

## = Nairobi National Park =

Nairobi National Park is a national park in Kenya . Established in 1946 , the national park was Kenya 's first . It is located approximately 7 kilometres ( 4 mi ) south of the centre of Nairobi , Kenya 's capital city , with an electric fence separating the park 's wildlife from the metropolis . Nairobi 's skyscrapers can be seen from the park . The proximity of urban and natural environments has caused conflicts between the animals and local people and threatens animals ' migration routes .

Still , despite its proximity to civilisation and relative small size for an African national park , Nairobi National Park boasts a large and varied wildlife population . Migrating herbivores gather in the park during the dry season , and it is one of Kenya 's most successful rhinoceros sanctuaries .

## = = History = =

Colonists arrived in the area where the park is located in the late 19th century . At this time , the Athi plains east and south of what is today Nairobi had plentiful wildlife . Nomadic Maasai lived and herded their cattle among the wildlife . Kikuyu people farmed the forested highlands above Nairobi . As Nairobi grew ? it had 14 @, @ 000 residents by 1910 ? conflicts between humans and animals increased . Residents of the city carried guns at night to protect against lions . People complained that giraffes and zebras walked on and ruined their flower beds . Animals were gradually confined to the expansive plains to the west and south of Nairobi , and the colonial government set this area aside as a game reserve . Settlers from Nairobi including Isak Dinesen , author of Out of Africa , rode horses among gazelles , impala , and zebras in this reserve .

The conservationist Mervyn Cowie was born in Nairobi . Returning to Kenya after a nine @-@ year absence in 1932 , he was alarmed to see that the amount of game animals on the Athi plains had dwindled . Expanding farms and livestock had taken the place of the game . He later recalled this place as a paradise that was quickly disappearing . At this time , the area that would later become Nairobi National Park was part of the Southern Game Reserve . Hunting was not permitted in the reserve , but nearly every other activity , including cattle grazing , dumping , and even bombing by the Royal Air Force was allowed . Cowie started to campaign for the establishment of a national park system in Kenya . The government formed a committee to examine the matter .

Officially opened in 1946 , Nairobi National Park was the first national park established in Kenya . Maasai pastoralists were removed from their lands when the park was created . Cowie was named as director of Nairobi National Park and held this position until 1966 . In 1989 , Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi burned twelve tons of ivory on a site within the park . This event improved Kenya 's conservation and wildlife protection image .

## = = Geography = =

The park covers an area of 117 @. @ 21 square kilometres ( 28 @, @ 963 acres ) and is small in comparison to most of Africa 's national parks . The park 's altitude ranges between 1 @, @ 533 metres ( 5 @, @ 030 ft ) and 1 @, @ 760 metres ( 5 @, @ 774 ft ) . It has a dry climate . The park is the only protected part of the Athi @-@ Kapiti ecosystem , making up less than 10 % of this ecosystem . The park has a diverse range of habitats and species .

The park is located about 7 kilometres ( 4 mi ) from the Nairobi 's centre . There is electric fencing around the park 's northern , eastern , and western boundaries . Its southern boundary is formed by the Mbagathi River . This boundary is not fenced and is open to the Kitengela Conservation Area ( located immediately south of the park ) and the Athi @-@ Kapiti plains . There is considerable movement of large ungulate species across this boundary .

The fence that separates the park from the city runs along a high way leaving the airport , this is one fact many Kenyans are proud of ? this park is the only natural safari park that has a city scape background that can be seen from almost any part of the park , as seen in the picture of the giraffe and the sky scrapers .

## = = Flora = =

The park 's predominant environment is open grass plain with scattered Acacia bushes . The western uplands of the park have highland dry forest with stands of *Olea africana* , *Croton dichogamus* , *Brachylaena hutchinsii* , and *Calodendrum* . The lower slopes of these areas are grassland . *Themeda* , cypress , *Digitaria* , and *Cynodon* species are found in these grassland areas . There are also scattered yellow @-@ barked *Acacia xanthophloea* . There is a riverine forest along the permanent river in the south of the park . There are areas of broken bush and deep rocky valleys and gorges within the park . The species in the valleys are predominantly *Acacia* and *Euphorbia candelabrum* . Other tree species include *Apodytes dimidiata* , *Canthium schimperiana* , *Elaeodendron buchananii* , *Ficus eriocarpa* , *Aspilia mossambicensis* , *Rhus natalensis* , and *Newtonia* species . Several plants that grow on the rocky hillsides are unique to the Nairobi area . These species include *Euphorbia brevitorta* , *Drimia calcarata* , and *Murdannia clarkeana* .

## = = Fauna = =

The park has a large and diverse wildlife population . Species found in the park include Cape buffaloes , baboons , black rhinos , gazelles , zebras , cheetahs , Coke 's hartebeest , hippopotami , leopards , lions , elands , impala , Masai giraffes , ostriches , vultures and waterbucks .

Herbivores , including wildebeest and zebra , use the Kitengela conservation area and migration corridor to the south of the park to reach the Athi @-@ Kapiti plains . They disperse over the plains in the wet season and return to the park in the dry season . The concentration of wildlife in the park is greatest in the dry season , when areas outside the park have dried up . Small dams built along the Mbagathi River give the park more water resources than these outside areas . They attract water dependent herbivores during the dry season . The park is the northern limit for wildlife migrations in the dry season . The park has a high diversity of bird species , with up to 500 permanent and migratory species in the park . Dams have created a man @-@ made habitat for birds and aquatic species .

The David Sheldrick Trust runs a sanctuary in the park that hand @-@ rears orphaned elephant and rhinoceros calves , and later releases them back into secure sanctuaries . Orphaned and sick animals are brought to the sanctuary from all over Kenya . The sanctuary is located close to the park 's main entrance . It was opened in 1963 . It was set up by Daphne Sheldrick after the death of her husband David Sheldrick , the anti @-@ poaching warden of Tsavo National Park . Nairobi National Park is sometimes called Kifaru Ark , which means " Rhinoceros Sanctuary " . It is one of Kenya 's most successful rhinoceros sanctuaries , and it is one of only a few parks where visitors can be certain of seeing a black rhinoceros in its natural habitat .

## = = Conservation = =

Mervyn Cowie oversaw the development of several of Kenya 's national parks and designed them with human visitors in mind . This emphasis helped to make tourism Kenya 's primary industry . However , it exacerbated problems between the human population and wildlife . Farmers living next to the parks did not have input into the establishment of the parks . Locals received very little benefit from the game animals . Livestock is threatened by lions , and some landowners think that Kenya 's wildlife is not good for them . In 1948 188 @,@ 976 people lived in Nairobi , and by 1997 the city 's population had grown to 1 @.@ 5 million . The park is under pressure from the city 's growing population and need for farmland . People live right next to the park 's boundaries , which creates human @-@ animal conflicts . The human population also creates pollution and garbage . Effluent and industrial waste from factories located along the park 's northern boundary contaminate the park 's surface and ground water systems .

Treaties with the Maasai in 1904 and 1911 forced them to give up all of their northern grazing lands on the Laikipia escarpment near Mount Kenya . Some of the people that lost land there were resettled in the Kitengela area . The Maasai 's pastoral life did not create any conflicts with the

wildlife . Today the Kitengela 's former Maasai group @-@ ranches have been privatized and some of the land has been sold to Kikuyu farmers . Houses , cultivated plots , schools , shops , and bars are found on the Kitengela plains . Some of the park 's revenues have been used for community projects in order for the people living on the Kitengela to benefit from the presence of the national park . Many Maasai landowners have formed the Kitengela Landowners Association , which works with the Kenyan Wildlife Service to both protect the wildlife and find benefits for the locals .

The park and the Athi @-@ Kapiti Plains are linked by the migrations of wild herbivore populations . The plains to the south of the park are important feeding areas during the wet season . Before the city was established , herds of animals followed the rains and moved across the plains from Mount Kilimanjaro to Mount Kenya , a migration as great as the migration that takes place on the Serengeti . However , as the city grew the park became the northernmost limit of the animal 's migration . Migrating animals can reach their southern pastures by travelling through the part of the Athi plains called the Kitengela . This land is very important to their migration routes , but growth in the human population and the accompanying need for land threaten to cut off this traditional migration route from the park to land further south . The park 's migratory species are also threatened by changing settlement patterns , fencing , and their closeness to Nairobi and other industrial towns . These activities fragment their ecosystems and occupy their habitat .

= = Tourism and education = =

Nairobi National Park is the main tourist attraction for visitors to Nairobi . Visitor attractions include the park 's diverse bird species , cheetah , hyena , leopard , and lion . Other attractions are the wildebeest and zebra migrations in July and August , the Ivory Burning Site Monument , and the Nairobi Safari Walk and animal orphanage . Inhabitants of Nairobi visit the park and thousands of African children on school field trips visit the park each week .

The park 's Wildlife Conservation Education Centre has lectures and video shows about wildlife and guided tours of the park and animal orphanage . These tours are primarily , but not exclusively , to educate schools and local communities . There has been criticism about animals ' housing , and they now have more spacious housing in a more natural environment . The Kenya Wildlife Service has created a Safari Walk that highlights the variety of plants and animals that are in Kenya , and how they affect Kenya 's population .