife that has long vanished from the area.

Among the animals occasionally spotted grazing on the marshes were strange, goat-like antelopes. These animals were sitatungas, one of Africa's most remarkable and least understood antelope species.

Scientifically known as **Tragelaphus spekii**, the sitatunga is uniquely adapted to life in wetlands. Unlike most antelopes that prefer grasslands and savannahs, sitatungas thrive in swamps, marshes, and papyrus-dominated wetlands. Their elongated, widely spread hooves enable them to walk across floating vegetation and soft mud without sinking. They are excellent swimmers and can even submerge themselves in water to evade predators.

The sitatunga's appearance is equally distinctive. Adult males possess elegant spiral horns and a shaggy, water-resistant coat ranging from grey to dark brown. Females are generally smaller and chestnut-brown in colour. Their bodies are marked with white stripes and spots that help them blend into reeds and wetland vegetation. Naturally shy and elusive, sitatungas are most active during dawn and dusk, making sightings relatively rare.



Historically, healthy wetlands across Kenya supported populations of sitatungas. Ondiri Wetland, the source of the Nairobi River and one of the country's most important peatlands, once provided an ideal habitat. The wetland offered abundant food, secure breeding grounds, and dense vegetation for shelter.

However, the story of the sitatunga at Ondiri mirrors the broader decline of wetlands across Africa. Human activities have dramatically altered these fragile ecosystems. Drainage for agriculture, settlement expansion, pollution, encroachment, overgrazing, and unsustainable resource extraction have steadily reduced wetland habitats. At Ondiri, declining water levels and habitat degradation transformed a thriving sanctuary into a fragmented ecosystem unable to support many of its original inhabitants.

As the reeds disappeared and human pressure intensified, the sitatunga quietly vanished from the wetland.

The disappearance of the sitatunga from Ondiri is more than the loss of a beautiful antelope. It is a reminder that wetlands are living ecosystems whose health directly influences biodiversity, water security, climate resilience, and community livelihoods.

As ongoing restoration efforts seek to revive Ondiri Wetland, there remains hope that the ecological integrity of this unique landscape can be restored.

Perhaps one day, future generations visiting Ondiri will once again witness the quiet movement of sitatungas among the reeds, reclaiming a home that was once theirs.



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**By David Wakogy,
FOWK FOUNDER AND COORDINATOR**

ECOTOURISM AT ONDIRI WETLAND:



Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves education and interpretation. It operates on the core pillars of sustainability: minimizing physical and ecological impacts, directly funding conservation, and empowering host communities socially and economically. The main difference between ecotourism and mass tourism while Mass tourism is Leisure-based; standardized and commercialized, Ecotourism is: Educational; active engagement with nature and culture. How it works



Ondiri Wetland is one of the places that you will be able to get such an experience. Our Main area of ecotourism coverage is:

1. Birdwatching
2. Botany
3. The quacking bog experience
4. Citizen Science experience.
5. Duduwalks, we are able to study and interact with the insect family.
6. Barefoot walking.

Ecotourism is considered the fastest-growing market in the tourism industry. Within ecotourism, linking of tourism with environment and community interests takes place – a practice that has become an essential movement in light of global climate challenges and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

If you are looking to get involved locally, Ecotourism Kenya acts as a regional hub, promoting responsible travel and managing Eco-rating certifications for sustainable accommodations in the region.

#VisitOndiri



You are free to visit with us for one of a kind green tourism. Individuals, Families, Religious Institutions, Schools, visitors are all welcome.

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REDISCOVERING NATURE: WHY KIKUYU'S GREEN SPACES MATTER MORE THAN EVER



By **Nelson Maina Macharia** -
Environmentalist

In a world increasingly dominated by screens, deadlines, and the relentless pace of urban life, the simple act of stepping into nature has become both a luxury and a necessity. For residents of Kikuyu and its surrounding areas in Kiambu County, nature is not a distant destination reserved for holidays, it is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Yet, many of us pass by these natural treasures without truly experiencing them.

Kikuyu is often celebrated for its strategic location on the outskirts of Nairobi, its growing commercial activity, and its vibrant communities.

However, beyond the busy roads and expanding estates lies another side of Kikuyu: one of wetlands, birdsong, indigenous vegetation, and quiet spaces that invite us to reconnect with ourselves and the environment.

At the heart of this natural heritage lies Ondiri Wetland.

Just a short distance from Kikuyu town, Ondiri Wetland stands as one of Kenya's ecological marvels. It is Kenya's only known quaking bog and among the country's most significant freshwater wetlands.

More importantly, it serves as the source of the Nyongara River, a major tributary of the Nairobi River, supporting water systems that sustain countless lives downstream.

For years, Ondiri faced mounting threats from pollution, encroachment, and public neglect. What many viewed simply as a swamp was, in reality, a living ecosystem quietly performing vital functions: filtering water, storing carbon, controlling floods, supporting biodiversity, and moderating local climate conditions.

Fortunately, a remarkable story of hope emerged from within the community itself.



#VisitOndiri

Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK), a community-led conservation organization founded in 2016, has transformed the narrative around Ondiri. Through clean-up initiatives, habitat restoration, environmental education, tree-planting activities, and advocacy, they have demonstrated that ordinary citizens can become extraordinary custodians of nature.

Their work reflects a simple but powerful truth: conservation succeeds when communities feel connected to the places they protect.

Visiting Ondiri today offers much more than a lesson in environmental science.



It provides an opportunity to slow down and remember what it means to belong to a place.

A morning nature walk along the wetland trails reveals the rhythmic calls of birds hidden among reeds. Birdwatchers often arrive with binoculars and notebooks, eager to spot species that find refuge in this unique habitat.



Photographers capture reflections dancing on still waters. Families spread picnic mats beneath open skies, sharing conversations uninterrupted by notifications and digital distractions.

For students, Ondiri serves as an outdoor classroom where lessons about biodiversity, climate change, and sustainability come alive. For young people especially, interacting with nature nurtures curiosity, responsibility, and appreciation for the delicate systems that sustain human life.

There is also something profoundly healing about these experiences. Scientific studies continue to affirm what many cultures have long understood:

spending time in natural environments reduces stress, improves mental well-being, boosts creativity, and strengthens social bonds.

In communities where the pressures of modern living continue to rise, accessible green spaces become essential public assets rather than optional amenities.

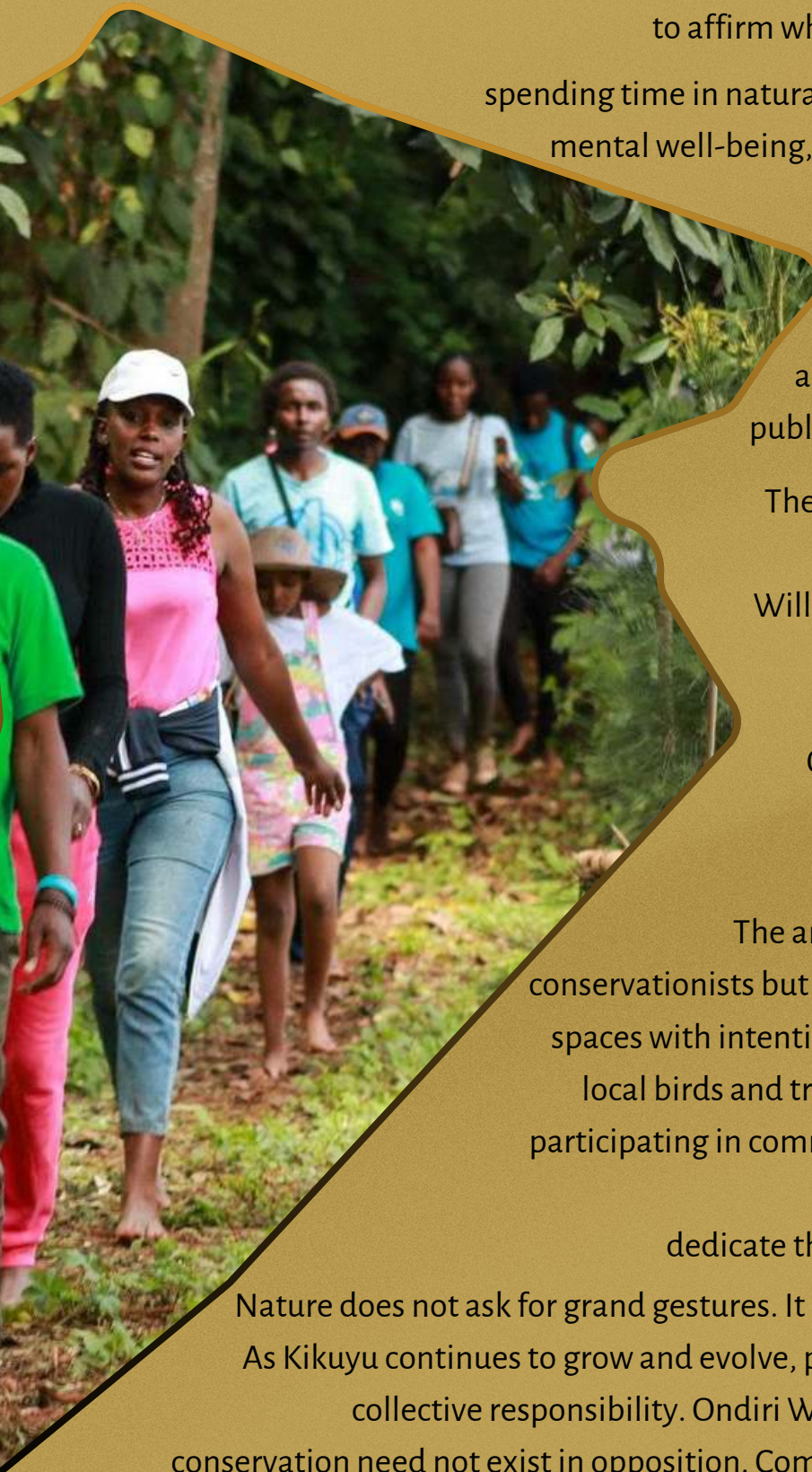
The story of Kikuyu's natural environment is ultimately a story about choices. Will we continue to regard wetlands, forests, and rivers as vacant spaces awaiting development? Or will we recognise them as life-support systems deserving protection and respect?

The answer lies not only with policymakers and conservationists but with each of us. It begins by visiting these spaces with intention. By teaching our children the names of local birds and trees. By disposing of waste responsibly. By participating in community clean-ups. By planting indigenous trees. By supporting organisations that dedicate themselves to environmental stewardship.

Nature does not ask for grand gestures. It asks for consistency, awareness, and care. As Kikuyu continues to grow and evolve, preserving its natural heritage will require collective responsibility. Ondiri Wetland reminds us that development and conservation need not exist in opposition. Communities can prosper while safeguarding the ecosystems that sustain them.

Perhaps the greatest gift nature offers is perspective. Standing at the edge of Ondiri, listening to the rustle of reeds carried by the wind, one is reminded that we are not separate from the environment, we are part of it.

This coming week, perhaps the invitation is simple: take a walk. Visit a wetland. Watch a bird. Plant a tree. Bring a child along. In reconnecting with nature around Kikuyu, we may discover that we are also reconnecting with ourselves. And in protecting places like Ondiri, we protect the future we all share.



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2026

Sarah Waminja, representing FOWK, poses alongside Director General Dr. Mamo B. Mamo, EBS, and Principal Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Eng. Festus Ngeno, MIEK, CBS.



5th June is World Environment Day, a day celebrated globally to inspire environmental awareness and action across the globe. This year, the theme was a global call for climate action.

This year, Kenya was not left behind. The national event for the World Environment Day was held in Ol Kalou, Nyandarua County, presided over by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Dr. Deborah Barasa, EGH, accompanied by the Principal Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Eng. Festus Ngeno, NEMA leadership led by Chairman Emilio Mugo, Director General Dr. Mamo B. Mamo, alongside other senior officials from the County Government and National Government.



Representing FOWK at the event, Jackie joined other participants in planting a tree, reaffirming our commitment to environmental conservation.



FOWK Founder Mr. David Wakogy during a tree a plating exercise with PS Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Eng. Festus Ngeno, MIEK, CBS.



The national celebrations brought together people from different sectors under a shared commitment to protecting our environment and addressing the growing climate crisis. The event highlighted the importance of environmental conservation, climate action, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable development. Through activities such as tree planting, environmental awareness campaigns, and engaging discussions on environmental stewardship, participants were reminded that protecting nature is a collective responsibility that requires action from all of us. A key takeaway from the celebrations was the need to safeguard critical ecosystems that support biodiversity, water resources, and local livelihoods. This message strongly resonated with the conservation efforts taking place at Ondiri Wetland, Kenya's largest quaking bog and an important freshwater source. The event emphasized the value of community participation in conservation by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging collective action.

Activities such as tree planting and restoration initiatives showcased practical solutions that can be replicated around Ondiri Wetland to enhance ecosystem health, improve water quality, and increase resilience to climate change. Additionally, the event created opportunities for networking, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, opening doors for partnerships that can support conservation programs, environmental education, and sustainable ecotourism initiatives at the wetland.

As the impacts of climate change continue to be felt across the globe, events such as World Environment Day provide an important platform for raising awareness and inspiring meaningful action. The gathering in Ol Kalou demonstrated the power of collaboration and reaffirmed the commitment of all stakeholders to work together in protecting our environment for present and future generations. The experience was both inspiring and motivating, highlighting that every action, no matter how small, contributes to a healthier environment and a more sustainable future for all.



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**By Sarah Waminja Muya,
Environmentalist.**



THE AFRICAN WATER RAIL

RALLUS CAERULESCENS



The water rail is considered one of the most elusive birds in Africa. It is a highly secretive and elusive medium-sized wetland bird, renowned for its skulking behaviour. It slips almost invisibly through dense reedbeds and marshes. Its presence serves as a strong indicator of the health, resilience, and biodiversity of freshwater wetlands.

Its appearance is characterized by long, oversized red toes, a short tail, and a long, slender dull-red bill. Both sexes look almost identical, although the male is typically slightly larger than the female. Its body is laterally compressed (flattened from side to side), an adaptation that allows the bird to move effortlessly through even the densest stands of reeds.

The African Water Rail is extremely reclusive, and catching a glimpse of one requires great patience. The best time to observe it is early in the morning when it is most active. Focus on the edges of marshes and bogs, such as the Ondiri Wetland, where dense wetland vegetation (macrophytes) like *Typha domingensis*, *Cyperus dives*, and *Eriochloa meyerana* provides cover.

Because the species is highly territorial, birders sometimes use recorded calls to entice individuals into emerging from cover to defend their territory—a technique known as the playback strategy.

The African Water Rail builds a cup-shaped nest in a dry spot among reeds. Both sexes share nest construction and incubate the eggs for about 20 days. After hatching, both parents diligently feed and protect the chicks for approximately four weeks, aggressively defending the brood from potential threats. These birds probe mud and shallow water with their bills, while also locating and picking up food by sight.

Despite their secretive nature, water rails can be surprisingly aggressive predators. They are known to hunt and kill small birds and mammals by repeatedly stabbing them at the back of the head with their bills.

The African Water Rail plays a critical ecological role as an opportunistic omnivore and wetland predator. By feeding on aquatic insects, small amphibians, crustaceans, and other invertebrates, it helps regulate local populations and prevents the overabundance of certain marsh-dwelling species.

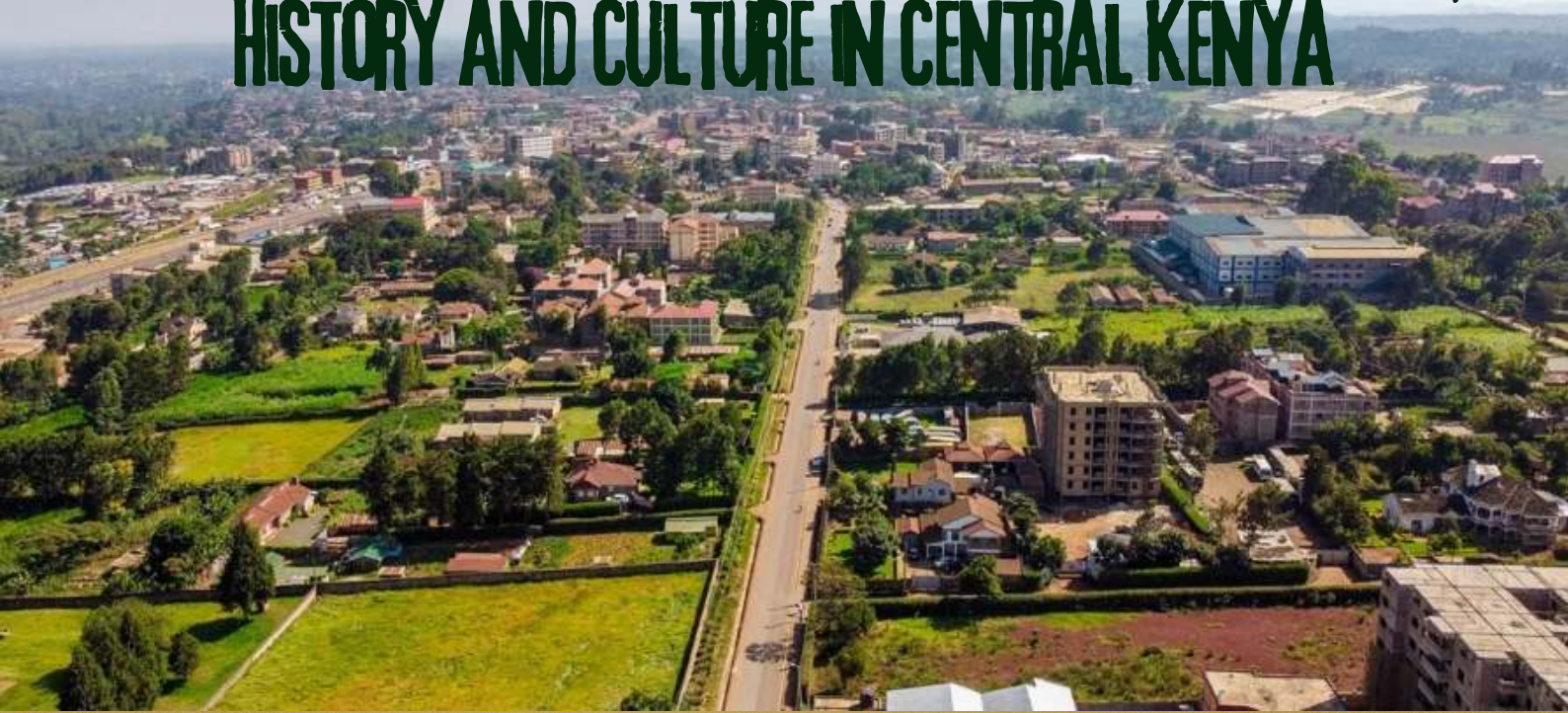
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**By Kimani Ng'ang'a -
Environmental Activist/Ethnobotanist**

DISCOVER KIKUYU: A VIBRANT GATEWAY TO NATURE, HISTORY AND CULTURE IN CENTRAL KENYA



Nestled just southwest of Nairobi, Kikuyu is one of the fastest-growing urban centres in the Kenya. Rich in history, endowed with remarkable natural attractions, and home to some of the nation's most respected institutions, Kikuyu offers a compelling blend of heritage, ecology, spirituality and modern urban life.

The town traces its origins to the construction of the Uganda Railway by the British colonial administration. Early residents referred to the railway station as Ceceni, a local adaptation of the word station. Situated at the foot of the escarpment leading into what was once known as the White Highlands, Kikuyu evolved into an important commercial and missionary centre and today stands as a thriving metropolitan hub.

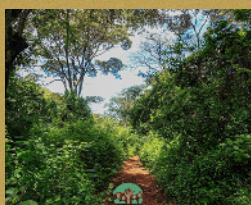
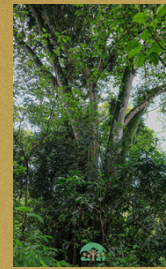
Kikuyu is widely recognised for its excellent infrastructure and high quality of life. It is home to outstanding healthcare facilities, led by PCEA Kikuyu Hospital and LifeCare Hospital, prestigious educational institutions including Alliance High School, Alliance Girls High School, University of Nairobi and Presbyterian University of East Africa, excellent road connections via the Southern Bypass and Waiyaki Way, and a vibrant business environment.



Among Kikuyu's most remarkable attractions is Ondiri Wetland, Kenya's only known subterranean peat bog and the source of the Nairobi River. This internationally significant ecosystem is the lifeline of Kikuyu's residents and offers birdwatching, guided nature walks and environmental education through Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya.



Nearby lies Thogoto Forest, covering approximately 764 hectares of indigenous and exotic woodland. Visitors can explore Irima rĩa Ngai, the “Hole of God,” a dramatic crater associated with local legend, and Gĩtwe kĩa Mbagathi, the pristine spring that gives rise to the Mbagathi River. Guided hikes are regularly organised by the Thogoto Forest Family.



Nature lovers can also fish at Karai Wetland, enjoy family picnics at Riu Nderi Wetland, explore the fascinating Bengi Mbaya caves, visit Kikuyu Springs, which formed part of Nairobi's earliest piped water system in 1906, observe more than one hundred bird species along the Nyongara River, and go trout fishing at Rungiri Dam with the Friends of Rungiri Dam.



Kikuyu is also a treasure trove of history. Visitors can tour sites associated with Waiyaki wa Hinga, including the great acacia tree where his homestead once stood; visit the site of Jomo Kenyatta's workshop, where he worked as a carpenter in his early years, within the Presbyterian University of East Africa; see Mambere School, the first formal school in the area; pay respects at the historic Church of the Torch and Watson Memorial Chapel; and tour the century-old Alliance High School. The famous Banguru, a prefabricated house manufactured in Scotland and assembled in Kenya after a dramatic six-month delay at sea, remains one of the town's most intriguing landmarks.

Beyond its natural and historical attractions, Kikuyu offers lively markets, fresh produce, renowned nyama choma, bustling restaurants and thriving residential estates. Visitors can play golf at Sigona Golf Club, enjoy spectacular sunsets at the Thogoto Interchange, and immerse themselves in the dynamic atmosphere of one of Kenya's most promising urban centres.

Kikuyu also boasts a vibrant spiritual and civic life. Newcomers and long-time residents alike can join community organisations such as the Rotary Club of Kikuyu, Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya, Swamp Runners, Cloister Gym Club, Thogoto Forest Family, local residents' associations, professional networks, church fellowships and Bible study groups.

Kikuyu is far more than a commuter town on the outskirts of Nairobi. It is a place where rivers are born, forests shelter biodiversity, schools shape future leaders, churches preserve a rich spiritual heritage, and communities flourish. Whether you are seeking adventure, knowledge, investment opportunities or a welcoming community, Kikuyu offers an unforgettable experience.



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By David Wakogy,
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THE PIED WAG TAIL

The African pied wagtail inhabits subtropical or tropical seasonally wet or flooded lowland grassland, rivers, and, sometimes, freshwater marshes. In some areas it is commensal with humans in towns and villages.

The African pied wagtail is monogamous, the cup shaped nest is lined with grass and feathers and is usually situated near water in a convenient tangle of sticks. In settlements the nest may be located on buildings.

The nests of the African pied wagtail are parasitised by other birds. The African pied wagtail is mainly insectivorous but also feeds on other invertebrates, grass seeds, tadpoles.

Let's see the similarities of birds character and human beings, shall we?

1. They are very beautiful. they have different colors of white and black very cordial.
2. They can only be found in certain geographic area, different environments that includes the wetland and found in certain nations not just anywhere .
3. Monogamous..they are independent ,can search for the new location with ease.
4. They only get food on safe waters like the wetlands .
5. Their nest are distinctive for the "cup shape " also with curated sticks that means they are very interestingly creative.
6. They have great vision precision since they feed on insects, birds and fish

HEY, WHAT TYPE OF BIRD ARE YOU?



Mmm... Let's take a minute before we go further into our deepest thoughts, responses, and IQ beforehand. Let's explore this together as we unfold why we are characterized by birds;

I can't help but be amazed by the Architect of the universe and how God has made it such a wonderful thing, marvelous from all angles. You see, at the heart of Kikuyu lies the beautiful Ondiri Wetland, the biggest and only quaking bog of its kind, one whose significance sometimes goes unseen. Many people may see it but never perceive it.

But as for me, it's more than what meets the eye. I gaze upon one of the rarest species of birds every day: the "Black-headed Heron" and the Pied Wagtail. You'll find these in Ondiri Wetland, wading, flying, and sometimes wandering around majestically at the upper right corner of the wetland.

HEY, WHAT TYPE OF BIRD ARE YOU?

THE GREY HEADED HERON

Another buddy you come across in Ondiri Wetland. This one is a peculiar species, for it can just decide to walk alongside you but at a safe distance; they usually travel in pairs or maximum of 4.

They vary in colors of grey/black depending on species, but most importantly they don't flock. Just like eagles, grey crowned cranes, they love their own territory marking/personal space. You can only find one at a particular time and place.

You see,...there's no way we can outlive/eradicate/change how flora and fauna serve as one complete circuit in the universal structure and natural co-existence.

For the plants we consume, insects, birds, water bodies, and anything in between, we as human beings have a major role in ensuring these ecosystems are protected and cared for, and most importantly, in advocating for conservation at all levels.



Wetlands in Kenya depend on that responsibility, just like Friends of Ondiri.



Gracy's Adventure on the Bog

THINGS TO DO IN KIKUYU: CURATED NATURE AND HERITAGE ITINERARIES

A practical and comprehensive guide to some of the most rewarding experiences in Kikuyu. These itineraries are ideal for day trips, educational tours, family outings, birdwatching expeditions, team-building activities and cultural excursions.

ITINERARY 1: THOGOTO FOREST ADVENTURE TRAIL

Theme: Indigenous Forest Exploration, Birdwatching, Sacred Sites and Natural Swimming

Recommended Duration: Half Day to Full Day (4 to 8 hours)

Highlights

- Guided forest hike and tree identification walk
- Birdwatching in indigenous and exotic woodland
- Visit to Irima rĩa Ngai (The Hole of God)
- Swimming and relaxation at Gĩtwe kĩa Mbagathi, the source of the Mbagathi River
- Nature photography and meditation
- Optional tree planting



Suggested Schedule

- **8:00 AM** Meet at the forest entrance for briefing by the Thogoto Forest Family.
- **8:30 AM** Begin the forest hike and tree walk, learning about indigenous species and medicinal plants.
- **10:30 AM** Birdwatching and nature photography.
- **11:30 AM** Visit Irima rĩa Ngai and hear the local legends associated with the site.
- **12:30 PM** Swim, relax and enjoy a picnic at Gĩtwe kĩa Mbagathi.
- **2:00 PM** Return hike and optional tree planting.

Best For:

Nature lovers, hikers, schools, families, photographers and spiritual retreats.

THINGS TO DO IN KIKUYU: CURATED NATURE AND HERITAGE ITINERARIES

ITINERARY 2: RIVERS, WATERFALLS, CAVES AND WETLANDS CIRCUIT

Theme: Water Adventures, Fishing, Birdwatching and Scenic Landscapes

Recommended Duration: Full Day (8 to 10 hours)

Morning: Kikuyu Springs

- Visit the historic springs that supplied some of Nairobi's earliest piped water in 1906. Learn about the history of water supply and enjoy the serene surroundings.

Mid-Morning: Rungiri Dam and Rungiri River

- Trout fishing at Rungiri Dam.
- Birdwatching around the reservoir.
- Nature walk to the scenic Rungiri River Waterfall.

Noon: Bengi Mbaya Caves (Ituka Rua)

- Explore the caves and listen to fascinating stories and local folklore.

Afternoon: Thowa Waterfalls (Mora) along Nyongara River

- Guided walk to the waterfalls and surrounding forest.

Late Afternoon: Nyongara River Nature Trail to 87 Activities

- Enjoy a riverside walk through riparian habitat while observing birds such as kingfishers, herons, weavers and egrets.

Enjoy a riverside walk through riparian habitat while observing birds such as kingfishers, herons, weavers and egrets.

Optional Picnic and Wetland Extensions

Riu Nderi Wetland

- Family picnic
- Nature walk
- Birdwatching

Karai Wetland

- Fishing and picnic
- Excellent waterfowl birdwatching, including ducks, jacanas, herons and geese



THINGS TO DO IN KIKUYU: CURATED NATURE AND HERITAGE ITINERARIES

ITINERARY 3: ONDIRI WETLAND ECO-EXPERIENCE

Theme: Kenya's Unique Peat Bog and the Source of the Nairobi River

Recommended Duration: Half Day (3 to 5 hours)

Hosted by The Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK)

#VisitOndiri

Activities

- Guided birdwatching.
- Walk on the floating peat bog.
- Nature trail exploration.
- Wetland ecology interpretation.
- Tree planting and environmental education.

Ideal For

Students, conservationists, photographers, researchers and families.

Common Bird Species

African jacanas, herons, egrets, ducks, kingfishers, weavers and seasonal migrants.



THINGS TO DO IN KIKUYU: CURATED NATURE AND HERITAGE ITINERARIES



ITINERARY 4: KIKUYU HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

Theme: Resistance History, Missionary Legacy and National Heritage.

Recommended Duration: Full Day (6 to 8 hours)

Historical Sites to Visit

Mugaa Tree Site

The traditional site where Waiyaki wa Hinga is believed to have established his homestead.

Jomo Kenyatta's Early Workshop Site

Located within the Presbyterian University of East Africa, where Kenya's founding father worked as a carpenter in his youth.

Mambere School

Situated at Musa Gitau Comprehensive School and recognised as the first modern school in the area.

Church of the Torch

A nationally significant church associated with the development of education and Christianity in Kenya.

Watson Memorial Chapel

A beautiful historic chapel and architectural landmark.

Banguru House

A famous prefabricated house manufactured in Scotland and assembled in Kikuyu.

Alliance High School

- Tour one of Kenya's most prestigious school and learn about its enduring legacy.
- Carey Francis Burial Site

Visit the final resting place of the legendary educator Carey Francis.

Suggested Two-Day Signature Experience

Day 1

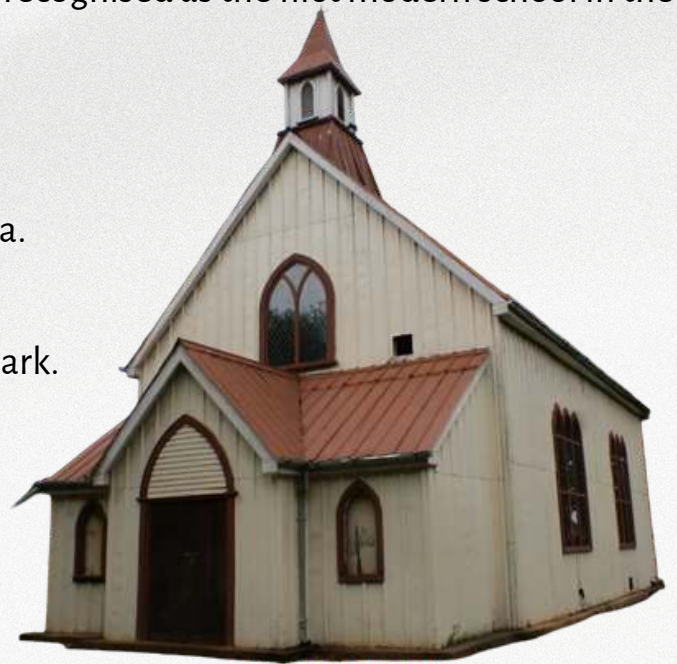
Morning: Thogoto Forest Adventure Trail

Afternoon: Kikuyu Heritage and Historical Walking Tour

Day 2

Morning: Ondiri Wetland Eco-Experience

Afternoon: Rungiri Dam, Karai Wetland or Riu Nderi Wetland for fishing, picnics and birdwatching



THINGS TO DO IN KIKUYU: CURATED NATURE AND HERITAGE ITINERARIES



BEST ACTIVITIES BY INTEREST

Birdwatching

- Ondiri Wetland
- Karai Wetland
- Nyongara River
- Thogoto Forest
- Rungiri Dam

Fishing

- Rungiri Dam
- Karai Wetland

Family Picnics

- Riu Nderi Wetland
- Karai Wetland
- Gĩtwe kĩa Mbagathi

Swimming

- Gĩtwe kĩa Mbagathi

History and Heritage

- Waiyaki wa Hinga homestead next to the great Mũgaa tree
- Jomo Kenyatta workshop site
- Church of the Torch
- Alliance High School

Practical Tips for Visitors

- Wear comfortable walking shoes.
- Carry drinking water, snacks and sunscreen.
- Bring binoculars and a camera for birdwatching and photography.
- Engage local guides for a richer experience.
- Seek prior permission for visits to schools and church compounds.
- Respect sacred sites and avoid littering.

Why Visit Kikuyu?

Kikuyu is far more than a commuter town near Nairobi. It is a remarkable destination where rivers are born, forests shelter biodiversity, wetlands attract abundant birdlife, schools have shaped national leaders and communities continue to preserve a rich historical and spiritual heritage.

Whether you are looking for adventure, environmental education, family recreation, historical insight or investment opportunities, Kikuyu offers an unforgettable experience in the heart of Central Kenya.



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By David Wakogy,
FOWK FOUNDER AND COORDINATOR



TEAM FOWK



THE ONDIRI WETLAND TREE AND HERBAL GARDEN.



Keeping in mind the **Jaza Miti Initiative** of planting **15 billion trees** by 2032 to restore more than 10.6 million hectares of degraded landscapes, Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya established not only a tree nursery but also a herbal garden.

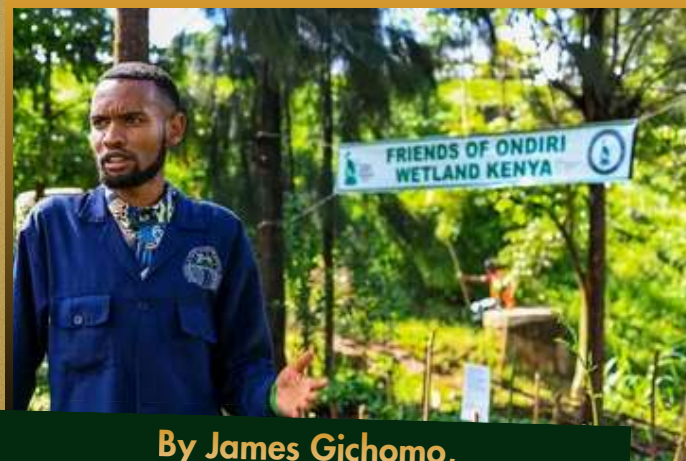
The need for this initiative arose from the importance of using medicinal trees to promote conservation. The nursery comprises various indigenous medicinal tree species found within our ecosystem.



This knowledge has also contributed to the establishment of the Ondiri Wetland Seed Centre. Through close collaboration with KEFRI, our work has expanded toward agricultural enterprises. Due to the effects of malnutrition in Africa, our tree nursery will also provide diverse fruit tree species to help address nutritional challenges.

The Ondiri Wetland Seed Centre provides not only seeds but also vital information on aspects such as germination rates. Ondiri Wetland has served both as a university of ecological knowledge and a pharmacy of herbal remedies.

The establishment of indigenous tree nurseries and herbal gardens should be strongly emphasized. As we head towards Mazingira Day, the focus should not only be on the number of seedlings planted but also on diversity, keeping in mind that the future will always be brighter when conservation and biodiversity go hand in hand.



By James Gichomo,
The FOWK Head of Citizen Science

Ondiri hosts a variety of medicinal species such as **Prunus africana**, **Warburgia ugandensis**, **Markhamia lutea**, **Olea africana**, **Filicium decipiens**, **Spathodea campanulata**, **Ehretia cymosa**, **Erythrina abyssinica**, and many others.

Acting locally, the organization has been able to establish a tree nursery with more than 5,000 seedlings.

This number has continued to grow through various seedling propagation methods, including the use of seeds in seedbeds, vegetative propagation, and the collection of wildings.

SOFT LIFE STARTS AT THE SOURCE ; MY EXPERIENCE AT ONDIRI WETLAND - KENYA

In a generation obsessed with finding peace, purpose and places that feel real, I found all at Ondiri wetland . Hidden just outside Kikuyu town, Ondiri Wetland is more than a beautiful natural landscape- it's the birthplace of the Nairobi River.

This unique ecosystem became more than a conservation site - it became a classroom, a sanctuary and a reminder that nature is still one of the coolest spaces to reconnect with.

Spending time at Ondiri offers a rare opportunity to observe nature at work. From the rich diversity of Bird-life and indigenous vegetation to the quiet flow of water that begins its journey towards Nairobi, isn't that beautiful? At first glance its just a wetland , but spend enough time there , you realize its where one of Nairobi's important stories begins.

Ondiri powers a system that supports millions of lives downstream and every aspect of the wetland reflects the interconnectedness of life and the importance of environmental stewardship.

Every sunrise brings a different experience; the birds in flight , mist floating above the water and the landscape that seems to move at its own pace in a world where everything feels rushed , Ondiri continues to teach me the value of slowing down and paying attention.

This isn't just an environmental story, it's my story too. Amidst a generation that keep talking about climate anxiety, sustainability, Wellness and creating a future worth living in, At Ondiri these conversations become real. Firsthand, I understand how protecting natural spaces isn't just for scientists nor for policymakers , but instead, it is something that affects us all.



SOFT LIFE STARTS AT THE SOURCE ; MY EXPERIENCE AT ONDIRI WETLAND - KENYA

From the water that we use to the environment that we'll inherit. Profound appreciations to team FOWK for their unwavering commitment towards transforming conservation of this meaningful wetland through; restoration, community engagement, environmental education and advocacy in safeguarding this important source of the Nairobi River while inspiring collective responsibility for its regeneration. Their dedication reminds us that every restored ecosystem begins with people who choose to care as we secure not only the future of the river but also the well-being of the communities that depend on it.

The more I learn about the wetland, the more I understand that the Nairobi River regeneration journey doesn't begin in the city but here, in the quiet and clean waters of Ondiri. Protecting this space is the first step toward restoring a river that has carried both challenges and hopes of Nairobi for decades now. Congratulations once more to team FOWK for their work that has been a great testament to the power of collective action in securing a sustainable future through wetland protection and conservation.

As I sum up, My experience at Ondiri wetland is a powerful reminder that protecting nature today is essential for a cleaner and more sustainable tomorrow and in an era of trends, Ondiri reminds us that sustainability isn't just buzzword but a lifestyle. And maybe all the future we're all searching for starts with protecting the places that have been sustaining us all along because sometimes the most powerful glow-up isn't personal - its environmental 🌱🌱🌱

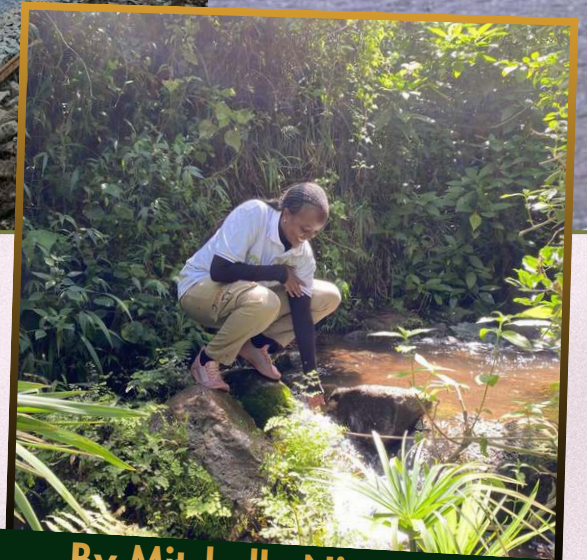


By Tabitha Kalekye
CMD Practitioner

**Kûma yjïa yîi yîŭwŭ, tî kîw'u kikyoka kivitîlaã indî ní
wikwaty'o wa ũnî wa ûsi wa llovi na mathayu ma andû
aingî.**

**("From this quiet wetland, flows not just water, but hope
for the future of Nairobi's river and many people")**





By Michelle Njoroge
Environmentalist & sustainability advocate

A clean, flowing river should be a right, not a privilege. As the arteries of our ecosystems, rivers nourish biodiversity, sustain livelihoods, and connect communities. The regeneration of the Nairobi River is a journey toward restoring this vital lifeline and reclaiming a healthier future for people and nature alike.

At Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK), we aim to ensure that the heart of our ecosystem continues to thrive by maintaining the wetland in good condition, free from solid waste and other forms of pollution. By doing so, we help ensure that the water flowing from it remains clean and healthy. Even the smallest spark of hope can move mountains, and that hope is what drives us in the regeneration of the Nairobi River.

In partnership with government agencies, private organizations, and local communities, we have mapped the tributaries that originate from the wetland and feed into the Nairobi River. These include the Nyongara River, Kabuthi River, Rungiri River, and Gitwe Kia Mbagathi, which receives its water through underground seepage.

By focusing on these four rivers, we are able to carry out clean-up efforts as far upstream as possible. We have also organized activities that create awareness and promote advocacy for clean rivers among local communities, government institutions, and other stakeholders.

We believe that the Nairobi River can be clean again because of the power of compounding.

Small actions taken consistently every day create a greater impact over time.

Our message to everyone reading this is simple: let us view this as a challenge we must overcome together. We are the solution, and through our collective efforts, we can restore the Nairobi River to a cleaner and healthier state for future generations.



THE NAIROBI RIVER BASIN REGENERATION PROGRAMME (NABREP) - ONDIRI WETLAND CHAPTER



This programme was established as a comprehensive, intergovernmental, and multi-sectoral initiative to reclaim, restore, and sustainably manage the Nairobi River corridor.

Overall coordination of the programme is entrusted to the **Nairobi Rivers Commission (NRC)**, which provides leadership, policy coordination, and oversight.

As one of the furthest sources of the Nairobi River, a critical catchment area, and Kenya's largest highland bog, the Ondiri Wetland serves as the starting point for the Nairobi Rivers Commission's restoration programme.

The Commission aims to protect, rehabilitate, beautify, and restore the Ondiri Wetland by safeguarding the bog from encroachment, illegal water abstraction, pollution, and other environmental threats.



Projects currently being undertaken at the Ondiri Wetland in line with the Commission's objectives include the development of an amphitheatre, birdwatching towers, nature trails, boardwalks, and the Republic's first wetland research centre.

Email:

kimaninganga@friendsofondiriwetlandkenya.org

BY KIMANI NG'ANG'A -
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST/ETHNOBOTANIST

FRIENDS OF ONDIRI WETLAND KENYA

*Our Wetland. Our Future.
Our Responsibility.*

Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya is a citizen science group dedicated to conserving Ondiri Wetland for people and nature.

We observe. We record. We protect.

By working together, we build knowledge, inform action, and ensure Ondiri thrives for generations to come.



Citizen Science
You don't need to be a scientist to make a difference. Just your eyes, your phone, and your care for Ondiri.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

OBSERVE

Look for birds, plants, wildlife and water changes.

RECORD

Log your findings with photos, notes, and locations.

SHARE

Upload your observations to help build a shared database.

PROTECT

Use our data to support smart conservation and local action.

Be a Friend. Be the Change.



Join us today:

www.friendsofondirivetlandkenya.org

Together for Ondiri! ♥

Follow us: Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya @friendsofondiri @friendsofondiri

Are you an academic institution in Kenya?

Does your school, college, or university have an **Environment Club** – or would you like to establish one?



&



Friends of
Ondiri
Wetland
Kenya

Miyawaki254 and Friends of Ondiri offer **capacity building and professional support** to help institutions set up, strengthen, and sustainably run **Environment Clubs**.

- Guidance on establishing Environment Clubs
- Capacity building for students and teachers
- Practical environmental conservation programmes
- Mentorship and community-based environmental action

We are your trusted partner in environmental stewardship.

✉ Write to us: info@friendsofondirivetlandkenya.org

www.friendsofondirivetlandkenya.org



We are cordially inviting you to the screening of

Ardhi Mbili, Maji Moja

— (Two Lands, One Water) —

A creative collaboration exploring the shared challenges and stories of wetlands and marshlands across different landscapes and communities; Northern Ireland and Kenya.

Join us for an afternoon of film, dialogue, and reflection as we celebrate the connections between people, water, land, and culture.

We would be honored by your presence.

RSVP below

Date:
2nd July 2026

Title:
Ardhi Mbili, Maji Moja
(Two Lands, One Water)

We look forward to welcoming you.



KIKUYU EDITION CHANGEMAKERS AWARDS

3rd July 2026

Starting from 4pm

Honoring Kikuyu's boldest changemakers – individuals and organizations transforming our community through impact, innovation, and service. Make your voice count, vote for Kikuyu's true changemakers!



WATTLE HOUSE

Bethsaida Park, Kikuyu - Nderi Road

FOR QUERIES

0729432304

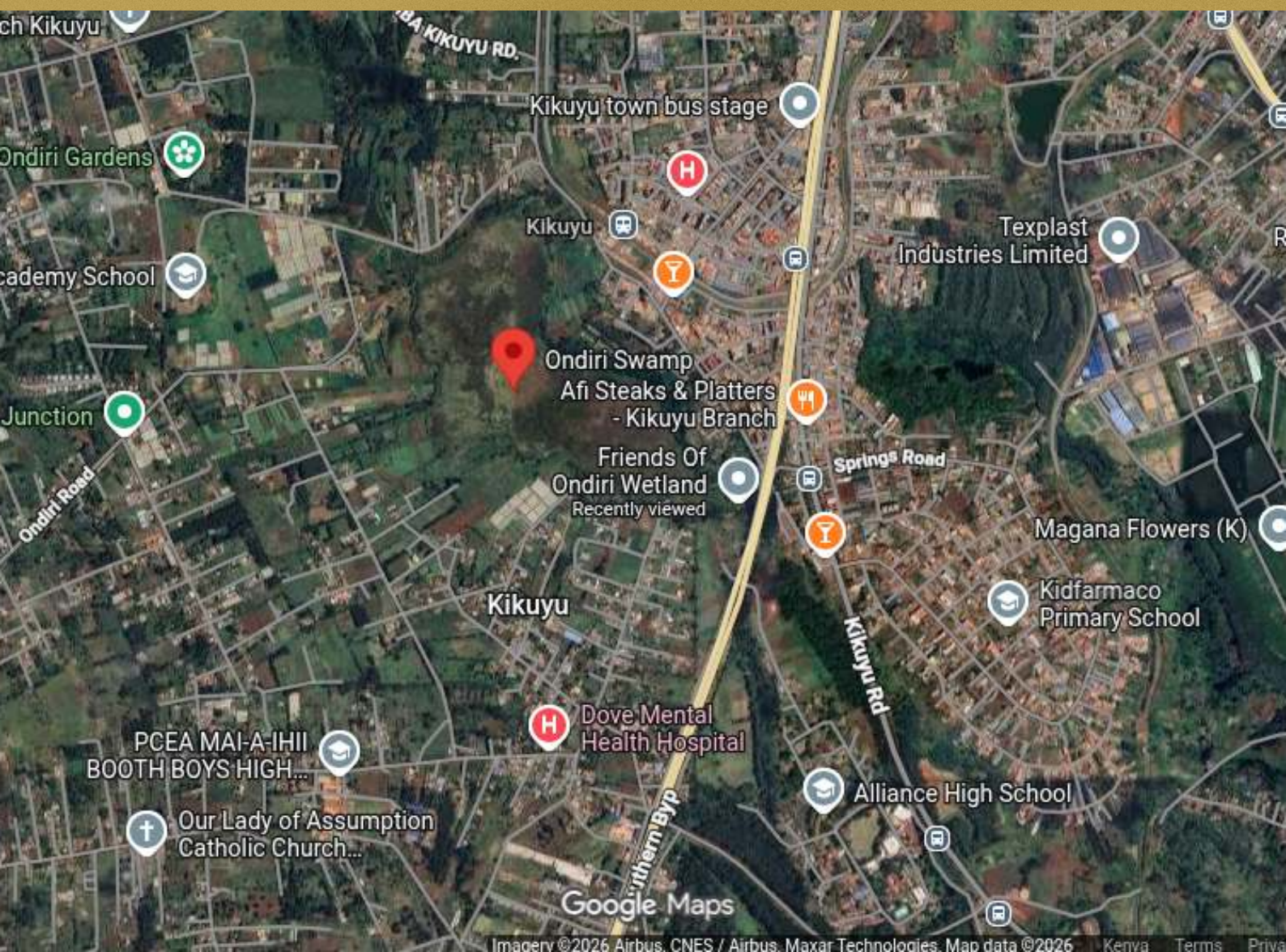
kikuyuardchangemakersawards@gmail.com

DID YOU KNOW

Ondiri Wetland is Kenya's largest highland peat bog, covering 34.5 ha (**about 48 football pitches**), has a perimeter of 3.3 km, sits at 2,000 m above sea level, and reaches 2-4 m deep, feeding the Nairobi River!



Satellite Imagery of Ondiri Swamp Located in Kikuyu.



FRIENDS OF ONDIRI WETLAND KENYA – 2026 ENVIRONMENTAL CALENDER

January – Clean Energy & Climate Awareness

26 Jan – International Day of Clean Energy Community climate education and sustainable energy awareness.

February – Wetland Conservation

2nd Feb – World Wetlands Day Flagship clean-up, tree planting, and biodiversity monitoring.

March – Forests & Water

21 Mar – International Day of Forests

22 Mar – World Water Day Riparian restoration and school outreach on water conservation.

April – Earth Stewardship

22 Apr – Earth Day Community mobilisation, clean-up, and environmental campaigns.

May – Biodiversity Protection

20th May – World Bee Day

22 May – International Day for Biological Diversity Pollinator gardens and biodiversity assessments.

June – Flagship Environmental Action

5 Jun – World Environment Day Major conservation event, walking barefoot, and partnerships.

July – Community Engagement Conservation awareness, youth engagement, and volunteer appreciation.

August – Indigenous Knowledge

9 Aug – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples Cultural conservation and local ecological knowledge.

September – Clean Environment

7 Sep – Clean Air Day

20 Sep – World Cleanup Day Large-scale clean-up and waste management campaigns.

October – Climate & Food Systems.

10th Oct – Mazingira Day.

16 Oct – World Food Day, Climate-smart agriculture and sustainability training.

November – Environmental Governance Policy dialogue and stakeholder engagement on wetland protection.

December – Soil & Reflection

5 Dec – World Soil Day. Soil conservation and annual impact review.

The Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya (FOWK) is a community-driven environmental organisation dedicated to protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable management of the Ondiri Wetland.

#VisitOndiri



#TwendeOndiri

FOR UPDATES VISIT:

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Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya
- FOWK



FRIENDS OF ONDIRI WETLAND



Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya



Friends of Ondiri Wetland Kenya

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