Kenyan Important Bird Area keeps National Park status

Title The High Court of Kenya has reversed an order by President Mwai Kibaki to downgrade the Amboseli National Park to a game reserve. The High Court found the move to ?de-gazette? Amboseli was illegal. Serah Munguti, the Advocacy manager of Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner), immediately welcomed the decision. ?Nature Kenya firmly believes that the future of Kenya?s wildlife lies with citizens and the local populations who share land with wildlife?. The downgrading of Amboseli was ordered by the President ahead of Kenya?s first Constitutional Referendum in 2005, and was largely seen as an attempt to gain support from the Maasai Community to support the new constitution. Serah said the new High Court decision was a firm reminder that: ?policies and leadership decisions likely to affect the integrity of ecosystems must be made in consultation with experts and not for political benefits.? Amboseli National Park lies immediately north-west of Mount Kilimanjaro, on the border with Tanzania. It has been identified as an Important Bird Area, and has a rich avian fauna with over 400 bird species recorded, including over 40 birds of prey including Vulnerable Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* which uses the site during its migration period. Amboseli National Park is surrounded by six communally-owned group ranches that are wet-season dispersal areas for wildlife, and whose management has direct influence on the ecological stability of the park. Wildlife tourism is one of Kenya's main sources of foreign revenue, and Amboseli brings in about $3.3m a year from park fees and related tourist activities. This money helps administer Amboseli and other National Parks in Kenya. ?Local people must benefit not only from environmental services but also from concrete financial revenues derived from conservation?, concluded Serah Munguti.