The three Gold Eco-rating qualifiers were announced at an event held on March 22, 2007 at Sarova Panafric, Nairobi.

The Ecotourism Kenya Eco-rating Scheme awards labels for different levels of certification. Gold Eco-rating is the highest level of certification in the scheme and signifies that a facility has innovative, outstanding and replicable practices in environmental management, sustainable resource use and social linkages. It is a distinctive label of sustainable tourism that guarantees the traveler that the enterprise has among other things:

• Initiated programs to conserve the environment and manage environmental challenges, e.g. Campi ya Kanzi supports a predator compensation scheme for landowners to secure the future of wildlife species where it operates.

• Manages solid waste that it produces.

• Employs the principle of Reduce, Recycle and Re-use.

• Promotes local traditions and micro enterprises, e.g. Basecamp trains local women to make high quality traditional Maasai handicrafts and markets these products to its guests and selected outlets locally and internationally.

• Complied with legislation relating to environment, wildlife management, employment, use of resources

• Employs and trains local people in various aspects of tourism business.

• Encourages visitor participation in environment management and social programs through information sharing.

• Has programs for saving water and energy.

• Uses sustainable technologies, e.g. Malewa River Lodge has installed wind and micro-hydro power systems.

Kenya’s Premier

Gold Eco-rated Lodges

Basecamp Masai Mara, Campi ya Kanzi and Malewa River Lodge are Kenya’s first tourist accommodation facilities to attain Gold Eco-rating under Ecotourism Kenya’s Eco-rating Scheme. In addition, Amboseli Porini Camp, Mara Porini Camp, Olonana, Ol Seki Mara and Turtle Bay Beach Club are the first to attain Silver Eco-rating.
Statistics from the Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) show that Kenya earned Ksh 17.5 billion (US$ 250 million) from tourism in the first quarter of the year 2007, this represent 18 percent increase from Ksh 14.7 billion (US$ 210 million) recorded during the same period last year. It is estimated that more than one million visitors will visit Kenya in 2007, up from 954,000 in 2006, when the sector earned Ksh 56.2 billion (US$ 802.8). Though tourism should have both tangible (e.g. job creation, state and local tax revenue, etc.) and less tangible (e.g. social structure, quality-of-life, etc.) benefits for the poor, studies by World Tourism Organisation (WTO) in several African counties have noted that such benefits tend not to reach the local poor. After the tourists have departed, local communities – who often are the objects of tourists’ visits and who bear the social and ecological consequences of increased tourism – are left with relatively little tangible benefits. This situation is clearly unsustainable. How can we ensure that the local communities benefit from the increased tourism earnings in Kenya?

In Kenya, the public, private and community sectors have invested considerable time, money and effort in the design, implementation and management of Community Based Tourism (CBT) enterprises for good of the locals. Although their objectives are sound, Eco-tourism Kenya (EK) has established that such initiatives tend not to pay adequate attention to micro-issues such as empowerment and capacity building of local communities which, along with effective natural and cultural resource management, is ultimately the key to ensure that locals benefit from tourism earnings.

It is with this background that EK recently embarked on a series of country-wide regional trainings for CBT enterprise members, owners, entrepreneurs and investors. The aim of the training programmes is to build capacity and skills of the local communities to engage more effectively in the business of tourism. These trainings will ultimately enhance communities’ capacity to tap into the tourism sector in Kenya. Many CBT enterprises in the Mid-Rift (Nakuru, Naivasha, Baringo and its environ), Coast (North & South coast, Malindi and Tana-River), Western and Narok regions have already undergone training, with more to be trained in the next few months [see schedule of upcoming trainings in ‘newsbriefs’ Pg.5].

While these trainings are essential in tackling issues of product development, and market access, EK believes that a lot more needs to be done to ensure increased community access to technical support and financing (turnkey funding) on an on-going basis to ensure entrenchment of CBT into mainstream tourism and hence equitable distribution of tourism gains. To support or partner with Ecotourism Kenya in mentoring CBT enterprises in Kenya, send e-mail to info@ecotourismkenya.org.

Eco-Warrior!

Safaricom CEO Mr. Michael Joseph (pictured) is the winner of the 2006 Eco-Warrior Awards (Individual category). The award was given in recognition of Mr. Joseph’s leadership of Safaricom’s environmental conservation and local community support efforts in various tourism destinations in Kenya. The award was presented on June 6th 2007 at Safaricom headquarters in Nairobi. The other winners of Eco-warrior Awards 2006 are Campi ya Kanzi and Ol Donyo Wuas Lodge. Congratulations!
Climate change and tourism: It’s time to go carbon neutral

by Philip Murithi & Francis Omondi

In the world today, sustainable tourism entails striving to be carbon neutral. This means balancing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that are produced from tourism-related activities like air travel, auto travel, heating, electricity, etc with equivalent carbon reduction activities elsewhere (offsets).

Carbon offsetting has its roots in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that calls on polluting nations to reduce their greenhouse gases (GHG) emission levels and sets out fines for countries that exceed emission targets. By ratifying the agreement, developed countries (referred to as Annex I countries in the Protocol) are required to reduce their GHG emission levels while developing countries like Kenya (referred to as Non-Annex I countries), having no GHG emission reduction obligations, can participate in GHG reduction through Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects.

CDM allows developed countries to invest in emission reduction projects in developing countries. These projects can take the form of afforestation, methane collection and combustion and renewable energy and energy conservation activities. Apart from reducing GHG emissions, CDM encourages transfer of clean technologies and funds from the developed world to the developing world.

Statistics show that the current number of registered CDM projects worldwide is disappointingly low, with none in Kenya, 20 in Africa and only 708 the whole world. Clearly, rather than wait to have registered carbon sequestration projects, there is need for the tourism industry in Kenya to take action to minimize its carbon footprint. There are various actions that can be undertaken to ensure that the industry is carbon neutral. A few of these include:

- Individuals and businesses (like airlines, tour operators and hotels) can offset their carbon by supporting community carbon reduction projects. For example, Caribbean Airlines has introduced a program that offers passengers the opportunity to offset airline carbon emissions by allowing them to contribute to community projects that aim at reducing greenhouse gases such as use of renewable energy and reforestation.
- Individuals can take action to be carbon neutral, including reducing the amount of travel that they undertake, reducing stop-over’s where possible (by flying directly to one’s destination), sharing cars and making use of public transport. One can also take up the responsibility of offsetting his/her carbon every time they travel. “Every time I travel to Europe, I dig a hole and plant at least eight trees to offset my carbon,” Wangari Maathai told a gathering in March 2007.
- Creation of carbon trading programs – whereby polluting businesses in the travel trade (such as airlines flying to Kenya, for example) can buy permits to emit carbon dioxide from lower emitters (such as eco-resorts or hotels with energy saving practices).
- Developing a carbon trading hub – where funds for regional development are generated through the trading of carbon permits. Some portions of these funds can be ploughed back into sustainable tourism and regional climate change mitigation programs.

Finally, Ecotourism Kenya supports a holistic approach where air lines, tour operators, hotels and other tourism industries’ players are incorporated into efforts to minimize carbon dioxide emissions.
National Ecotourism Conference: Call for papers
Ecotourism Kenya would like to announce the initial call for papers for the 2007 National Ecotourism conference that will be held on 22nd and 24th October 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. Papers are invited on the following sub-themes:
• Ecotourism and climate change
• Ecotourism and community development
• Consumer choices
• Best practices in Ecotourism
For more information, email judy@ecotourismkenya.org

Events held in this quarter
Ecotourism Kenya has held five major events this quarter.
• **Ecotourism Kenya Open Day 2007** was held on 15th and 16th March 2007 at the Ecotourism Kenya offices. More than 200 people attended the event where they discussed the programmes of Ecotourism Kenya and interacted with the organization’s members and partners.
• **Mid-rift Regional Ecotourism Workshops** was held on 12th – 13th April 2007 at Hotel Kunste, Nakuru. At this event, 16 representatives of Community-Based Tourism enterprises in Nakuru, Naivasha and Baringo areas received training on The Stepping Stones for Tourism (see article on page 6).
• **Coast Regional Ecotourism Workshop** was held on 27th to 28th April 2007 at Kwetu Training Centre, Mtwaya. 47 participants representing Community-Based Tourism enterprises from the north and south coast region attended this training on The Stepping Stones for Tourism (see article on page 6).
• **The Coast Eco-rating Workshop** was held on 28th April 2007 at Turtle Bay Beach Club, Watamu. Over 10 hotels and lodges were represented at this meeting which discussed the Eco-rating Scheme and its benefits to coastal hotels. The participants also benefited from a guided tour of Turtle Bay Beach Club, a Silver Eco-rated facility.
• **Energy & Water Efficiency Training** was held on 10th May 2007 at the AMREF Training Centre, Nairobi. Two trainers facilitated the meeting: Leo J. Blyth discussed solar power and lighting options; costs, benefits and opportunities and Sarah de Mowbray discussed the options available for managing waste water.

You can see photos of these events in the back page of this newsletter. Summaries of reports are also available on our website. Copies of reports of some of the meetings above are available for purchase.

The Global ecotourism conference
This took place in Oslo, Norway from 14-17th May 2007. Ecotourism Kenya represented Kenya at this conference in its capacity as Kenya’s national ecotourism association. In line with its mission of linking communities, tourism and conservation, Ecotourism Kenya raised funds for representatives of Community Based Tourism Enterprises from Kenya and Rwanda to attend the conference. Overall the East African delegation comprised of Judy Kepher-Gona (Ecotourism Kenya), Emily Mujinji (KEEP Isecheno Bandas- Kakamega Forest) and Joseph Shuel (Ilngwesi Lodge). Eugene Rutagarama represented Rwanda. Also from Kenya were Amos Sironka Tinnia and Lars Lindqvist both of Basecamp Explorer. Kenya had among the largest delegations at the conference, thanks to our partners, FORD Foundation and collaborators like Basecamp Explorer.

The conference attracted more than 500 participants from 77 countries, among them representatives of seventeen national and regional ecotourism associations. The conference was structured to have two plenary sessions and one and half days of workshops on various topics. Out of the 20 workshops, Kenya had 5 speaking slots. This is indication that Kenya is indeed a destination of significance in the global ecotourism market place. Kenya shared lessons on voluntary certification, local partnerships, nature and culture interpretation, ecotourism and indigenous peoples, ecotourism branding and community conservancies. Kenya’s approach to these issues attracted admiration from many participants. What lessons did we learn? Oddly enough, the ecotourism community in Kenya has not awakened to take advantage of Kenya’s image as a global leader in ecotourism and used it effectively for marketing to attract quality tourists- (low volume high value). Secondly, while Ecotourism Kenya has worked to define the ecotourism brand values through certification (Eco-rating Scheme), key stakeholders have been dragging their feet on using the scheme to promote the brand. Thirdly many countries in Europe and South America considered having ecotourism associations as a great achievement and this was being used to drum the destinations commitment to ecotourism and/or sustainable tourism. Yet Kenya, which has one of the oldest ecotourism associations in the world and one which is held in high esteem within the international ecotourism circles, has not effectively utilized Ecotourism Kenya to champion Kenya’s re-banding efforts. The last lesson we learnt was that Ecotourism Kenya has potential and opportunities to mentor emerging ecotourism associations in Africa to work towards minimum regional standards and this is being pursued. Visit
known to exploit locals by taking away most of the money that visitors pay to go there. This has arisen due to manyatas not being embraced as part of the formal tourism industry, a lack of understanding of how tourism works by locals, and the absence of a transparent payment system that ensures that money stays in the village. Unscrupulous tour drivers insist on getting a percentage of what their visitor’s pay, with many drivers taking away more than 95% of revenue that should have gone to the village. All this is done without the knowledge of the visitors. In a groundbreaking new initiative, Dr Cheryl Mvula of Tribal Voice Communications, funded by the Travel Foundation in the UK, has addressed this challenge by awareness raising and capacity building in the community and by establishing a ‘cashless’ booking system for the five cultural manyatas in the Mara Triangle. Tour operators wishing to take their visitors to these cultural centres now need to pay in advance, with tickets being sold by KATO and several of the lodges in the Mara Triangle that support this pilot initiative. The project, which started in September 2006, has reportedly recorded a 790% increase in income to the villages in its first 8 months compared to the same period last year. For more information, email cdmvula@aol.com

ARUSHA TRAVEL & TOURISM FAIR

EK shares Eco-rating Concept with Tanzania Tourism Industry

Ecotourism Kenya, at the invitation of organisers of the above fair and the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators, participated in the Arusha Travel and Tourism Fair. The exhibition was preceded by a two-day seminar that discussed a range of issues surrounding CBT. Judy Kepher-Gona made a presentation to the Tanzanian tourism industry and government officials, on the significance of eco-rating or eco-certification in sustainable tourism. The presentation covered Kenya’s experience in developing the scheme, the opportunities presented by an eco-rating scheme now and in the future, as well as the role for a sector association like Ecotourism Kenya in promoting sustainable tourism. A majority of those present concurred that eco-rating was a unique opportunity for businesses and destinations to guarantee consumers an environmentally and socially responsible product/destination. Other discussions touched on possibility of having a regional certification scheme for East Africa in line with the East African Community principles. EK also participated in the exhibition courtesy of the Fair organisers and used the opportunity to share knowledge relating to ecotourism and CBT. In appreciation of the contributions of EK, the organisers included the EK stand among the few that were visited by Prof. Jumanne Maghembe (MP), the Tanzania’s Minister for Natural resources and Tourism.

Upcoming events

The following are the revised dates for Ecotourism Kenya’s upcoming events:

July
- Amboseli/Kajiado/Ukambani Regional Workshop: 12-13 July 2007 in Kajiado town

August
- Taita Taveta/Tsavo Regional workshop: 9-10 August 2007 in Voi town

October
- National Ecotourism Conference: 22-24 October 2007 in Nairobi city

Contact the office for registration and more information on these events.

Tourism Opens Doors for Women - 2007

Preliminary preparations for this year’s United Nations World Tourism Day (UNWT) are underway. “Tourism Opens Doors for Women” is the theme identified by World Tourism Organization for the World Tourism Day which as each year will be celebrated on 27 September. This year’s campaign intends to highlight the opportunities that the tourism sector offers for women, with a view to enhancing the role of women in tourism.

In order to increase public awareness of the interrelation between tourism and its beneficial role for women, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife together with other stakeholders intend to have a week long celebration in various places in Kenya. The culmination of the World Tourism Day will be held on 27th September 2007 tentatively in Machakos town. For further information please contact; Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife, Tel: +254 (020) 313010

Increasing benefits from cultural centres

Tour drivers who take tourists to cultural manyatas (villages) are
Over the last three years, Ecotourism Kenya has reached a number of CBT enterprises in the key tourism circuits who are keen to be involved in ecotourism businesses. Most of the CBT businesses comprise a range of activities, product and services including tour guiding, sale of crafts and souvenir items, sight seeing, boat rides, forest excursions, nature trails, cultural activities and accommodation. Our close interaction with community groups engaged in ecotourism has shown that there is lack of market information and commercial orientation in their activities. Recently as Ecotourism Kenya was meeting with community groups from Mid-Rift (Naivasha, Nakuru, Baringo and its environs) region, it emerged that majority of the groups do not have a clear understanding of important tourism issues, including the local tourism market.

At the workshops, the stories of Lake Solai Wetlands Conservation Association, Kanji’s Snake Farm, Lake Baringo Community Boats and Excursion, Ruko Community Wildlife Trust and Lelin Overland Camp Site presented an urgent need to assist these community initiatives with technical and financial support to gain market access. Ecotourism Kenya foresees that unless all the key essentials of running a CBT enterprise are addressed with the owners, it may not be possible for these enterprises to be included in the local tour operators’ itineraries in the near future.

Out of the 70-CBT enterprises reached recently by EK from the Mid-Rift and Coast regions of Kenya, less than 20% can claim to be market ready or to have market access. EK through Community Outreach Program is targeting such enterprises for training. EK has developed various approaches to help such CBT enterprises improve on market access among them training and exposure/promotion. Training is conducted on various aspects of running, planning and managing a CBT business. Apart from the training, EK has dedicated a section of its website to promote CBTs that are market ready. Each month, a community based organization (CBO) with marketable product, service and activity is given exposure on the website as ‘featured community’. This allows travelers, development partners and the public to learn about the places and contact them for booking or support. There are plans to improve on the website to enhance exposure of CBT initiatives to the general public. Another approach used by EK is participating in local tourism fairs, where EK books a stand and invites CBT enterprises to exhibit at these fairs where they have an opportunity to meet potential clients.

For more information on the Community Outreach program contact Francis at info@ecotourismkenya.org
There are three categories of Membership as follows:
1. Corporate - 10,000
2. CBO - 1,000
3. Individuals - 2,500

To join send your cheque or Money Order to:
Ecotourism Kenya, P. O. Box 10146  00100 - GPO, Nairobi.

Include the following details:
Name, Name of Organisation (Corporate & CBOs), P. O. Box, Postal Code, Town/City, Telephone, Fax and Email address.

Are you a responsible traveller?

The Kenya Safari Code calls on travellers to respect local cultures and promote community benefits by supporting projects and properties that benefit local people through employment, social development and the preservation of traditional livelihoods. There are other ways for responsible travellers to demonstrate their respect and appreciation of indigenous communities. These include:
• Take time to learn about the destination and its people before you travel. This helps one to identify behaviour that is acceptable to that culture and that which is not.
• Take time to observe and listen once you get to your destination. Do not assume you know a lot just because you have some prior knowledge of the community. Remember to always ask for permission before taking photos of people and/or their homes.
• Make use of locally-made goods and services wherever possible and always endeavour to pay a fair price for them. Remember that the ‘bargain’ you obtain could be at the expense of low wages paid to a worker or a group.
• Ask your tour operator and accommodation provider what they are doing to support the welfare of the local community they work with.
• Take time to reflect on your experience at the end of each day (and the holiday itself) to enable you to deepen your understanding of the people you meet.

Visit the Ecotourism Kenya resource centre to learn more about responsible holidaying.

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (LVSB) is a Site Support Group (SSG) based at the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya offices in Kisumu and is involved in the conservation of Important Bird/Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) around the Lake Victoria region.

Youth, conservation and Business

by Mike Wairoma

The group has been able to attain most of its objectives and growth through establishing proper networks, partnerships and working hand in hand with like minded partners such as the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, Ecotourism Kenya and Nature Kenya.

LVSB was initiated in 1997 as 'Kwe Kwe' (swahili term for weed) club by a group of youths who had just completed their O-level schooling and wanted a mode through which they could pursue and express their passion and interest for nature and conservation. At inception the group was involved mainly in bird watching and school outreach programmes that were mainly part time and non income generating. Today, the group has been able to initiate 5 departments within itself through which it manages different income generating initiatives as well as initiated different funded projects.

The group has extensively involved the youth both directly through membership and indirectly through the community in its conservation agenda. The youths who join LVSB fall between the age groups of 18-35 years and include graduates, college students and school leavers awaiting their results to join college. Most of the youths get to find out about the group through its school and community outreach programmes as well as through friends who have been involved in our activities. The group recruits its members at a fee of Kshs.300 which is then renewable at Kshs.100 per year.

Through these fees the group offers the youth a wide range of benefits including capacity building in environmental, social issues and micro enterprise management, access to information through the group’s library, team building excursions, exchange programmes and experience in management of group projects, income generating activities and fund raising through proposal writing.

In its ten years of existence the group has benefited immensely from the untapped potential of the youth who have brought into the group an immense amount of knowledge and dynamism in the way they carry out their activities and manage the group’s resources. LVSB have been members of EK since 2005 and can be contacted at lakevictoria.sunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Join Ecotourism Kenya now...

Visit the Ecotourism Kenya resource centre to learn more about responsible holidaying.
Thomson Falls Camp Site and Hostel participated in the 2007 Holidays ’07 Expo held at Sarit Centre from 21st to 25th March 2007 courtesy of Ecotourism Kenya who had paid for the stand to support small community based ecotourism operators to show their products and services. This is the 2nd such exhibition that our camp has participated. We were able to share with visitors to the Ecotourism Kenya stand our services, activities and attractions around our camp site that includes the famous Thomson Falls, Lake Ol bolosat (the only lake in Central Province with hippos and bird species some rare ones) and agro tourism.

The benefits our camp got from the Sarit Centre exhibition include the following:-
- We got 3 bookings as a result of the exhibition.
- Reach out to 600 potential customers through brochures given out.
- Person to person contacts with customers
- Networking with tour agents and other community based ecotourism ventures.
- Learning from main stream tourism operators
- Training and exposure to our three staff who attended the exhibition.
- This was a golden opportunity to market our facility as a result of which we continue getting enquiries of our camp site to date.

Mr. Mbugua can be reached at thompsonfalls20@yahoo.co.uk

Events Pictorial

1| Discussing composting at Turtle Bay Beach Club during the Coast Eco-rating Workshop
2| Participants at the Energy & Water Efficiency Training Workshop
3| Ecotourism Kenya facilitated the participation of two community groups at the Oslo Conference in Norway, including Joseph Shuel of Il Ngwesi group ranch (extreme right), pictured here with other participants at the conference. 4| Ecotourism Kenya Open Day 2007

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