

Dakatcha Woodland

Important Bird Area



NatureKenya
The East Africa Natural History Society

Art by: Edwin Selempo



DAKATCHA WOODLAND

Clarke's Weaver, a species of bird, is found in only two places on Earth: Dakatcha Woodland, and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest to the south. Clarke's Weaver probably nests in Dakatcha Woodland, although its nest has never been found. This site is therefore of critical conservation value to Kenya and the world. Without Dakatcha Woodland, Clarke's Weaver would become extinct.

The Dakatcha landscape consists of a series of dry forests, dense thickets and open woodlands dominated by spreading *Brachystegia spiciformis* trees (Mrihi), interspersed with active and abandoned farmlands, in the rolling hills northwest of Malindi town. To the south, the site is bordered by the wide Galana-Sabaki River. The wooded hills are vital water catchments for the surrounding farmland.

Several rare and globally threatened species of birds, plants and mammals are found in Dakatcha Woodland.



Dakatcha Woodland.

-D. Mumbu

What are IBAs?

Important Bird Areas are places of international importance for the conservation of birds.

How are IBAs selected?

Using an internationally agreed criteria based on threatened birds, birds only found in a small area, birds found in a particular habitat type and sites with large gatherings of certain birds.

Why are IBAs useful?

By conserving areas that are important for birds we protect many other forms of life.

How many IBAs are there in Kenya ?

60 IBAs have been listed in Kenya. The Dakatcha woodlands are listed because of the globally threatened Clarke's weaver.

Distinctive Birds of Dakatcha Woodland

Threatened birds include Clarke's Weaver, Sokoke Pipit, Sokoke Scops Owl, Fischer's Turaco and Southern Banded Snake Eagle. Dakatcha Woodland is also home to the globally threatened Golden-rumped Sengi (Elephant-shrew) and rare plants such as the tree *Warburgia stuhlmannii* (mhirihiri).



Clarke's Weaver

-S. Garvie



Sokoke Pipit

-S. Garvie

Dakatcha Woodland is one of Kenya's 60 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) – sites internationally recognised as vital for the conservation of birds and other living things. It is considered a key biodiversity area at a global scale and therefore forms part of the Eastern Africa Coastal Forests of Kenya and Tanzania Biodiversity Hotspot. Despite its importance for water catchment and plant and animal diversity, Dakatcha has no formal protection status.

What to do at Dakatcha Woodland

Dakatcha Woodland is part of the "IBA Triangle" of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Mida Creek, Gede Ruins and Sabaki River Mouth, all premier bird watching destinations. Tsavo East National Park is not far to the west.

Hiking, camping and looking for the special and characteristic birds and trees of the East African coastal forests and woodlands will appeal to naturalists. Early morning or late afternoon are best, and the terrain may be rough in places. Trained guides from Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group know where to find the birds. The *Checklist of the Birds of Dakatcha Woodland* provides background information and a list of bird species.

Dakatcha Woodland also features cultural attractions such as the grave of Mekatili wa Menza, an anti-colonial rule heroine; the sacred forest Kaya Singwaya; and Kapangani Rock deep in the IBA. Tourist attractions include the famous Marafa Hell's Kitchen, Bore-Singwaya and other natural erosion depressions



Join local well trained guides for a unique bird watching experience

-P. Changawa

Threats facing Dakatcha Woodland

The northwestern part of Malindi District where Dakatcha Woodland is located is a transition between the coastal strip and upcountry terrestrial ecosystems, and there are few sources of permanent water. Commercial charcoal production from *Newtonia hildebrandtii* (Mukami) trees is the major cause of destruction in the woodlands while *Cynometra webberi* (Mfundu) thickets are cleared for pineapple growing in red soils and *Brachylaena huillensis* (Muhuhu) trees are almost gone due to high demand in the wood carving industry.

Today the major threat to Dakatcha Woodland is demand for land for large-scale plantations of *Jatropha curcas* (Mbonokoma). This plant has been promoted as a bio-fuel in Kenya. Clearing woodland to grow this fuel crop spells doom for the Dakatcha habitats and the species that live here.



Logging, charcoal production and large-scale biofuel plantations threaten the capacity of the woodland to conserve water and store carbon.

Nature Kenya's activities at Dakatcha Woodland IBA

Nature Kenya works with local communities to improve livelihoods and conserve this incomparable and endangered habitat.



Tree nurseries, Dakatcha -D. Mumbu



Bee keeping training, Dakatcha -D. Mumbu

Activities include:

- Establishing and strengthening institutional and advocacy capabilities of community-based organizations and agencies.
- Improving livelihoods through development of nature-based enterprises such as beekeeping, eco-tourism and farm forestry.
- Promoting sound management of the site through the Community Conserved Area approach.
- Developing eco-tourism infrastructure to help market Dakatcha as a tourist destination.
- Promoting linkages between the local community, the administration and other stakeholders for collective conservation action in Dakatcha.

Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group

This umbrella group draws members from five community based organizations (Baricho Youth Group, Mulunguni Umoja Youth Group, Mahenzo Youth Group, Marafa Hell's Kitchen Tourist Operators Association and Mulangaza Youth Group). They have come together to work for a conserved, biodiversity-rich and prosperous Dakatcha.



The conservation team in an SSG Organizational development workshop for community based organisations at Malindi district. -P. Changawa

Group activities include:

- Establishing tree nurseries and commercial woodlots and tree planting.
- Beekeeping and honey processing.
- Creating awareness on environmental conservation issues.
- Conducting monthly bird watching outings.
- Monitoring of habitats and biodiversity.
- Guiding visitors

How YOU can help conserve Dakatcha Woodland

- Visit Dakatcha Woodland; employ a guide
- Buy a checklist, honey and other products
- Tell others about Dakatcha Woodland
- Become a member of Nature Kenya
- Donate to the conservation of Dakatcha Woodland IBA
- Fill a basic monitoring form and send records of your observations to the National Museums of Kenya (Ornithology Section) or Nature Kenya



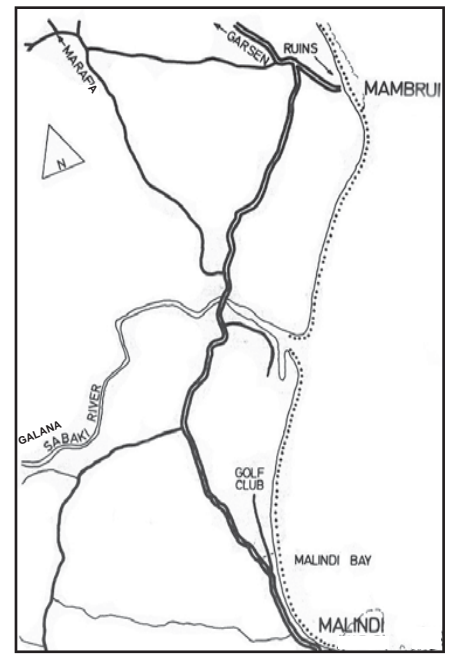
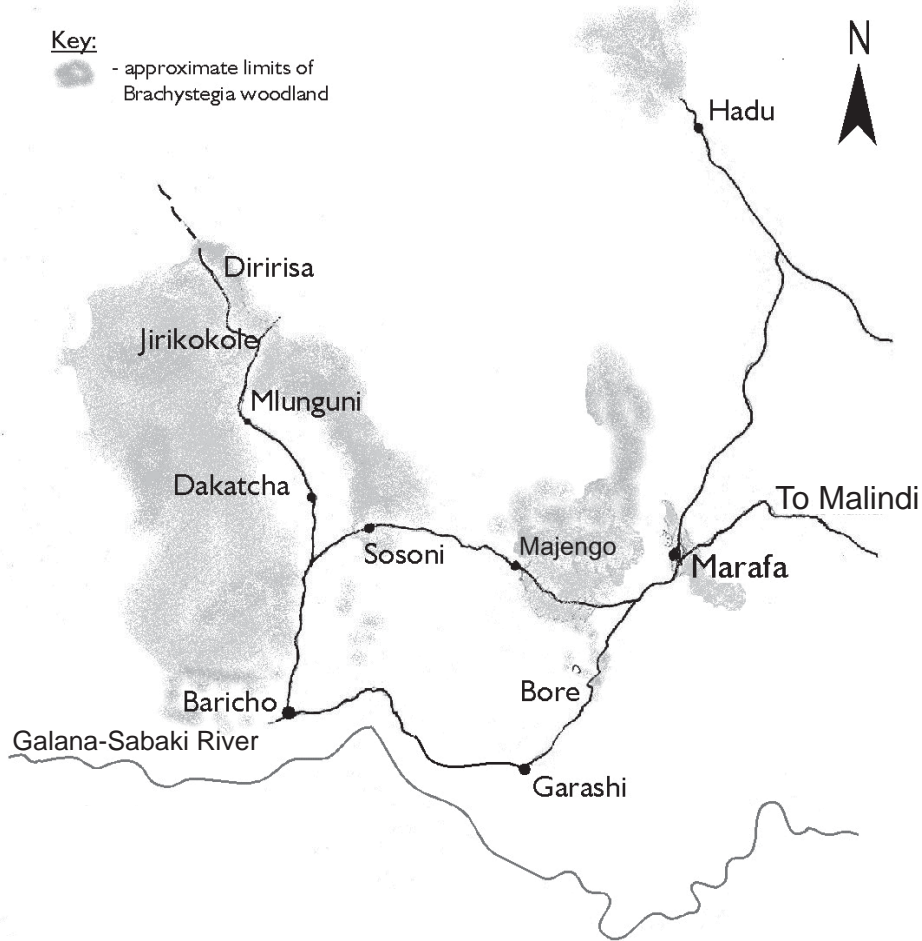
Tetracera boiviniana
- D. Mumbu



Lizard Buzzard

-A. Buonajuti

map courtesy of Colin Jackson



Map

Marafa, the main trading centre in Dakatcha Woodland IBA, is about 30 km northwest of Malindi on Kenya's north coast. Roads to Marafa and Baricho branch off the Malindi-Lamu road after the Sabaki River Bridge and at Mamburui. For more information contact the Nature Kenya Office at Gede Ruins or Nairobi National Museum.

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Bell's Kitchen -D. Mumbu