

## Project Update: August 2013

Our team conducted blue swallow habitat surveys from the onset of annual blue swallow arrivals in western Kenya. We concentrated much of our studies in the unprotected Busia Grasslands IBA visiting the local grassland patches namely: Matayos at the Sio River Bridge; Sikoma at Nasira River and Sio River; Nambale at Nambale River Bridge and Sio River (Manyore area); Malanga/Nambale at Rerekwe River; Kisoko at Sio River; and Mungatsi at Walatsi River. Opportunistic observations on motorcycle and foot surveys on site were conducted alternately per respective site. We described the current status of the local moist grassland habitats and estimated their sizes and suitability for use by the blue swallow. We observed massive loss of moist grassland habitats mainly as a result of anthropogenic activities including encroachment through land conversion to sugarcane farming, overgrazing, and human settlements among others. However, we recorded sites with marshy streams as suitable habitats for the blue swallow mainly in the Busia Grasslands as opposed to the mainly protected Ruma NP.



Left: Impact of land degradation through soil erosion and encroachment by farming at Nambale along Sio River. Middle: Sio River at Sikoma; one of the few remaining pockets of the fast disappearing riparian grasslands in Busia IBA. Right: Walawatsi River; one of the sites negatively affected by overgrazing and encroachment by sugarcane farming in Busia IBA.