

# Nairobi National Park News Friends of Marcon March Mark



12th Edition - May 2020

#### **CHAIRMAN'S MONTHLY REPORT MAY 2020**



**Gareth Jones** Chairman of the Board FoNNaP

Greetings to all of you,

The current global reality of the Covid-19 plannedemic is still very sobering and of great concern to many nations. The world as we know it has changed dramatically in a short period of time. However even with limitations the Nairobi National Park continues to be functional.

As many of you are aware the draft Nairobi National Park Management Plan (2020-2030) is in final stages of moving towards approval by law. Early in April the FoNNaP board succeeded in getting a full copy of the proposed plans, while at the same time finding out that the deadline date for objections to the plan was the 19th April 2020. This resulted in a difficult process to all work together and study the plans with very little time remaining. It was noted that there are 122 proposed actions over a ten-year period, and that FoNNaP agreed to 75% or 90 of the proposed actions. Therefore, we gathered input from everyone concerned at the time, and we were successful in submitting a letter to the Hon Najib Balala CS – Tourism & Wildlife on the 17th April 2020. Other wildlife organizations and individuals also managed to submit a letter timeously.

On the 22nd April 2020 the Hon Najib Balala officially granted a period of public participation until the end of June 2020 according to Section 44 clause 5 of the Wildlife Act (2013). To date there has not been any forum involving public participation with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) or any stakeholders due to the current restrictions regarding social distancing and limitations on public meetings. However, the FoNNaP board has been meeting using social media to draft alternatives to the 32 proposed actions in the NNP Management Plan that are not acceptable. As soon as the board has a draft plan for all the proposed alternatives these will be shared with the FoNNaP members for comments and approval.

The full draft of the proposed NNP Management plan document was emailed to FoNNaP members during mid-April 2020 to allow members to read and comment. Comments can still be submitted to FoNNaP on fonnap I @gmail.com.With less than 4 weeks remaining for public participation to be submitted and considered it is critical that FoNNaP and other conservation groups like the Conservation Alliance of Kenya (CAK) all work together to ensure that the Nairobi National Park remains wild forever . None of us know exactly when public meetings will be allowed, hopefully June 2020 will allow. Parallel to the exercise of finding action alternatives for the NNP, the FoNNaP board and the CAK, intend write to Hon Najib Balala for a meeting to discuss public participation and also requesting that the period of public participation be extended to allow 2 months after the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

We also take this opportunity to welcome 2 more board members, namely Jagi Gakunju and Caroline Patita following our recent request to the members for nominees, we hope that they will be able to make a meaningful contribution as they serve.

In the meanwhile, take care out there and stay well! Pray God help us in our actions!!!

Kind regards

Gareth Jones



"I have never seen an elephant this close, I've seen all the other big animals except this," said one elated villager. "The last time they came I did not get a chance to see them for I had travelled", he continued to say.

The elephants, which according to the Kenya Wildlife Service, came from a community sanctuary in Mosiro seemed to enjoy being in the area. They grazed and browsed on the thick vegetation found in the area.

"They love it here," said Ole Kenta, "they should be allowed to stay. Nairobi National Park is just a few meters from here and we now have community rangers who will take care of them," continued Mzee Kenta. This after KWS said they will drive them back to where they came from.



#### **KITENGELA RESIDENTS EXCITED TO SEE ELEPHANTS IN THEIR BACKYARD By Vincent Lemayian Ole Simel**



For three straight days, residents of kitengela, Sholinke and Enkamuriaki areas marvelled by the presences of 3 elephants in their backyard. This is despite the area being a conservancy and bordering the Nairobi National Park. The three areas connect to form part of the Nairobi National Park ecosystem.

For a while, there has been a debate between conservationists in the ecosystem and KWS about the existence of a corridor beyond the Sholinke area, with KWS saying there were wild animals beyond Sholinke.

"There is the proof that there is a corridor now that the elephants found their way here", said Daniel Kimiti, the head community ranger at the Naretunoi community conservancy."People in these areas have just fenced around their houses for security reasons, the rest of the land is open," said Kimiti.

"Our records show that Nairobi National Park and Amboseli used to be one big ecosystem which allowed wildlife to move freely around the areas" said one junior staff at Kenya Wildlife Service who did not want to be mentioned.

"When I was young, there were very few homes from here to Kajiado, I could count them," said Loise Matunke. During drought and famine, we could see wildlife migrating to and from the park, she continued.

According to the KenyaWildlife Service, the Nairobi National Park ecosystem cannot host elephants. The 3 male jumbos were darted and taken to the Masai Mara in an exercise that attracted hundreds of residents who wanted to have a closer look at the gentle giants.



#### LIONS OF NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK Neema Moved to Tsavo

#### **By:Trish Heather-Hayes**

Neema was the sole surviving lioness of the Kingfisher family group born in 2013, whose sibling was Masaka (Leila being the mother of both) together with her litter brothers and sister Sirua, Rongai, and Pretty Girl, is now living in Tsavo East together with her daughter and son.

Although occasionally to be seen with the younger Morana, Amani, Leboia and Alamaya, Neema kept to herself most of the time and her favourite areas were from the forest down to KWS Workshop past Kingfisher and down to Masai Lodge and the castle at No 15, but also occasionally in other areas around 4 and 5 and Eland Dam.

In January 2017 she was collared as she had started to roam outside the park and into the residential area of Maasai Lodge road and beyond into Tuala. She had developed a liking for dog meat.! I saw her on one occasion near the worksop bring a dead dog back into the park to feed her cubs..

She produced 3 cubs in July 2018, one of which disappeared and she was left with a male and female.

Complaints and threats against Neema and her offspring were becoming more and more frequent, many times being accused of probably more than they were guilty of, but a decision was finally reached by KWS that for her own safety and that of her cubs she should be translocated and Tsavo East was the choice.

On the 10th April 2020 Neema was darted and re-collared, as her collar had expired. The cubs ran away and Neema was taken to the Vet dept. Attempts to track the cubs continued but they were not caught. The following day, in the afternoon, Neema was returned to the site in a transport cage and the little female was trapped when she went to her mother. The male was more elusive but with patience he was eventually darted and all 3 taken back to the Vet dept.

Having given them time to calm down for a couple of days, they were then translocated to Tsavo East and released together. Reports from Tsavo East have them settled and happy in their new home.

Very pleased that all went well. Although sad to know she and her babies are no longer in the park, they are alive and together. It could have been a different story had the residents of Maasai Lodge road and Tuala area taken things into their own hands and killed her as threatened. Hope they all live a long and happy life in Tsavo.



## **THE RHINO FACE-OFF By Aditya Shah**

Black rhinos are the smaller of the two African species. A key distinguishing feature is a hooked upper lip, suitable for browsing on leaves from trees and bushes. White rhinos have a square lip, more suitable for plains grazing.

It was an early Sunday morning and I drove into the park bright and early, the second car in. A line of cars already impatiently idling behind me, I decided to drive off in the most random direction, avoiding Hyena Dam, the Kingfisher Area, the Murram Pits and Sosian Valley, the more popular areas for early morning drivers.

Early mornings in the park are ... gorgeous; as I drove under an azure blue sky, the sun slowly rose and warmed me up, whilst the refreshing breeze ruffled my super-long-thanks-Covid hair. did not see much in terms of wildlife

I did not see much in terms of wildlife (not a single lion!) but did I care? No; it was a beautiful morning to be alive and in the wild.

Close to 8.00am, on the road to Moyokiet Picnic Site, I saw three hyenas dart across the road, cackling manically to each other."Wow!", I thought as I slowly drove towards them. As I rounded the bend, a most surprising, superb and scintillating sight, caught my eyes - two big black rhino bulls, facing off and fighting each other!

The bull on the left, covered with a film of red dust, was slightly smaller but extremely aggressive and kept charging the other. At one point he even started defecating and kicking his hind legs backwards (video on https://www. instagram.com/p/B R29rsnt2n/?igshid=r1I7oax9xodd),

which Sushil Chauhan later informed me is a way of asserting dominance and marking territory.

The bull on the right, clearly exhausted, was playing the defensive and was getting the worse of it, with bright red blood dripping down from a wound in his chest.

What was particularly special, is that the whole time this battle was going on, a giraffe was spectating over a nearby bush, a female and baby black rhino were worriedly hovering behind a bunch of bushes on the right, ox-peckers were flying from one rhino to the other feasting on their bloody wounds in the infrequent moments of stillness and an opportunistic hyena remained, waiting for a potential breakfast (there is always that one member from Team Mafisi that stays to the end isn't there...). After and hour of this back and forth and for no particular reason I can comprehend, the aggressive rhino stopped, turned around and walked off into the distance, leaving the "survivor" in the middle of the road, immobile and panting for air, for some twenty minutes, before he slowly moved off and re-joined his family.

A fantastic, one in a million sighting!

Aditya Shah (@mowglishah on Instagram)

## **#JoinFoNNaP**

Most people associate fire with being destructive and bringing death, but there are controlled conditions that cause fire to bring life.



The challenge is to "turn the herds" as quickly as possible after the rains when their natural instinct to migrate happens. Controlled burning programs have been very successful in many places in Africa, especially if measured scientific methods are used. In order to burn dry grass biomass and successfully transform a "dead grass" area to have fresh green shoots attracting herbivores, a "cold" fire method is required, this is a controlled fire condition, where a fire is lit in a demarcated zone with firebreaks, at an ambient temperature of less than 20deg C, with a humidity of over 50%. It is important that the timing of the fire, simulates a "lightening strike" just before a rainstorm. Scientifically it has been proven that burning should happen approximately every 10 years, depending on the climate of an area.

The timing needs to be right when planning for selected areas of the park to be burned with "cold" fires, hopefully KWS will do this action, and bring new life to the park in June /July 2020.



### **A FRIENDLY FIRE !! By Gareth Jones**

Nairobi National Park is in a very tough situation, human developments have virtually surrounded the park, the current reality is that the ancient migration routes have been reduced to a mere trickle, and over a period of time and especially after good rains this year the plant biomass has grown and dried out.

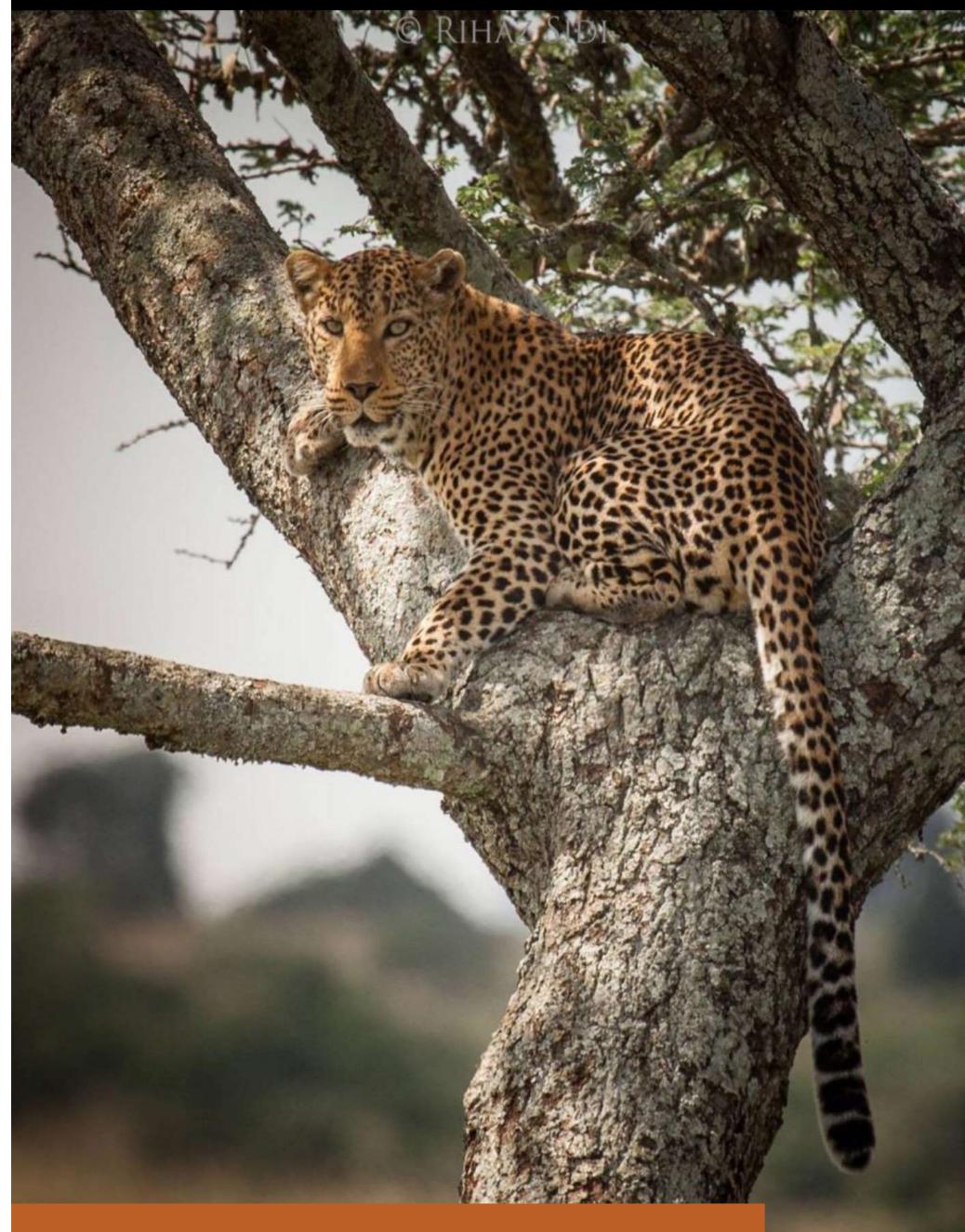


With the migration route being severely restricted, I believe it is important that alternative methods be considered to ensure that more herbivores remain inside the park boundaries. If the herbivores remain inside then the predators, such as lions will tend to remain inside the park.

The park is open daily from 06h00 to 19h00.

For more information on the park you can link to the following website http://www.kws.go.ke





LEOPARDS OF NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK SERIES **EDITION 2 By Anthony Childs** 

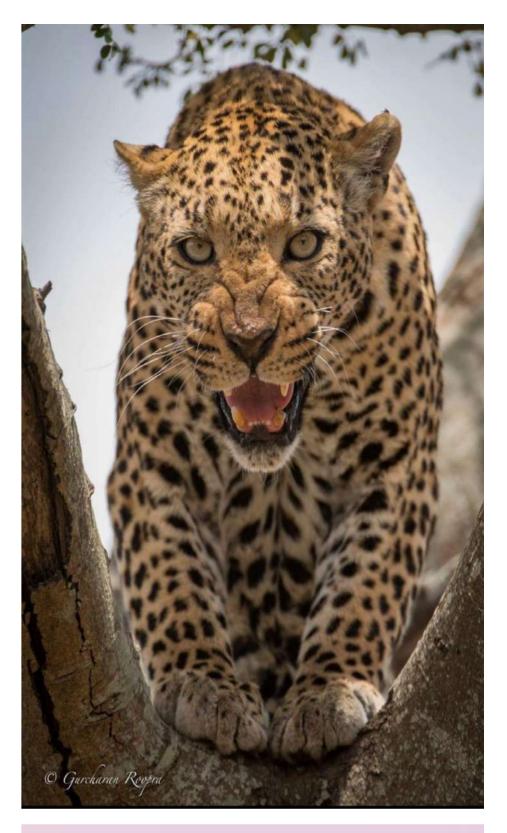


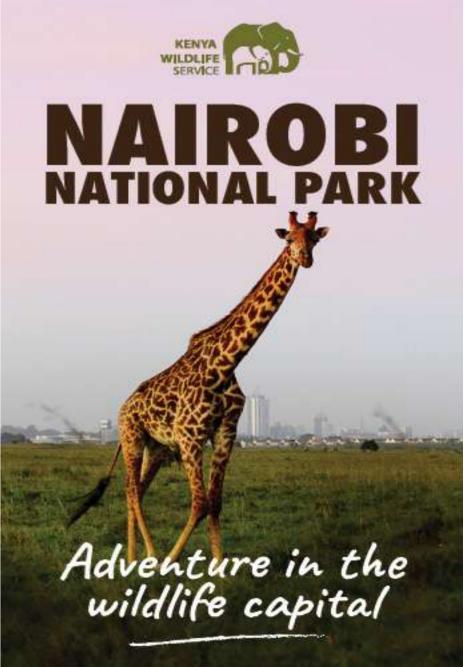
Looking back thru photographs of Leopard on Nairobi National Park Facebook pages, it was possible to go back and identify some of the leopards that have been seen, and where they were first seen. 'The light faced female' was first photographed in these groups by Gupz Saund in March 2013. At this point, she was timid around vehicles and would disappear immediately, so pictures were rare. As time went on she gradually got better and better around cars and from about mid-2015 was the most frequently seen leopard in the park. Her territory stretched from Kingfisher Picnic Site which was the furthest we saw her to the West and Hippo Pools which was the furthest we saw her to the East. She was never seen North of the Ormonye Valley as far as I know – but would come out of the park into the communities reasonably frequently. She was responsible for eating lots of domestic dogs and ate a mum and all her puppies near the staff canteen of the lodge. I took plenty of camera trap pictures of her returning to the carcass she had hanging in the tree near there. In 2015 she was also seen with two cubs. One of the cubs was a male and the other a female – this was her first litter as far we know.

Guch managed to get a fabulous photo of her in a tree near 15 murram pits – which at that point was the closest anyone had got to her - incidentally she wasn't growling at him but rather another approaching vehicle.

Her second litter was a single female cub who was first seen on the road down to The Emakoko at the end of October 2016. The cub was especially inquisitive coming up to the cars and was christened 'Koko' and subsequently 'The light faced female' became known as 'Ema'. They contributed a lot to NNPs Leopard sightings; we would rarely go two weeks without seeing them. Any leopard seen would generally be attributed to them although this wasn't always true. I last saw Ema alive near our lodge car park in the early stages of mating with a huge handsome male in April 2018, this litter never came to fruition as she was found dead in a valley behind the lodge July 2018, it was thought that this was one litter too far for her as there was no suspected foul play. Ema's cubs are very much around, the male from the first litter less frequently seen but both her female cubs have now had cubs of their own...







## PHOTO OF THE MONTH - Tilakraj Nagarai

"The sun is close to the earth today i need a shower" says the egret ..





#### THE REPTILES OF NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK: AN INTRODUCTION **By Stephen Spawls**

"Despite its small size, Nairobi National Park is home to a significant number of species of reptile and amphibian. Within its 117 km2 area, there are at least 25 species of snake (nearly 20% of Kenya's total), 20 species of lizard, (out of 125 species in Kenya), four chelonians (tortoises and turtles) and a crocodile. So, if you include its 20 species of frog (out of a Kenyan total of 100), the park provides a refuge for 20% of Kenya's reptile and amphibian fauna. Although the popular perception of Nairobi National Park is as an important mid-altitude conservation spot that must continue to be protected for megafauna like black rhinos and lions, it also serves as a safe place for some important, secretive species, like the Southern African Rock Python, species that are incompatible with humanity in numbers.



Python in Ambush Mbagathi River

The park spans two major habitats; the dry forest of central Kenya, and savanna grassland. The forest is the home of a number of secretive species, including the rare Forest Wolf Snake (Lycophidion ornatum), the endemic Meru Tree Snake (Thrasops schmidti), the near-endemic Jackson's Chameleon (Trioceros jacksonii) and the Kilimanjaro Forest Lizard (Adolfus kibonotensis), while out on the plains you can find such interesting East African animals as Boulenger's Scrub Lizard (Nucras boulengeri), the Kenyan Blue-headed Tree Agama (Acanthocercus gregorii) and the Kenyan Striped Skaapsteker, (Psammophylax multisquamis), an attractive grassland snake. The park is also home to a number of widespread savannah reptile species, like the Puff Adder (Bitis arietans), the Striped Skink (Trachylepis striata) and the Helmeted Terrapin, Pelomedusa neumanni. and although most visitors come to see the park's spectacular mammals and birds, some interesting reptiles can be seen, with a little luck.

The hippo pools are an interesting place to start. If you drive to the Hippo Pools and take the walk along the Mbagathi River, especially on a sunny afternoon, you are virtually guaranteed a sighting of basking Nile Crocodiles (Crocodylus niloticus) and Serrated Hinged Terrapins, Pelusios sinuatus. Both are fascinating, in several ways. The Nile Crocodile is the largest reptile in Africa, reaching nearly 6 m and weighing a thousand kilograms.



Nile Crocodile and Serrated Hinged Terrapin

It is one of only two species crocodiles that considers humanity as prey (the other is the Australasian Saltwater Crocodile), and in Kenya Nile Crocodiles regularly attack people on the Tana and Athi-Galana Rivers. The Serrated Hinged Terrapin is also the largest species in the genus, and the Nairobi park animals are the largest in Africa. As you walk beside the river, you might also spot a Nile Monitor Lizard (Varanus niloticus) basking. Amazingly, they are also Africa's largest lizards. So the Hippo Pools are a place of superlative reptiles.



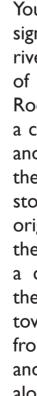
Hippo Pools Serrated Hinged Terrapin

Out on the plains, if you keep your eye open, you may spot some lizards. The rocky signposts often host little colonies of one of Kenya's most common lizards,



male Jackson's Chameleon





The big leopard tortoises (Stigmochelys pardalis) found in the park are also said to be introduced, mostly as translocated and released pets.





Northern Stripe-bellied Sand Snake

Striped Skink

the Striped Skink, (Trachylepis striata). This is a very versatile lizard; although relatively uncommon in savanna and light woodland, it is extremely quick to utilise buildings, and hence is able to thrive in urban Kenya where other reptiles cannot cope.

#### Kenyan RH Rock Agama

You might also see, basking on the signposts, and also on rocks along the rivers and gulleys of the southern side of the park, the Kenya Red-headed Rock Agama, Agama lionotus. This is a colonial species, it lives in colonies, and only the males have red heads, the females are duller. An interesting story attaches to these agamas; originally they did not occur within the park, but according to James Ashe, a charismatic Kenyan herpetologist, they were introduced to Athi River town in a load of stone imported from Tsavo for the cement factory, and have gradually spread westwards along the Mbagathi River.



Kenyan Blue-headed Tree Agama

You are not likely to see a snake, although the occasional visitor does. A Northern Stripe-bellied Sand Snake (Psammophis sudanensis) might shoot across your path.



**Battersby's Green Snake** 

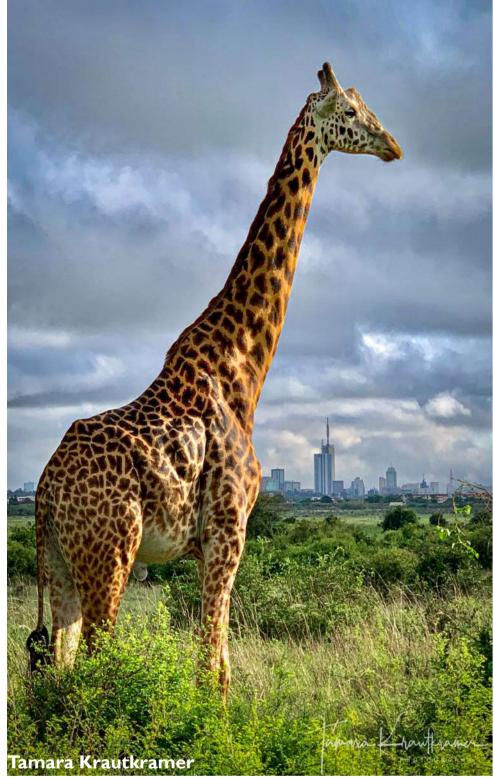
At the Hippo Pools, or by one of the dams, you might spot, in a bush, Nairobi's only green-coloured snake, the harmless Battersby's Green Snake, Philothamnus battersbyi.



#### Blck-necked Spitting Cobra

Sometimes a Black-necked Spitting Cobra (Naja nigricollis) is seen on the road. There is also a chance of seeing, at dusk, or perhaps hidden under a waterside bush, the Southern African Rock Python, Python natalensis. The park's most common snake is the harmless Brown House Snake, Boaedon fuliginosus, although you are only likely to see one on the road at dusk, or find one concealed under a rock."

### SIGHTINGS OF NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK MAY 2020













Please send photos to newsletter@fonnap.org to be featured in the NNP sightings column









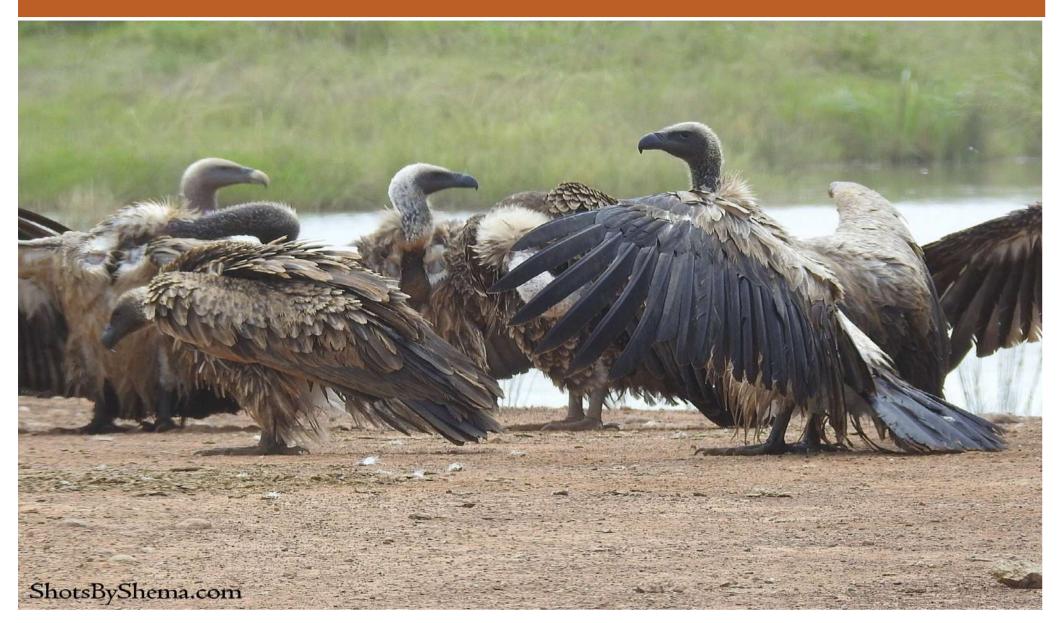




trishhhayes



#### THE VULTURES OF NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK **By Sidney Shema**



Nairobi National Park is designated as an Important Bird and There is a third vulture species in the park, the Lappet-faced Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International. And more recently the park, along with all other IBAs in Kenya, is now given the status of Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), a new designation used to encompass other life forms beyond just birds.

One of the main reasons why Nairobi National Park qualifies as an IBA is because it supports a significant breeding population of the White-backed Vulture (Gyps africanus), which is rated as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. There are about 40 breeding pairs that nest within the park. This species is joined by its close relative the Rüppell's Vulture (Gyps rueppellii), also Critically Endangered, which does not breed in the park but visits to feed as well as to bath at a regular spot above the Athi Basin. It is not uncommon to see White-backed and Rüppell's vultures together in the park either on a carcass or at the vulture bathing pool, or even roosting together in the same stand of trees.



Vulture (Torgos tracheliotus), listed as Endangered. This is a very different bird from the two Gyps vultures in almost all aspects, from appearance to its behavior and ecology. Unlike the two which are gregarious and often associate in sizeable groups, the Lappet prefers to operate alone or in pairs. It does however join the other vultures to feed on a carcass, where it dominates them as it is larger. The Lappet-faced Vulture holds a territory, while the Gyps vultures do not. And it is known to occasionally kill live prey, whereas the Gyps species are obligate scavengers; meaning they depend fully on scavenging. This bird will also pirate prey from other raptors if a chance presents itself. The Lappet-faced Vulture therefore lives and behaves a lot more like an eagle than the other two vultures in the park. Rarely do you see more than two Lappets together, unless it is a pair with a juvenile. In Nairobi National Park, there is only one breeding pair of Lappet-faced Vultures.

To learn more about the vultures of NNP and other parts of Kenya, feel free to visit: <u>www.shotsbyshema.com/ndege-wetu-</u> part-13-the-vultures/

## **#Keepitwild #Keepitalive**

## **EVENTS**

## **Nairobi National Park**

How can we ensure the management plan commits to protecting the unique, immeasurable ecological value and potential of the park for the public in Nairobi and beyond? You are invited to a Public Participation Forum!

When: 12th, 13th and 14th June 2020 from 2pm-6pm EAT. (Sessions are identical; participants choose a date most convenient to them)

Registration: Please register to participate using the links below. 12th June: <shorturl.at/bBSZ4> 13th June: <shorturl.at/dnFKX> 14th June: <shorturl.at/aFMX0

Format: Modified Open Space using Zoom.

Resources: Participants are encouraged to read the 6-page executive summary of the draft management plan <shorturl.at/pwyQ4>. For those interested, the full draft management plan can be accessed from this link <shorturl.at/DKTZ7>







Join The Friends of Nairobi National Park membership and help #Keeptheparkalive #savennp

### **FoNNaP MEMBERSHIP TYPES AND BENEFITS**

25% of our Membership fees go towards running administrative operations and 75% go towards projects.

#### Individual Membership | Adults KSH 2000 | Students KSH 500

#### **Benefits:**

•Free entries to the park for member participants during game counts and clean-up activities for members

•10% discounts on FoNNaP branded merchandise •10% discounts on FoNNaP Events (Annual members BBQ, FoNNaP Treasure hunts and free

entry to FoNNaP Wildlife Talks) •10% discount on selected corporate member

Companies products and services. •Opportunity to Volunteer in FoNNaP projects

#### Family Membership | KSH 4000

#### **Benefits:**

•Free entries to the park for member participants during game counts and clean-ups activities for members

•10% discounts on FoNNaP branded merchandise •10% discounts on FoNNaP Events

(Annual members BBQ, FoNNaP Treasure hunts and free entry to FoNNaP Wildlife Talks)

•10% discount on selected corporate member Company products and services.

•Family participation in FoNNaP occasional Wildlife quiz nights.

#### **Corporate Members | 25000**

#### **Benefits:**

•Logo Recognition and Advertisements on our Website.

Safari Capital Newsletter with an extensive group of readers. •Corporate social responsibilities for your business through accreditation of impacts of our projects. •Opportunity to place banners and exchange business cards on FoNNaP events

•Occasional appreciation mentions on all FoNNaP social media platforms

## **FoNNaP ESSAY COMPETITION WINNERS**

## **FoNNaP KIDS COLUNM**



The prize for the two winners will be a 3 hours game drive at Nairobi National Park by Paras Chandaria followed by a bush breakfast by The Flame Tree of Nandi Caterers.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all kids who participated in the FoNNaP Essay Writing Competition. We do have more exciting kids competitions coming up. Please have a look at the kids column for more details

www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

eielhknrscn

giraffe

monkey

springbok

elephant

rhinoceros

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antelope

leopard

python

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hippopotamus

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## **OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS**











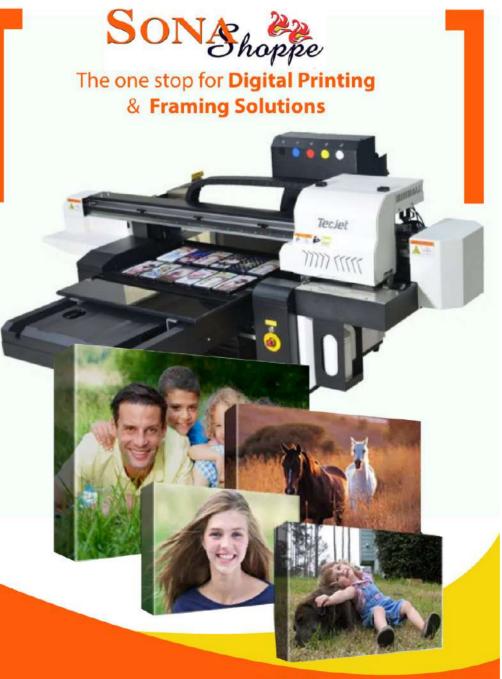


THE SAFARI COLLECTION



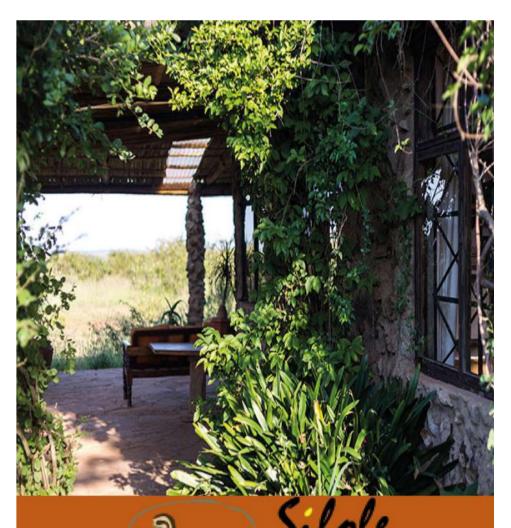






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## **Friends of Nairobi National Park**

FoNNaP is a non-profit membership society founded in 1995, dedicated to assisting the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to nurture and protect biodiversity within Nairobi National Park, and the broader ecosystem to which the park belongs.

Join today and be a Friend of the Park!

CONTACT US TODAY! Office No. 12, Langata Link | Off Langata South Road Opp. Kenya School of Law P. O. Box 45124-00100, Nairobi, Kenya Tel: +254 (0) 723 690 686 | Email: admin@fonnap.org Website: https://fonnap.org