

Nesting site of Endemic, Endangered Clarke's Weaver found!

Title

Clarke's Weavers, *Ploceus golandi*, are only found in Kilifi County, Kenya. They live in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, and in Dakatcha Woodland to the north. Clarke's Weavers are usually in small flocks, feeding on insects and fruits in forests of *Brachystegia spiciformis*. Their nesting site had never been found...until now. Monitoring teams from Nature Kenya and Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group, a site support group working with Nature Kenya, made the discovery after years of searching.

A team comprising Fleur Ng'weno, Albert Baya, Julius Mwambire, Japhet Garama, Kazungu Thuva, Samuel Kenga, Samson Katisho, Samson Barisa, Jonathan Kalama, Maxwell Issa, Annet Sifa, Faith Mbago and George Odera, first found a flock of Clarke's Weavers in a seasonal wetland within a grassy glade on January 6.

Not wanting to disturb the birds, the team could not see any nests. On March 23, 2013, the team of Fleur Ng'weno, Jonathan Mwachongo, Patrick Changawa, Julius Mwambire, Japhet Garama, Kazungu Thuva, Samuel Kenga, Samson Katisho and Peter Wario found a larger flock of Clarke's Weavers in a different seasonal wetland about 7 km away. It was an area of grasses and sedges the size of a football field, surrounded by trees and bushes.

Clarke's Weavers, males and females, were perching in the sedges and flying back and forth. The brownish, rounded shapes of nests could be seen. One male was weaving more sedge strips onto a nest. It was the breeding site! Over 700 Clarke's Weavers were in the small seasonal wetland. The bird's total population is currently estimated to be between 2000 to 4000.

Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group (DWCG), with support from Nature Kenya, is taking active steps to protect this first known breeding site. DWCG members visited the area the same week to talk to local elders, and informed government representatives. When people living near the seasonal wetland realize the importance of these birds, we hope they will take steps to see the wetland and forest are conserved.



