



JULY 2016 MAPPING RACE COMPETITION

KBM
2016

MAPPING KENYA'S BIRDS FOR CONSERVATION AND AVIAN TOURISM

Report by:
Washington Wachira



INTRODUCTION TO THE KENYA BIRD MAP

The Kenya Bird Map is a project of the Bird Committee of Nature Kenya (the East Africa Natural History Society), in partnership with the National Museums of Kenya, A Rocha Kenya, Tropical Biology Association and the Animal Demography Unit of the University of Cape Town. The project was initiated in the year 2013 with the aim of mapping Kenya's over 1,100 bird species.

The project is made up of citizen-scientists, who map birds using small grid squares (5 minutes longitude by 5 minutes latitude or 9km by 9km on the ground) overlaid on the map of Kenya. Every birder in or visiting Kenya is welcome to join the project; where they get registered and assigned an observer number.

It is a follow-up of the first Kenyan bird atlas that was done about 30 years ago. Since then, a lot has happened to Kenya's habitats and the condition of the environment. For a number of bird species it is evident that numbers have either increased and spread (e.g. House Sparrow and House Crow) or reduced and contracted in range (e.g. Denham's Bustard and Egyptian Vulture). This second phase is here to ensure these changes are documented and the data gathered used for furtherance of birds conservation and environmental sustainability.

THE MAPPING RACE

The Mapping Race is a competition organised by the Kenya Bird Map, targeting unmapped pentads across the country. The competition, which runs for a month, seeks to reward the individuals who map the highest numbers of new pentads in that month. The overall objective of the competition is to boost the Kenya Bird Map's coverage as a key tool for birds' conservation in Kenya. Once the species' geographical distribution maps are developed and updated, in situ conservation measures can be prioritised for each species.

The competition also seeks to boost avian tourism in Kenya; by ensuring citizen scientists are involved in understanding the local birds. Bird guides across the country get an opportunity to take part in a project to conserve the local birds; and have their work profiled. They also stand a chance of winning the month's prizes. The Kenya Bird Map works with hotels, lodges and camps to award the competition winners. The hotels, lodges and camps also get to become the Mapping Race partner of the month; where the competition helps to profile their hospitality facilities and attractions.

JULY 2016 MAPPING RACE AND RESULTS

July 2016 saw the competition inaugurated, where 16 of the many birders who took part, managed to map species in new pentads. The winner stood a chance to win a full-board accommodation trip to Swara Plains Acacia Camp. Further, the top three winners were

guaranteed of each receiving a brand new “Birds of East Africa” guidebook; a gift from the book’s authors Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe.

The race took place between 1st and 31st July 2016. Announcements were made across the month of June, on Facebook platforms, Kenya Bird Map MailChimp email platform and the NatureNet Newsletter. Follow-up advertisements and progress updates were continually shared with birders, both on Facebook and email.

In total, the month of July 2016 received 58 new pentads from mappers across the country. 54 of those were done across the month of July, with 4 being submissions of existing data.

This was a mapping record, being the highest number of new pentads done in any single month since the project started in the year 2013. The full list of the top mappers of the month is shown here:

Name	Observer Number	Total New Pentads
Adamjee Mustafa	40474	13
Dominic Chesire	12972	11
Robert Lentaaya	40512	7
James Kirisia	40550	4
Japhat Garama	40436	3
Julio Mwambire	40385	3
Martin Mburugu	40542	2
Paul Wachira	40429	2
Stephen Graham	40332	2
Andreas Fox	40456	1
Isaac Kilusu	40537	1
Albert Baya	6418	1
Stephen Gachagua	40350	1
Andrew Kinzer	12850	1
Brian Aela	40509	1
Benjamin Joshua	40270	1

Top three winners’ profiles and Mapping Race experiences

1. Mustafa Adamjee (South Coast, Diani)

“Some of my best moments birding were seeing a Namaqua Dove at a public beach and seeing Crowned Hornbills nesting in a coconut tree. My best experience in the mapping race would be when I was mapping the Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary pentad. It was around 7:30 am and I was adding lots of birds to my list, when I thought I heard the Brown-headed Parrot. But I figured that it wasn't, since I've never seen any on my birding trips, so I kept on. To my surprise, I climbed a hill and on the top all I could see and hear were Brown-headed Parrots. It was really fantastic to see so many of them in one place.”



2. Dominic Chesire (Nairobi)

“Best moments in mapping came when I started using Birdlasser Kenya. My July 2016 Mapping Race experience was when I intensively map 9 new pentads in two days and become the race’s temporary leader, and still it was totally for fun. I actually wanted to see the reaction of other participants and make them put more effort to colour the map.”



3. Lentaaya R.Robert (Samburu county)

“Memorable experiences birding in Kirisia, Mt. Nyiro, Ndoto Hills, Mathew`s Ranges. My best moments and experiences during bird mapping have happened in the mornings and evenings. My July 2016 mapping Race satisfaction and joy was that I visited new places that I had never been and came across new bird species.”



SWARA PLAINS ACACIA CAMP

The camp is situated on the Kapiti Plains opposite the rugged Lukenya Hill, just 35 minutes from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport or 36 Kms from Nairobi. It is fully contained within a privately fenced 20,000 acre wildlife sanctuary. Swara Plains Acacia Camp and the surrounding sanctuary hosts a resident population of over 3,000 game animals (Cheetah, Zebra, Spotted Hyena, Bat-eared Fox, Eland, Oryx, Giraffe, numerous Antelopes, etc.) and over 313 identified bird species. Comfortable rustic accommodation and good home cooking are provided at the camp. Nature walks, cycling, fishing, and day/night game drives are just some of the activities one can do at the sanctuary. With such an accessible location this magnificent piece of African Savannah provides an experience not to be missed.



The Swara Plains Acacia Camp was the competition's hospitality partner in the month of July 2016. The overall winner was awarded a full-board one night stay at the camp in August 2016. The camp also facilitated transport for the winner to and from camp. This package included a guided nature walk and game drive of the Swara Plains, led by Jez Simms (the local birder on the ranch).

During the stay, Mustafa's highlight species included: Black-chested Snake Eagle, Secretarybird, White-winged Widowbird, Water Thick-knee, Spotted Thick-knee, Common Greenshank, Hybrid Lovebird, Ostrich, White-backed Vulture, Slate-coloured Boubou, African Darter, African Spoonbill, Black-cheeked Waxbill, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, Desert Cisticola, Hildebrandt's Starling, Striped Kingfisher, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Marico Sunbird, African Firefinch, Pectoral-patch Cisticola, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Kori Bustard, Fawn-coloured Lark, Short-tailed Lark, Chestnut Sparrow, Kittlitz's Plover, Northern Pied Babbler, Wahlberg's Eagle, Buff-bellied Warbler, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Grey Crowned Crane, Klaas's Cuckoo, Nubian Woodpecker, Taita Fiscal, Shelley's Francolin and the rare Common Buttonquail.





Photos by Jez Simms: Striped Kingfisher, Secretarybird, Grey Crowned Cranes, Mustafa enjoying his birding treat at Swara Plains and his farewell dessert

For more information and to book a visit to the camp/ranch, email: jez.simms@atsgroup.net

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The Kenya Bird Map project achieved great results through the July 2016 Mapping Race competition. This shows clearly that birders in Kenya are ready and willing to take part in citizen science work, for the conservation of local species. Through the Mapping Race, a competitive platform was set for birders to take part in this fun-filled and satisfying bird mapping activity.

The Kenya Bird Map hopes to keep up this Mapping Race event at determined intervals, as we seek more mapping coverage in Kenya.

We welcome all birders and other stakeholders to join us in this great initiative, for the sustainable conservation of Kenya's avifauna.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all Kenya Bird Map members for the great effort in mapping Kenya's birds. This would not have been possible without the effort of each bird mapper out there who is contributing mapping records.

The stakeholders and partners who supported the July 2016 Mapping Race:- Swara Plains Acacia Camp, the NatureNet Newsletter team, John Fanshawe and Terry Stevenson. Ahsante sana...

For inquiries about the Mapping Race and to support a month (hotels, camps and lodges are welcome to sponsor a winner's stay and other rewards are welcome from all stakeholders e.g. books, electronics etc.), email: manager.kbm@naturekenya.org