ACTIVITY REPORT

Nature Walk & Grey Crowned Crane Awareness Event
Sheraton Hotel Kampala Gardens

Date: January 26, 2025

Figure 1: Participants observing birds in a tree canopy

1. Introduction

On January 26, 2025, the Avian Conservation Uganda Society (ACUS), in collaboration with Sheraton Hotel Kampala and the Ismaili Community of Uganda, organized a **Nature Walk and Grey Crowned Crane Awareness Event** at the Sheraton Hotel Kampala Gardens. The event aimed to promote urban green space conservation, enhance awareness about Uganda's national bird, encourage sustainable environmental practices and break ground for the Ismaili Community's Nature Club.

2. Objectives

The key objectives of the event were:

- To engage participants in identifying **bird and plant species** within the Sheraton Gardens.
- To raise awareness about the **Grey Crowned Crane conservation** and its ecological significance.
- To visit and understand the **waste management site and organic garden** at Sheraton Hotel.
- To foster creativity and conservation awareness through a **painting activity** centered on the Crested Crane.
- To support the launch of the **Ismaili Community's Nature Club** and encourage environmental stewardship.

3. Activities Conducted

3.1 Guided Nature Walk

- Participants explored the Sheraton Gardens, identifying **various bird and plant species**.
- Expert guides from ACUS provided insights into the ecological roles of these species.
- Observations were documented for future reference.

Figure 2: General Manager of Sheraton Hotel Kampala JP leading the trail for the nature walk

Figure 3: Young participant observing birds using Binoculars

3.2 Grey Crowned Crane Awareness Session

- ACUS led an awareness session on the conservation status and threats facing Uganda's national bird.
- Discussions focused on habitat loss, illegal trade, and conservation efforts.

Figure 4: Conservation & Operations Manager of ACUS, Eric leading an awareness session

Figure 5; Participants listening to the Awareness session about Grey-crowned cranes

3.3 Visit to Waste Management Site & Organic Garden

- Participants visited and learned about Sheraton Hotel's sustainability initiatives.
- Waste management (sorting, segregation) and organic gardening techniques were showcased

Figure 6: Participants being showed into the waste sorting room

Figure 7: Participants being showed around the organic gardens of Sheraton Kampala

3.4 Art Activity

- Participants painted artistic representations of the **Crested Crane** as a form of creative engagement with conservation.
- The activity emphasized the beauty and importance of Uganda's national bird.

Figure 8: Lead Artist taking participants through the Art session

Figure 9: Team from ACUS and Sheraton show off their paintings after the Art session

3.5 Launch of Ismaili Community's Nature Club

- The event marked the beginning of the Ismaili Community's **Nature Club**, aimed at fostering long-term environmental consciousness and action within the Ismaili community and Uganda at large.

Figure 10; Younger generation of the Ismaili community, young nature stewards

4. Observations & Findings

4.1 Bird Species Observed

Figure 11; Dark-capped bulbul (common bulbul)

Figure 12; Pied Crow

Figure 13; Eastern plantain eaters

Figure 14; Little egret

Figure 15; African thrush

Figure 16; Double-toothed barbet

Figure 17; Marabou stork

Figure 18; Yellow-billed kite

Figure 19; Splendid starling

Figure 20; Ross's turaco

Figure 21; White browed Robin-chat

Figure 22; Green-backed camaroptera

Figure 23; African Open bill

Figure 25; Red-eyed dove

Figure 24; Yellow-fronted tinker bird

Figure 26; Hadada ibis

4.2 Plant Species Identified

For this baseline survey we identified 51 plant species which included a combination of trees, herbs and shrubs majority of which were ornamental in nature;

No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1.	Oil palm tree	*Elaies guineensis*	Traditionally, extracts and oils are used to treat skin irritations and rashes as well as impotence. The oil is also prized in cosmetics and for wound healing, with bioactive compounds showing anti-inflammatory properties.
2.	Manila palm	*Adonidia merrlliii*	Primarily grown as an ornamental plant. In some local traditions, parts of the plant may be used for crafting
3.	Steudner's dragon tree	*Dracaena steudneri*	Used in decoctions for liver disorders, high blood pressure, and skin ailments. Its extracts are believed to have antimicrobial effects.
4.	Wheeping fig	*Ficus benjamina*	Used to treat jaundice and impotence. Ficus species are known for anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties.
5.	Lemon	*Citrus limon*	Locally known as “Niimu.” Widely used in traditional medicine for its antiseptic, digestive, and respiratory benefits. Its high vitamin C content also makes it a popular ingredient in teas and home remedies.
6.	Mango tree	*Mangifera indica*	Locally known as “Muyembe,” various parts (leaves, bark, and fruit) are used to treat diarrhea, flu, and cough.
7.	Guavas	*Psidium guajava*	Known locally as “Mapeera,” guava leaves and fruits are used in traditional medicine to alleviate coughs and, in some accounts, to help curb alcohol addiction.
8.	Java plum	*Syzygium cumini*	Traditionally employed to manage diabetes and cough. Research supports that extracts from various parts of the tree may exhibit hypoglycemic and antimicrobial activities.
9.	Bark-cloth fig	*Ficus natalensis*	Locally known as “Omutuba,” its fibrous bark is traditionally used in the manufacture of crafts and musical instruments such as drums.
10.	Indian rubber tree	*Ficus elastic*	Known both as an ornamental species and for its latex. Traditionally, the latex has been applied to treat skin conditions and aid wound healing

11.	Alexandrae palm	*Archontophoenix alexandrae*	Mainly cultivated as an ornamental palm. There is little documented evidence of medicinal use, although it contributes to the cultural landscape
12.	Fishtail palm	*Caryota urena*	Traditionally tapped for sago extraction (a starch source) and used in local weaving and crafting practices.
13.	Royal palm tree	*Roystonea regia*	Often used as a decorative tree in landscaping. In many tropical regions, it also holds cultural significance and may feature in local rituals.
14.	Fig tree	*Ficus ovata*	In folk medicine, parts of the plant (including its latex) are sometimes used for treating digestive and respiratory issues, as well as for wound care
15.	Candlenut	*Aleurites moluccana*	Traditionally used for oil extraction and wax production. The oil is incorporated in culinary, medicinal, and cosmetic applications; in some traditions, it is also employed as a purgative.
16.	Rose hibiscus	*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*	Popular as an ornamental shrub, extracts from the flower are sometimes used in traditional remedies for skin and hair care
17.	Fresh marigolds	*Tagetes patula*	Used traditionally for their anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and insect repellent properties
18.	Robusta coffee	*Coffea robusta*	Locally known as “Mwanyi,” the beans are primarily used for their stimulant effects. In folk medicine, coffee is sometimes consumed for digestive aid and as an alertness enhancer
19.	Jacaranda	*Jacaranda mimosifolia*	Primarily valued as an ornamental tree for landscaping purposes
20.	Lucaena	*Lucaena leucocephala*	Traditionally used as fodder and for soil improvement (green manure). Some communities also employ it for treating digestive issues and as a diuretic in traditional medicine
21.	Traveller’s palm	*Ravenala madagascarieriensis*	Not a true palm, but its unique form is valued for weaving, basket making, and sometimes in traditional rituals
22.	Morinda tree	*Morinda lucida*	In traditional African medicine, it is used to treat malaria, infections, and inflammation.
23.	Insulin plant herb	*Costus igneus*	Nicknamed the “insulin plant” for its reputed ability to help regulate blood sugar levels;

			traditionally used to manage diabetes. Several studies have explored its hypoglycemic effects
24.	Ashoka tree	*Saraca asoca*	Beyond its ornamental value, it is widely used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine to treat gynecological disorders, menstrual irregularities
25.	Small leaf shrub	*Codiaeum variegatum*	Primarily cultivated for ornamental purposes. In some traditions, extracts are used topically for skin issues; however, caution is advised as the plant can be toxic if ingested
26.	Garden croton big leaf shrub	*Codiaeum variegatum*	Similar to other croton varieties, it is mainly used as an ornamental plant. Traditional topical applications exist for skin ailments, though its use should be approached with care due to potential irritants.
27.	Canna lily	*Canna indica*	Locally known as "Amagunda," the herb's rhizomes and leaves are used in traditional medicine as diuretics and for treating digestive disorders.
28.	Madagascar periwinkle herb	*Catharanthus roseus*	Locally known as "Sekajja," this herb is famous for its role in modern medicine (source of anticancer drugs vincristine and vinblastine) and is traditionally used to treat diabetes, high blood pressure, and leukemia
29.	Spanish-tamarind tree	*Vangueria apiculata*	Its edible fruits are consumed locally, and the tree is used in folk remedies to aid digestion and provide nutritional benefits
30.	Spider plant	*Chlorophytum comosum*	Widely grown as an ornamental houseplant, it is also recognized for its air-purifying qualities, believed to have minor healing properties when used in home remedies
31.	Vitex hedge shrub	*Vitex trifolia*	Traditionally used to alleviate headaches, fevers, and respiratory issues. Its extracts are noted for anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects
32.	Bleeding heart herb	*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*	Primarily cultivated as an ornamental; in some folk traditions, parts of the plant have been applied for mild pain relief
33.	Cuphea herb	*Cuphea hyssopifolia*	Traditionally used in herbal remedies for digestive issues and inflammation. Its antioxidant properties are also valued in ethnobotanical practices

34.	Lobster heliconia	*Heliconia rostrata*	Mainly prized for its ornamental value. In certain cultures, its striking bracts are incorporated into ceremonial decorations and traditional festivities.
35.	Small heliconia	*Heliconia sp.*	Similar to the lobster heliconia, it is primarily used for ornamental and cultural purposes, with occasional use in local crafts
36.	White-cider	*Thuja occidentalis*	Traditionally employed in herbal medicine to address respiratory ailments such as coughs and bronchitis
37.	Mexican white cider tree	*Cupressus lusitanica*	Traditionally, the durable wood is used in construction and craft-making. Additionally, extracts are sometimes used in folk remedies to treat respiratory and skin conditions
38.	Ferns	*Pteris spp.*	Locally referred to as "Kayongo Herb," various ferns are used in traditional medicine for wound healing, fever reduction, and as mild diuretics
39.	Umbrella papyrus	*Cyperus alternifolius*	Traditionally used in weaving and basket making. In some regions, extracts are used for minor digestive remedies
40.	Giant elephant ear	*Alocasia macrorrhiza*	After proper detoxification, its corms are consumed as a food source. Traditionally, the plant is also used for its purported anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties
41.	Lemon grass	*Cymbopogon citratus*	Locally known as "Kisubi," it is extensively used both as a flavoring agent in teas and for its medicinal properties, which include anti-inflammatory, digestive, and calming effects
42.	Viper plant	*Sansieveria trifasciata*	Locally known as "Akagogwa," this herb is traditionally believed to have anti-venom properties and is used as a snake repellant
43.	Coleus herb	*Coleus amboinicus*	Traditionally used for respiratory and digestive ailments. Its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties have been documented
44.	Goosefoot herb	*Sygonium podophyllum*	Often used as a nutritive green in traditional diets; some reports suggest its use for digestive issues
45.	Calliandra shrub	*Calliandra brevipes*	Traditionally, the bark and leaves are used in decoctions for treating coughs and other respiratory ailments, acting as an expectorant

46.	Duranta shrub	*Duranta repend*	Valued as an ornamental plant; in some traditional practices, its extracts have been used to address respiratory infections and microbial conditions, though caution is advised because of potential toxicity
47.	Candlenut tree	*Aleurites moluccana*	Locally known as "Kabak'anjangala." The seeds yield oil and wax used in culinary, medicinal, and cosmetic applications. The tree is also cultivated for ornamental purposes and as a source of fuel
48.	Foxtail grass	*Andropogon gerardii*	Traditionally used for soil stabilization and as a forage grass. Its aesthetic value also makes it popular in ornamental landscaping
49.	Bottlebrush	*Callistemon citrinus*	Locally known as "Mwambala butonya." Traditionally, extracts from its leaves have been used to treat respiratory ailments such as coughs and bronchitis due to their expectorant properties
50.	Ornamental senna	*Senna sp.*	Widely used in traditional medicine as a natural laxative. Both leaves and pods are employed for their purgative effects in folk remedies
51.	Stripped giant reed grass	*Arundo donex variegate*	Traditionally used in local crafts, including basketry, musical instruments, and construction. Its fibrous stalks are also valued for erosion control and various artisanal application

5. Key Outcomes & Impact

- Increased awareness of urban biodiversity and conservation challenges.
- Strengthened relationships among ACUS, Sheraton Hotel, and the Ismaili Civic Organization.
- Enhanced community engagement in **biodiversity conservation efforts**.
- Fostered creativity and appreciation for nature through the painting session.
- Set the foundation for continued conservation activities through the Ismaili Community's Nature Club.

6. Challenges & Recommendations

6.1 Challenges Faced

- Some bird species were difficult to identify due to their elusive nature.
- Limited time for detailed observations of certain plant and bird species.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Future nature walks should allocate more time for species identification and appreciation.
2. A plan for periodic nature walks should be established to monitor biodiversity trends.
3. Participants should be taught how to use **binoculars and field guides** to enhance birdwatching experiences.
4. Sheraton Hotel Kampala should continue to sustainably manage its green gardens which are one of the few green spaces in Kampala and vital habitats for birds and other biodiversity.

7. Conclusion & Way Forward

The event was a great success in promoting urban biodiversity conservation and strengthening partnerships. Moving forward, ACUS will continue to engage communities through similar initiatives, fostering **nature conservation awareness** and active participation in sustainability efforts.

We extend our gratitude to **Sheraton Hotel Kampala** and **Ismaili Civic Organisation** for their collaboration and commitment to environmental conservation. We look forward to more impactful initiatives in the future.

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