

# DAKATCHA WOODLAND

## HOME OF CLARKE'S WEAVER, THE BIRD OF KILIFI COUNTY

**An internationally recognized Important Bird Area**  
A mix of superb forests, eroded sand depressions, seasonal wetlands, farmlands and homesteads of the Giriama and Watha people. It's where Clarke's Weaver, a bird that's only found in Kilifi County (nowhere else in the world), was discovered nesting in seasonal wetlands in 2013. Dakatcha Woodland is for anyone who wants to enjoy the outdoors – the person who wants to walk, hike, discover the world of nature, landscapes and the people.

**Dakatcha Woodland Important Bird Area** covers nearly 2,000 square kilometres in the rolling hills of Magarini sub-county of Kilifi County. The beautiful spreading trees called Mrihi (*Brachystegia spiciformis*) are the main forest type. In the dry season many Mrihi trees lose their leaves; when the new leaves unfold they may be red, pink or orange in colour. It is the most northern *Brachystegia spiciformis* forest in Africa. This forest gives Dakatcha Woodland its signature bird – the Clarke's Weaver.



**Dakatcha Woodland**



**Male and female Clarke's Weavers**



**Golden-rumped Sengi**

### RARE COASTAL ANIMALS

Three bird species considered so rare that they are in danger of extinction are found in Dakatcha Woodland: Clarke's Weaver, Sokoke Pipit and Sokoke Scops Owl. Clarke's Weavers live only here and in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest to the south. There's also a mammal found only at the Coast and which is globally threatened: the Golden-rumped Sengi (Elephant-shrew). More than 220 kinds of birds can be seen here, including the spectacular Fischer's Turaco and international migratory birds such as Eurasian Rollers, Eurasian Golden Orioles, Nightingales and Spotted Flycatchers.



**Fischer's Turaco**



**Sokoke Scops Owl**

### SPECIAL PLANTS

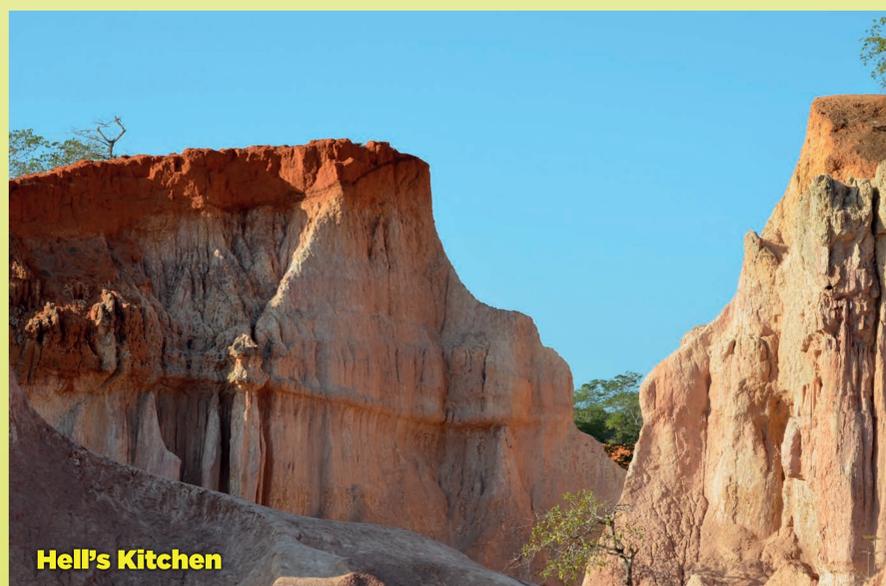
The forests of Mrihi (*Brachystegia spiciformis*), Mfunda (*Cynometra webberi*), mixed forests and thickets shelter the unique animals. The seasonal wetlands with sedge and grass provide nesting sites for Clarke's Weavers. There are more than eleven rare plant species here, including the tree *Warburgia stuhlmannii*, a shrub *Pavetta linearifolia*, the succulent *Monadenium invenustum* and an orchid *Eulophia serrata*.

### VALUE

The forests and thickets trap, store and release rainwater, protect the fragile soil from erosion and moderate the local climate. The trees and shrubs absorb greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, thus slowing climate change. The plants also provide medicines, food, fibre and forage to the local communities.



**Brachystegia forest**



**Hell's Kitchen**

### TOURISM AND EDUCATION

Dakatcha Woodland offers visitors a chance to view unusual landscapes, walk or hike in serene surroundings, watch coastal forest birds and visit key attractions such as the Hell's Kitchen depression, Kaya Singwaya sacred forest, Bore Singwaya depression and the Mekatilili wa Menza Cultural Centre. It's also a living classroom, providing an opportunity to learn ecological knowledge and traditional technical know-how from local communities.

### PHOTO CREDITS:

Colin Jackson, Doug Janson, John Mwacharo, Lars Peterson, and Rupi Mangat

## THREATS

Dakatcha Woodland has no formal protection status. The economic and ecological services it provides and its remarkable biodiversity are threatened by over-exploitation of resources.

Uncontrolled logging of indigenous trees and illegal charcoal production have destroyed large tracts of forest vegetation and wildlife habitat. Agricultural expansion, especially pineapple production, has led to clearing of Cynometra forests and thickets, critically important as habitat for the endangered Sokoke Scops Owl. Unsustainable bush meat hunting poses a threat to the survival of rare mammals.



## CONSERVATION

The Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group (DWCG) is a local environmental group working with Nature Kenya to conserve Dakatcha Woodland. The group was formed in 2008 with the main objectives being to monitor birds and biodiversity, advocate for the conservation of Dakatcha Woodland IBA, create environmental awareness and support community livelihoods. DWCG comprises of four community groups and is affiliated to more than ten other groups, thus forming the largest community group in Marafa.

Working together, DWCG, the Dakatcha Community Forest Association and the local community have set aside 26,000 hectares as Community Conserved Areas. These are nature reserves managed by local communities for preservation of animals, plants and ecosystem services, and for ecotourism and other cultural and non-consumptive uses.



## SERVICES

The Marafa community eco-resource centre coordinates environmental education for local communities as well as schools. This centre houses the DWCG office and a honey processing facility. Trained community forest scouts patrol the forest to stop illegal activities and local community members have become skilled bird guides.



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