



WORLD
LAND
TRUST

Restoring degraded habitats at Mount Kenya Forest Reserve

Our Plant a Tree project
with partner Nature Kenya

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Country: Kenya

Partner/Organisation:
Nature Kenya

Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

Ecoregion

East African montane forests

Habitats

Mount Kenya, Africa's second highest peak, lies 140km to the northeast of Kenya's capital Nairobi. The landscape all around this extinct volcano just south of the equator features montane forest on the lower slopes, transitioning to bamboo, scrub and moorland as altitude increases and finally giving way to rock, ice and snow around the high central peaks.

Project summary

Nature Kenya are working to restore areas of degraded forest habitat within Ecologically Sensitive Zones in the Mount Kenya Forest Reserve. With WLT's support, our partner has already overseen the planting of 200,340 trees (restoring 494 acres or 200 ha) between 2019 and 2020. The goal is to follow with a further 100,000 trees (restoring 247 acres or 100 ha) between 2021 and 2022, to be planted by Ontulili and one other Community Forest Association (CFA).

Grouped under these CFAs, local people will raise their own seedlings with training and support from the Kenya Forest Service and the Kenya Forestry Research Institute. Under a Joint Forest Management agreement with the Kenya Forest Service, communities will also take care of the planting of native tree species, seedling monitoring every six months after planting has taken place, as well as weeding and other maintenance tasks every three months for a period of up to three years.

Main threats to the area

Nature Kenya and its partners have identified multiple Ecologically Sensitive Zones within productive areas of Mount Kenya Forest Reserve, where past logging threats have now given way to severe pressure from invasive species, overgrazing, forest fires, wildlife poaching, and human-wildlife conflict in areas frequented by elephants. To counter these threats, our partner is stopping a cycle that would see these areas undergo another forestry rotation, restoring them to native forest instead.

Global prioritisation

Mount Kenya Forest Reserve is a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), as well as one of Kenya's five main "water towers" that form the upper catchments of the country's main rivers. The Mount Kenya Forest Reserve and National Park were declared a World Heritage site in 1997.

African Savanna Elephant



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Lion



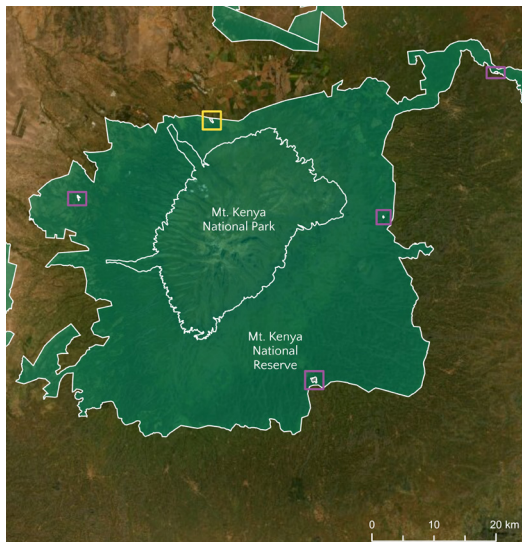
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Key species¹

African Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*, EN), Bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*, NT), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*, VU), Lion (rare) (*Panthera leo*, VU), African Golden Cat (*Caracal aurata*, VU), Aberdare Mole Shrew (*Surdisorex norae*, LC), Aberdare Cisticola (*Cisticola aberdere*, VU), Abbott's Starling (*Poeoptera femoralis*, EN).

¹ The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species includes categories of Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC)

UN Sustainable Development Goals advanced by this project



Nature Kenya Restoration Areas

- Complete
- Ongoing
- Protected Area



Biodiversity

Mount Kenya is an important reservoir for biodiversity. The landscape boasts a rich abundance of afro-alpine flora, spanning a total of 880 plant species of which at least 11 are endemic and 150 are near-endemic. The forest reserves all around the extinct volcano are home to as many as 53 of Kenya's 67 African highland biome bird species, as well as at least 35 forest specialist bird species and little-known, Endangered residents like Abbott's Starling. Meanwhile, Kenya's largest remaining forest population of African Elephants – an estimated 2,000-3,000 individuals – roam the landscape. The Reserve was once also home to two populations of Black Rhinoceros but individuals of this Critically Endangered species have become extremely rare since the early 2000s, with no sightings recorded within the protected areas of Mount Kenya for the last decade. For their part, the once-numerous populations of Bongo antelopes, the flagship species of Kenya's high mountain forests of Aberdare, have experienced a dramatic drop over the past 40 years.

Local communities

Various communities call the landscapes all around Mount Kenya home, including the Kikuyu people (based on the western side of the Mount), the Meru people (eastern side) and the Embu ethnic group (to the south). Nature Kenya is working to mobilise all three communities, largely reliant on agriculture for subsistence, into CFAs (see page two). With help from donations from corporates and the public, the WLT partner is funding the establishment of these local bodies, and offering training and support over the life of this project so that communities can manage the seedlings and carry out tree planting. The restoration work will form part of a project aimed at engaging downstream water users with payments to upstream water stewards. Nature Kenya intend to develop that side of the project with other funders.

Partner/NGO

Established in 1909 to promote the study and conservation of nature in eastern Africa, Nature Kenya is the Kenyan branch of the East Africa Natural History Society, which is Africa's oldest conservation body. Nature Kenya strives to: advance knowledge of Kenya's biodiversity; promote conservation of key species, sites, and habitats; encourage community participation in conservation through capacity-building and promotion of sustainable benefits; and advocate policies favourable to biodiversity conservation.

Nature Kenya became a WLT partner in 2009, leading two years later to an appeal that funded the protection of the Leleshwa Reserve in the Kinangop Plateau. WLT's latest work with Nature Kenya includes the protection of the Dakatcha Woodland and this reforestation project around Mount Kenya.