

Project Update: June 2008

From Community Awareness and Education, we moved into community organising. The eight groups at the grassroots level and the umbrella association (Mabamba wetland Eco-tourism Association – MWETA), are being consolidated into strong community structures to empower the community to sustainably conserve the resource. We have managed to negotiate with Kasanje sub-county leadership and the association was given the responsibility of collecting some fees from the tourists who come to visit. Part of this income goes to the association's treasury for conservation and community development work.



Billy one of the volunteers in the tourist office

Two volunteers (Billy and Kevin) have been trained in computer skills and Information management. The centre is now functional. We have, however planned for the official launch to coincide with this year's World Environment Day of 5th June. This occasion will be used for increased awareness about Mabamba to the wider layer of the population especially the policy makers at District and the Central government.

"In our efforts for continued networking and promotion of eco-tourism for empowerment of the community of Mabamba we have successfully initiated our networking efforts with Uganda Safari guides - a network of private tour operators. They requested that we create a link to our website to theirs, which we have already done. They will also do the same. For this reason they requested for a brief about Mabamba and nature Palace Foundation in regard to eco-tourism activities. Am glad to share it with you".

Mabamba's growing Eco-tourism Industry – By David Kintu Nkwanga

Background Information

Mabamba bay has grown into one of the most interesting and spectacular site for bird watching in Uganda. Apart from Murchison Falls National Park, Mabamba bay is the only place and site (so far rated as the best in Africa and/or the whole world) where the elusive Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*) can be spotted at any one time of the day, approximately 38% of the global population of the Blue Swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*), and the globally-threatened Papyrus Yellow Warbler plus other birds of global conservation concern. It is also a habitat to rare plant species like Sandboxes species. Recently, Mabamba has become one of the strong holds for the migrant Blue Swallow with over 100 individuals recorded every year. Mabamba has been surveyed in recent years and now boasts of over 260 species with one day's record of 157 species (Bird Life International).

Current Developments at Mabamba with Nature Palace Foundation.

Nature Palace Foundation, a not-for-profit Community-Development and Human Well-being-focused organization that operates on the principle of blending Conservation with Development, initiated the Promoting community participation and support in conservation and wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance Project. The project aimed at promoting local Community members' participation and to kindle their support in Conservation and wise-use of Mabamba Bay Ramsar Site. This project was supported by Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation. (www.ruffordsmallgrants.org/rsg/projects/david_nkwanga)

Establishment of Mabamba Information Centre

The major outcome of this project was the establishment of an Eco-tourism Information centre and Nature School/Campsite to assist visitors who come to the site feel more comfortable and be able to get some background information about the resource. The Idea of an information centre was conceived in the 2006 and is being developed by both Nature Palace Foundation and



the Community through their Association (Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association - MWETA). MWETA identified two volunteers from the community to manage the information centre after undergoing training. Functions of the centre:

- Is a focal point for documenting, sharing and disseminating indigenous knowledge: This will help build confidence of community members and help them realize the importance of the resource, not only to them but the entire globe. E.g. some migratory birds from Europe breed from Mabamba.
- Providing Information to Tourists and visitors: Before the project there was no visitor's/tourist reception area. Visitors therefore missed the opportunity of interacting with the local community members and getting some basic information about the resource.
- Creating awareness and Education Campaign: Community members continuously get education and Awareness messages from the Information Centre and adjacent Nature School.
- Providing Skills in Alternative Income Generating Opportunities and Wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland. Organized Community groups are being prepared to undergo training in alternative sources of Income as a result of the existence of this resource. E.g. making souvenirs /handcrafts from papyrus, water hyacinth etc.

Other Eco-tourism support projects by Nature Palace Foundation

Nature Palace Secretariat, Botanic Garden & Learning centre are located approximately 15km from Mabamba as you move towards Mpigi town. Please see map provided below.

Existing Facilities and Services:

Nature Palace Botanic Garden:

NPF established Nature Palace Botanical Garden (NPBG) in 2001 to promote conservation of floral species, with special emphasis on those that are very essential to the welfare of poor communities in terms of known medicinal values. In 2005, NPBG was registered as a participant in the world-wide implementation of the International Agenda in support of Plant Conservation, Environmental Awareness and Sustainable Development coordinated by Botanical Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) based in UK. NPBG maintains In-Situ and Ex-situ Conservation sites, manages Species Collection and Seed Banking and conducts visitors' education.



Leisure Park

NPF provides eco-tourism services and venue for nature educational programs



Picnic/Camp sites

Nature Palace foundation has Expansive venues for picnics and camping.





Medicinal Plants Under the Poverty Alleviation and Health Care Promotion through conservation (PHPC) project, this program involves Training in various aspects of Medicinal plants, their propagation and multiplication as well as awareness creation.

Ecological Agriculture Models

NPF maintains demonstration plots for community education in sustainable agriculture. These include LEISA approaches, Agro forestry, Integrated Pest Management and Organic production approaches.

Catering services

Both Traditional and oriental dishes are prepared on order.

Please See Map for directions

Entrance Fees: Nature Palace is a not-for-profit civil society organisation. Your subsidized contribution in terms of entrance fees will assist to support conservation work.

Service	Category of visitor	Amount
Entrance	Domestic visitors	1,000/= Uganda shillings
	International visitors	2 USD @ person
Camping	Domestic visitors	10,000/= UGX @ night (1-5 people)
	International visitors	15 USD @ night (1-5 people)
Meals		Depends on menu. Contact us for details.

N.B. Reservation is required: Contact us on +256-772-625963/+256-772-306075/+256-392 966008. You can also make your reservation from our Mabamba coordination office.

For more information please contact:

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