



World Wetlands Day 2012 celebrations in Kenya

The World Wetlands Day is marked yearly on 2 February to commemorate the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands, which was done on 2 February 1971 in the Caspian Sea. This is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Ramsar Convention is the only global environmental treaty that deals with wetlands. Each year since 1997, government agencies, NGOs and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits. In Kenya, Nature Kenya (BirdLife partner) joined in the celebrations that were held at Ombaka Primary School, Kisumu County. The activities were aimed at the protection and opening up of the Singida Wetland in Nyando to the Western tourism circuit, unlike in the previous years where the concentration had been heavily tilted to the coastal region. This was in line with this year's theme "Wetlands and Tourism". Ugenya Singida provides many benefits (essential goods and services) to the communities living around and within the wetland ecosystem. The site has a lot of ecotourism potential including boat racing, rafting, sport hunting and sport fishing among others. The successful celebrations were made possible through the National Steering Committee (NSC) that was being co-ordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources (MEMR). During the celebrations, speeches were offered by the area Provincial Commissioner, Provincial environmental Officer, The NEMA acting Director among other invited guests. About 1500 school going children with a similar number of adults were reached on that day. Several publications were also distributed by the various groups that were displaying their work. Nature Kenya's (BirdLife partner in Kenya) Site Support Groups -Lake Victoria Sunset Birders and Yala Conservation Group were among the exhibitors. Yala Conservation Group which has receiving support from Nature Kenya through BirdLife International AECID project had a chance to showcase their work which focuses on sustainable use of papyrus to produce marketable products like mats, baskets, tables, chairs and many more products