

Final Report

Following the Whitley Awards in early 2000, the Biodiversity Parks Project was formally endorsed as a project of Nature Kenya - the East Africa Natural History Society - at the Society's Executive Committee meeting in March 2000. The seasonal wetlands site and the Whitley Award were featured in the March issue of the magazine World Water Watch, which was distributed to the Environment Ministers of the world at their meeting in March 2000. The seasonal wetlands article was subsequently carried on WWF's Living Waters website. At the 5th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nairobi in May 2000, the seasonal wetlands site was featured among Nature Kenya's activities at the BirdLife International / Nature Kenya stand.

Today you can read about the Biodiversity Parks Project (and the Whitley Award) and seasonal wetlands in general on Nature Kenya's new website, www.naturekenya.org.

The year 2000 was a severe drought in Kenya, blamed by meteorologists on La Niña, the opposite of El Niño. In Nairobi, there was hardly any rainfall from December 1999 to October 2000. From June to October 2000, piped water and electricity supply were rationed to domestic and industrial users in Nairobi. The seasonal wetlands site remained largely dry, but some of the seasonal pools held water for a few months, and herds of cattle came there daily to drink. Nevertheless, knowledge of the seasonal wetlands site's biodiversity continued to increase, as botanical and bird outings recorded additional species. Nature Kenya's new Plant Committee held one of its inaugural outings there in February 2001, following heavy rains in January, and collected a number of ephemeral wetland plants for the East African Herbarium. Several Wednesday Morning Birdwalks visited the site, and new birds observed include Red and Yellow Barbet and Red-fronted Barbet, two dryland species considered as rare or occasional in Nairobi.

The seasonal wetlands site was recognised and listed in the wetlands inventory for Nairobi by the National Wetlands Policy Development Stakeholders Consultative Workshop for Nairobi Province organised by Kenya Wildlife Service, custodian of wetlands in Kenya, in May 2001. This is significant from a policy standpoint, since seasonal wetlands, especially small ones, have often been ignored in wetlands assessments in Kenya.

Biodiversity Parks Project made a slide presentation to the Annual General Meeting of Nature Kenya in Nairobi in May 2001, and to the University of Nairobi's Environment Club in June.

In July, Dr Leon Bennun, Chairman of Nature Kenya, Mr Paul Matiku, Executive Director of Nature Kenya, and Mrs Fleur Ng'weno, the Nairobi Biodiversity Parks Project leader, held several meetings with the Director-General of the National Museums of Kenya. The National Museums are active in the study and conservation of biodiversity in Kenya, and it was agreed to further explore the possibilities of achieving a conservation status for the seasonal wetlands site. The Museums' Director of Sites and Monuments is now working with the Project on this issue. The landowners will also be kept informed of developments.

Co-operation with the other biodiversity-rich 'green spaces' in Nairobi is also envisaged. This includes the production of educational materials, such as bird check-lists for the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary (still in draft) and for the National Museum grounds in Nairobi, which now include a Botanic Garden (publication expected early next year).