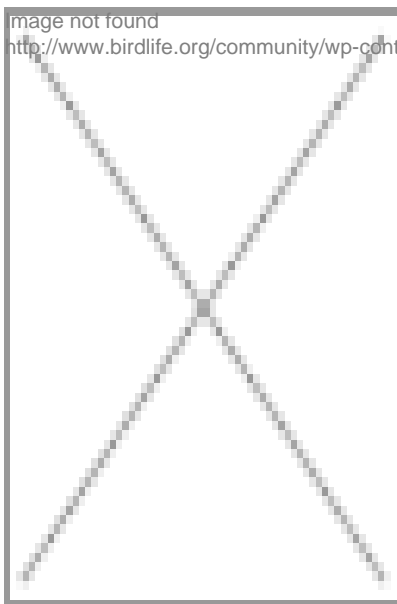


Guided by science, Kenyan authority rejects the case for jatropha at Dakatcha IBA

Title

Following a campaign led by Nature Kenya, supported by other BirdLife Partners, Kenya's National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has officially rejected a proposal to convert 10,000 hectares of Dakatcha Woodland IBA to grow the biofuel crop jatropha *Jatropha curcus*. Clearing the forest in this area of fragile soils and scarce water would have led to water shortages, soil erosion, food insecurity and loss of rare species of animals and plants. The local communities also risk losing their ancestral land. Dakatcha Woodland is the only site outside Arabuko-Sokoke where Endangered Clarke's Weaver is known to occur. It also holds substantial populations of Sokoke Pipit, and both species may breed at Dakatcha. The woodland holds at least half of the bird species associated with Kenya's East African Coast biome. Kenya Jatropha Energy Limited intended to clear the forest to grow the crop, whose seeds produce oil that are used to make bio-diesel. There has been a strong push to introduce biofuel plantations at the Kenyan coast, especially targeting areas that are critical for the survival of the local communities and biodiversity. In the Tana River Delta, a Canadian company has been awarded a licence to convert 10,000 hectares for jatropha.



At Dakatcha IBA, Nature

Kenya has initiated alternative livelihood activities including sustainable forestry management.

But studies now show that converting natural ecosystems to grow biofuels is not beneficial. A study on Dakatcha commissioned by Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya), the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and Action Aid, found that jatropha growing would not be more environmentally friendly than fossil fuel, and would in fact, produce as much as six times more carbon emissions. "We applaud NEMA for this wise decision to reject untested biofuel crops in an area of Community Land and high biodiversity," said Paul Matiku, Executive Director of Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya). "It is heartening to see NEMA's decisions being guided by science. We now urge NEMA to apply the same criteria to the proposed biofuel plantations in other sensitive areas such as the Tana River Delta." "Whilst today is great news for the forests of Dakatcha, sadly this case is just one of an increasing number of European companies grabbing land in Africa to cash in on biofuel subsidies in the UK and Europe," says Helen Byron, RSPB's International Site Casework Officer. "Ultimately, the only thing will stop it is for Governments to end support for biofuels and to focus on cutting carbon from transport through electric vehicles instead." Dr Julius Arinaitwe, the BirdLife's Regional Director for Africa, says: "We congratulate the Kenya government for the move that will protect rare biodiversity found in this forest. Africa faces many development challenges and these can only be surmounted by striking a balance that ensures we don't destroy the natural capital in the process? This milestone on Dakatcha gives momentum to other ongoing campaigns to save critical sites in Kenya and across Africa. "Nature Kenya's superb performance will remain a source of inspiration for other BirdLife Partners with sites facing similar challenges," Jane Gaithuma of BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat, said. Nature Kenya's campaign to save Dakatcha Woodlands has received support from various donors, among them the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECID). Crucial support was received from BirdLife European Partnership notably, RSPB, SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain), SOF (BirdLife in Sweden), LIPU (BirdLife in Italy), BirdLife Finland and BirdLife Europe. Action Aid played a central role in the Dakatcha study. For more information please contact Serah Munguti ? advocacy@naturekenya.org **Online information** BirdLife's views on EU Bioenergy Policy [here](#) BirdLife case studies on agriculture [here](#) Dakatcha IBA Factsheet [here](#) Clarke's Weaver Factsheet [here](#)