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Forest Update

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In recognition of this year's launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, we're celebrating some of our amazing restoration projects.

Despite the challenges that 2020 presented, our partners continued the hard work to deliver the right trees in the right places. Although the stories in this newsletter highlight the inspirational restoration work of the partners, in many landscapes there are also additional projects underway to protect standing forests.

Restoring the lungs of the city in Tanzania

WWF Tanzania, the Tanzania Forest Service and local communities are leading efforts to restore coastal forests near Dar es Salaam.

Pugu, Kazimzumbwi, and Vikindu Forests are the lungs of the city, and are vestiges of some of the oldest forests in the world. These forests are critical to the health of the city and the livelihoods of local communities. Protecting and restoring these remnants of a once vast forest is crucial. Alongside efforts to protect this vital landscape, tree planting events are organised with local schools and community groups to restore important tree species in the degraded areas of the reserves. In 2020, WWF started Foresters for the Future, which aims to plant 100 hectares – about 150,000 trees – by training a cadre of young people who will plant trees in their communities and become advocates for the maintenance of forests and wildlife in Tanzania.

Of course, restoration and planting efforts were impacted by Covid-19 over the last year, but the team is enthusiastic to get back to work and to have planted 40,000 new seedlings by the summer.

[▶ Watch the video](#)

"The world is only beginning to realise that youth is a powerful voice for the natural world. In Tanzania we are yet to fully tap into this potential. Foresters for the Future will unleash incredible positive change for forests, wildlife, climate change action and connect young people (and ultimately all of Tanzania) to nature. Honestly, it's the way to go!"

Amani Ngusaru, Country Director, WWF Tanzania



© WWF Tanzania

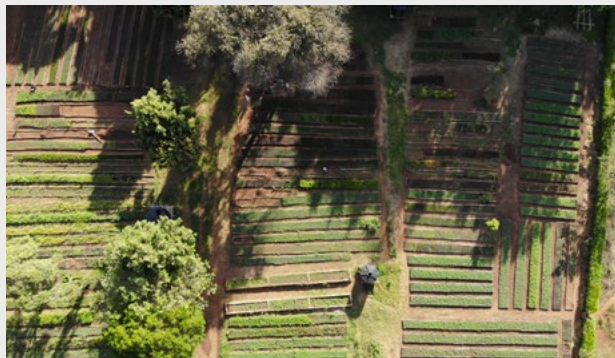
Nature's nurseries on Mount Kenya

In 2020 despite the Covid crisis, Nature Kenya (a BirdLife Partner) successfully continued working with three Community Forest Associations (CFAs) to deliver the Mt. Kenya restoration initiative.

Local communities took advantage of the good rains to restore degraded areas, taking all appropriate precautions with masks and social distancing. In March-May, Nature Kenya was able to plant 14,000 indigenous tree seedlings with the Irangi CFA, and another 30,000 seedlings in October-December with the Lower Imenti and Kabarú CFAs. These efforts are enhancing natural regeneration throughout the nearly 34,000 hectares of indigenous forest areas the CFAs are responsible for. Before planting started in October, the Lower Imenti CFA was able to start eradicating invasive *Lantana camara*, which prevents natural regrowth of the forest. So far, there has been a remarkable 90% survival rate for the planted seedlings.

Restoring the forests of Mt Kenya not only benefits the wildlife, but also the people who live in and around them. The CFAs manage the tree nurseries and sell seedlings for planting in and outside of Mt Kenya's forests. One member of the Lower Imenti CFA has been able to pay school fees for his children and finish building a house with the proceeds of seedling sales and the labour to plant them.

Species planted in 2020 included *Juniperus procera*, *Olea africana*, *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Croton megalocarpus*, *Bredilla micrantha*, and *Markhamia lutea*.



Top: Aerial view of the tree nurseries.
Bottom: Member of the one of the CFAs in the tree nursery © Nature Kenya



Top: Area within Nyungwe where ferns have been cleared. Standing dead trees are signs of forest fires that occurred in 1997.
Bottom: A mixture of seedlings showing re-growth. © WCS Rwanda.

Protecting vital resources in Rwanda

The best solutions are often the simplest. This has certainly been the case in Nyungwe Forest National Park in Rwanda's southwest, whose degraded forest pockets demanded a solution that would restore them to a wildlife haven and protect them as a vital resource for locals.

In the 1990s, swathes of the park were destroyed by fires set by poachers and wild honey collectors and fuelled by unusually dry weather conditions. Around 10% of the 100,000 hectare forest was lost – an area roughly equivalent in size to Barbados. Colonies of bracken ferns emerged in its place, which suffocated the native seeds buried in the soil and increased the forest's vulnerability to future fires.

For Trillion Trees partner the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – which has supported conservation efforts in southwest Rwanda for 25 years – restoring Nyungwe's degraded forest presented a win-win. WCS has spent a decade testing approaches, and for Nyungwe, it landed on fern removal as the most cost-effective method to restore the forest in burnt areas – a technique known as assisted natural regeneration.

Just prior to the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, fern removal started. Over the course of the year, WCS and local communities removed ferns across 70 hectares – equivalent to more than 1,100 tennis courts. In just a few months, they restored an entire hillside, where the first green shoots of new forest life are now visible. Work will now continue across the park to make way for naturally regenerated forest to flourish.



Difference in regenerating plants in the fenced and non-fenced areas of the property. © SAVE Brasil

Bringing back wildlife in Brazil

The Caatinga is the largest dry forest region in South America, and one of the richest dry forests in the world, in terms of biodiversity. But like other forests in Brazil (including the Amazon and Atlantic Forests), this unique ecoregion is under threat and is in desperate need of protection and restoration.

A few years ago, SAVE Brasil (BirdLife’s partner in Brazil) partnered with local farmers and created a conservation zone to pilot-test a method to regenerate native forest species which had disappeared due to overgrazing. The owner of the farm was motivated to restore the area to encourage native wildlife species, such as the Spix’s macaw (classified as extinct in the wild) to return. It is his dream that one day the birds will return through successful reintroduction programmes – and his land will be ready for them.

Grazing goats were kept out by fencing off the conservation zone – a simple yet effective solution. As a result, the young plant shoots have thrived.

Following this successful case, SAVE Brasil is now doing something similar in the Atlantic Forest – this time within the property of a senator. This will help set the precedent in the region

that dedicating land for conservation is vital and can be done at a minimal cost. On this farm, SAVE Brasil is also using the same method to create a 7-hectare exclusion zone that will connect two patches of degraded forest. In the second quarter of 2021, there are further plans for an additional two exclusion zones for natural regeneration as well as active restoration and agroforestry in the Atlantic forest of North-eastern Brazil, in the Serra do Urubu – Murici corridor.

While this project has been a huge success for the Caatinga region, natural regeneration isn’t enough. In many areas, degradation is too severe and active restoration and conservation (including tree planting, agroforestry, and sustainable ranching) is underway to save this unique landscape.



Property owners and project field team below the sign designating the property as a conservation area. © SAVE Brasil

Restoring biodiversity in Uganda

Mabira Forest Reserve is the largest remaining forest in central Uganda, and is close to three towns including Kampala city. The forest is of critical importance for biodiversity conservation, while also being a classroom and laboratory for many schools in the central and eastern region.

The proximity to the urban centres has made Mabira Forest one of the most popular forests in Uganda. Years of deforestation have left the forest surrounded by agricultural settlements, and over 5000 hectares of the forest remain highly degraded and in need of restoration. Nature Uganda has been working with surrounding communities through collaborative forest management initiatives to protect and restore some areas.

Work started in early 2020 and, despite delays caused by Covid-19, 500 hectares of degraded forest is naturally regenerating with a high density of sprouting seedlings – as many as 250,000 trees. Now that national lockdown is being eased, Nature Uganda has already started community mobilisation to continue with this vital work to restore the 5,000 hectare site through a combination of assisted natural regeneration and planting of the appropriate native species in collaboration with the local community.



© Nature Uganda