Title Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner) staff, two journalists, and Kenya Wildlife Service rangers escaped death narrowly in Mulunguni village, Magarini District, when they were attacked by people said to be working for an Italian investor on Friday July 2, 2010. The team had set out to visit the area to see conservation work and produce material for a TV feature story on the controversial clearing of Dakatcha Woodland forest for a plantation of *Jatropha curcas*, a biofuel crop. They had been warned that a local administrator had told villagers and employees of the Italian firm to ensure that Nature Kenya staff and any other person perceived to be against the grabbing of 50,000 ha of trust land and converting it to a jatropha plantations is not allowed to be in the area. However, the team had disregarded the warning. When the team stopped at the Kenya Jatropha Energy Ltd. plantation site to interview the person in charge, they did not know what awaited them. About 30-50 armed men and women emerged from the bush armed with machetes, sticks and all manner of crude weapons. Luckily the Kenya Wildlife Rangers ranger were armed and saved the team from early graves, although they sustained minor injuries and a damaged vehicle. The armed group were not yet done with the team. They immediately blocked the road to ambush the team on the return trip. Their anger was released on an innocent motorcyclist and his two passengers who happened to pass through the now no-go route. The unfortunate motorcyclist was abandoned by his fleeing passengers who sustained injuries as the armed group charged. The information spread fast and the Nature Kenya team used a different route on the return trip. However, Nature Kenya staff and the rest of the team were not yet safe. Word spread that administration police were ordered to mount a roadblock to arrest the team. This failed, and the Malindi police were given the Nature Kenya car number plates to mount a search for the vehicle and arrest the occupants. At the Malindi Police station the team recorded statements on the day?s nasty experience and none was arrested. The provincial administration in the area seems unable or unwilling to take any action and it seems that without government intervention the illegal actions on Dakatcha forest will continue and threats to Nature Kenya staff, media and local people opposed to the jatropha project will get worse. These threats to human lives arise from objections by environmentalists on the Environmental Impact Assessment Study Report for the Proposed Setting Apart of 50,000 hectares of Trust Land for Jatropha Cultivation in Bungale Area, County Council of Malindi. Nature Kenya ? the East Africa Natural History Society ? and other conservation organizations including the East African Wild Life Society, Youth for Conservation, East African Environmental Network, government agencies including Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Research Institute, and international organizations including BirdLife International STRONGLY OBJECT to the Kenya Jatropha Energy Ltd jatropha plantation project and plans mainly because: a) The project proponent has shown lack of accountability and transparency by starting to clear forest land and cut indigenous trees before the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report was advertised for comments. It is evident that the project proponent has no respect for the law. b) The Dakatcha Woodland is an Important Bird Area (IBA), a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and a Global Biodiversity Hotspot critical for globally threatened plants and animals found only in a few East African coastal forests. The land on which these unique plants and animals live in harmony with people is held in trust for the people by the Malindi County Council. The council has betrayed their trusteeship by agreeing to irregularly allocate the land to a private developer, disregarding the needs of local people and biodiversity. c) *Jatropha curcas* is an untested and potentially destructive plant. The myth that *Jatropha curcas* is commercially viable on degraded arid land has been proven false. The required 1000 ?2000mm of rain per annum and alkaline, nutrient-rich soils are not available in Dakatcha. *Jatropha curcas* is subject to many pests and diseases, especially under heat-stressed and irrigated conditions. In particular in Africa (e.g. in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique) well researched reports show frequent failures or financial difficulties of start-up Jatropha plantations, In addition, *Jatropha curcas* is poisonous and has been recognized by the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) as a potentially invasive plant. d) Large scale clearing of land for plantations in the Dakatcha area will erode the fragile soil and take up scarce water, turning forest land into desert and destroying the livelihoods of the local people. **Click here to see a Message from BirdLife?s Regional Director for Africa ? Dr Julius Arinaitwe ? about the Proposed Dakatcha Project.** Image: Tonrulkens / Flickr **-** *Jatropha curcas* is a plant used for biodiesel production which is largely untested and potentially destructive.