



WORLD
LAND
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NatureKenya
The East Africa Natural History Society

Securing Dakatcha Woodland for threatened biodiversity

How WLT's Buy an Acre programme is helping Nature Kenya to save some of the last 10% of the coastal forests of eastern Africa



Securing Dakatcha Woodland for threatened biodiversity



Country

Kenya

Partner/Organisation

Nature Kenya

Biome

Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests

Ecoregion

Northern Swahili coastal forests

Habitats

A haven for endemic life, these habitats 500 km to the southeast of Kenya's capital Nairobi and 50 km to the west of the Indian Ocean are dominated by trees of the *Brachystegia* genus, commonly termed "miombo" and noted for the red hues of new leaves. The woodland also encompasses important tracts of the evergreen forest species *Cynometra webberi* and areas of seasonal wetlands, crucial for the breeding population of an Endangered bird – Clarke's Weaver – not known to nest anywhere else.

Project summary

Kenya's Dakatcha Woodland is a landscape of remarkable conservation value. These forests lie within a global biodiversity hotspot – the Coastal Forest ecoregion of eastern Africa, of which Dakatcha is the northernmost limit – and are a key area for birds and biodiversity in general. They are a refuge for threatened species only found at a handful of other sites, and the sole documented breeding ground for the Endangered Clarke's Weaver birds.

Despite this significance, Dakatcha had historically not been granted any formal protection – until Nature Kenya stepped in. For over a decade, the WLT partner's conservation programmes have been safeguarding good breeding and foraging habitat for Clarke's Weaver and other threatened species in the area. Between 2022 and 2025, they aim to secure another 500 ha (1,235 acres) of woodland in the highest conservation value areas before they are lost to commercial agriculture, illegal charcoal enterprises, and rapid forest degradation.

Having supported Nature Kenya's efforts at Dakatcha since 2018, WLT will now fund, through our Buy an Acre programme, the purchase and protection of 376 ha of the 500 ha planned total, with Rainforest Trust financing the remaining 124 ha. Once land is secured, Buy an Acre donations will also help to fund the development of a site management plan; the enlisting of a warden and purchasing of a motorbike they will use during patrols; and more.

To inject further scale and ensure conservation is locally led, Nature Kenya will go beyond land purchase alone. The WLT partner will work with local people create another 5,000 ha (12,355 acres) of Community Conservation Areas (CCAs), 1,661 ha of which will be funded by WLT. These CCAs will be governed based on evidence-based, inclusive communal management practices set out under CCA committees, site support groups and other bodies, with Nature Kenya supporting capacity-building and providing livelihood incentives to communities acting to preserve their forests.

Main threats to the area

Dakatcha's threatened biodiversity remains at risk from land use change and land grab for commercial crop cultivation. This is coupled with degradation and overuse of the forest as a source of fuel wood, with charcoal production in particular driving the demand.

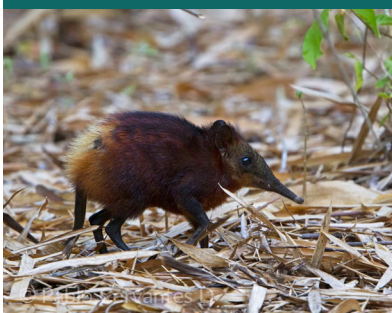
Global prioritisation

Around 90% of the Coastal Forests of eastern Africa has already been lost and within this little-known global biodiversity hotspot, Dakatcha Woodland remains crucial as a Key Biodiversity Area and one of the 277 landscapes included in BirdLife International's 'Important Bird Areas in Danger' list. Dakatcha has been identified as a regional priority by Kilifi County, but this recognition does not confer any level of formal protection.

Clarke's Weaver



Golden-rumped Sengi



UN Sustainable Development Goals directly advanced by this project

5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



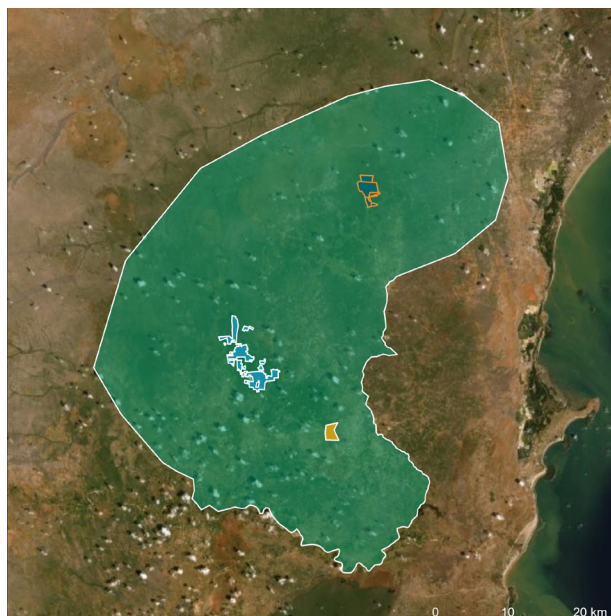
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



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



- Proposed Dakatcha IBA
- Nature Kenya Kibaoni Nature Reserve (to be supported by Buy an Acre)
- Nature Kenya Kamale Kilifi Weaver Reserve
- A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve



Key species¹

Clarke's Weaver (*Ploceus golandi*, EN), Sokoke Pipit (*Anthus sokokensis*, EN), Sokoke Scops Owl (*Otus ireneae*, EN), Fischer's Turaco (*Tauraco fischeri*, NT) and Southern Banded Snake-eagle (*Circaetus fasciolatus*, NT), Golden-rumped Sengi or Elephant-Shrew (*Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*, EN), African Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*, VU).

Main methods for land protection

Acquisition of land and establishment of CCAs; coupled with wardens and capacity building for communities to manage the new reserves; as well as support to unlock new sustainable income sources for local people and research to promote evidence-based land management.

Biodiversity

For many resident threatened species, Dakatcha is one of a last handful of homes left on the planet. Clarke's Weavers, for instance, have only been documented in these woodlands and another nearby location (the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest to the south). Dakatcha remains their only confirmed breeding ground and should it be lost, it could see these birds uplisted by the IUCN from Endangered to Critically Endangered. In addition, Nature Kenya's new planned land purchases and CCA declarations will also secure habitat for at least half of Kenya's East African Coast biome bird species, as well as large roamers like elephants and rare flora species such as evergreen Warburgia stuhlmannii trees up to 24 metres high.

Local communities

Dakatcha is part of an area blighted by some of Kenya's highest poverty rates (71% against a national average of 46%), driven by a poor agricultural land, deficient livestock husbandry practices, low uptake of modern agricultural systems and lack of access to financing. This is compounded by Dakatcha's harsh climate of long dry spells and its history of high food prices, which combine to force local communities to turn to the production of charcoal for sale – one of the main threats facing this forest – as a source of income. With at least 50,000 people relying on forests for timber, fuelwood, water, medicine and other vital ecosystem services, Nature Kenya have engaged with Dakatcha's communities for over 10 years. Through the CCAs planned with this latest conservation push, the WLT partner will work to ensure local people take part in – and benefit from – the protection of the woodland, unlocking sustainable livelihoods and boosting the resilience of deprived, climate-vulnerable agricultural communities.

Partner/Organisation

Founded in 1909, Nature Kenya works nationwide and 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. The organisation – the Kenyan branch of the East Africa Natural History Society, itself Africa's oldest conservation organisation – became a WLT partner in 2009. WLT-backed Nature Kenya projects since that year include land purchase in the Kinangop highlands and Dakatcha Woodland; a land lease in the Taita Hills; and various reforestation projects at Mount Kenya, Kikuyu Escarpment and South Nandi.

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