



Why are we planting trees

In the past two decades, the forests in Uganda were decreased by more than 30%. Meanwhile, the population has increased by more than 90%. Today, only 0.2% of Uganda is covered with forest plantations.

Does that mean that trees have to be planted everywhere?

No! About 35% of Uganda is bush land and grassland that can be used for cattle-keeping. About 45% of Uganda is farmland.

Only about 1% of the country's surface would need to be planted with trees to make sure there will still be timber on the market for buildings, furniture and so much more!

To secure the timber supply, the government has declared Forest Reserves like Kikonda "for tree farming only". Kikonda Forest on invitation of the people of Uganda, is bringing in the expertise and finance needed to develop and manage the forest.



Examples of animals in Kikonda

The bushbuck

Bushbuck mainly browse, but supplement their diet with any other plant matter that they can reach. Bushbuck are active around 24 hours a day, but tend to be nocturnal near human habitations. Bushbuck tend to be solitary, though some live in pairs. All bushbuck live within a "home" area, which is usually around 50,000 square metres on the savannah and much larger in the forest, that they will not normally leave. These areas usually overlap other bushbuck home areas. Bushbuck are basically solitary animals and the mature males go out of their way to stay away from each other. Usually bushbuck are most active during early morning and part of the night, therefore are almost entirely nocturnal in areas where they are unlikely to be disturbed.



The lizard buzzard

The lizard buzzard is a bird of prey. It is a bird of open woodland, which builds a stick nest in the fork of a tree or the crown of a palm tree. The clutch is one to three eggs. The lizard buzzard hunts mainly reptiles and large insects, but also small mammals and birds. It often sits quietly in the crown of an oil palm or on a telegraph wire. The call is a whistled klu-klu-klu.



The colobus monkey

The word "colobus" comes from Greek κολοβός κολοβός ("docked"), and is so named because in this genus, the thumb is a stump. Colobuses are herbivorous, eating leaves, fruit, flowers, and twigs. Their habitats include forests and wooded grasslands. Colobuses live in territorial groups of about nine individuals, based upon a single male with a number of females and their offspring. Newborn colobuses are completely white. Cases of allomothering are documented, which means members of the troop other than the infant's biological mother care for it. Colobuses are important for seed dispersal through their sloppy eating habits, as well as through their digestive systems. They are prey for many forest predators, and are threatened by hunting for the bushmeat trade, logging, and habitat destruction.



The striped kingfisher

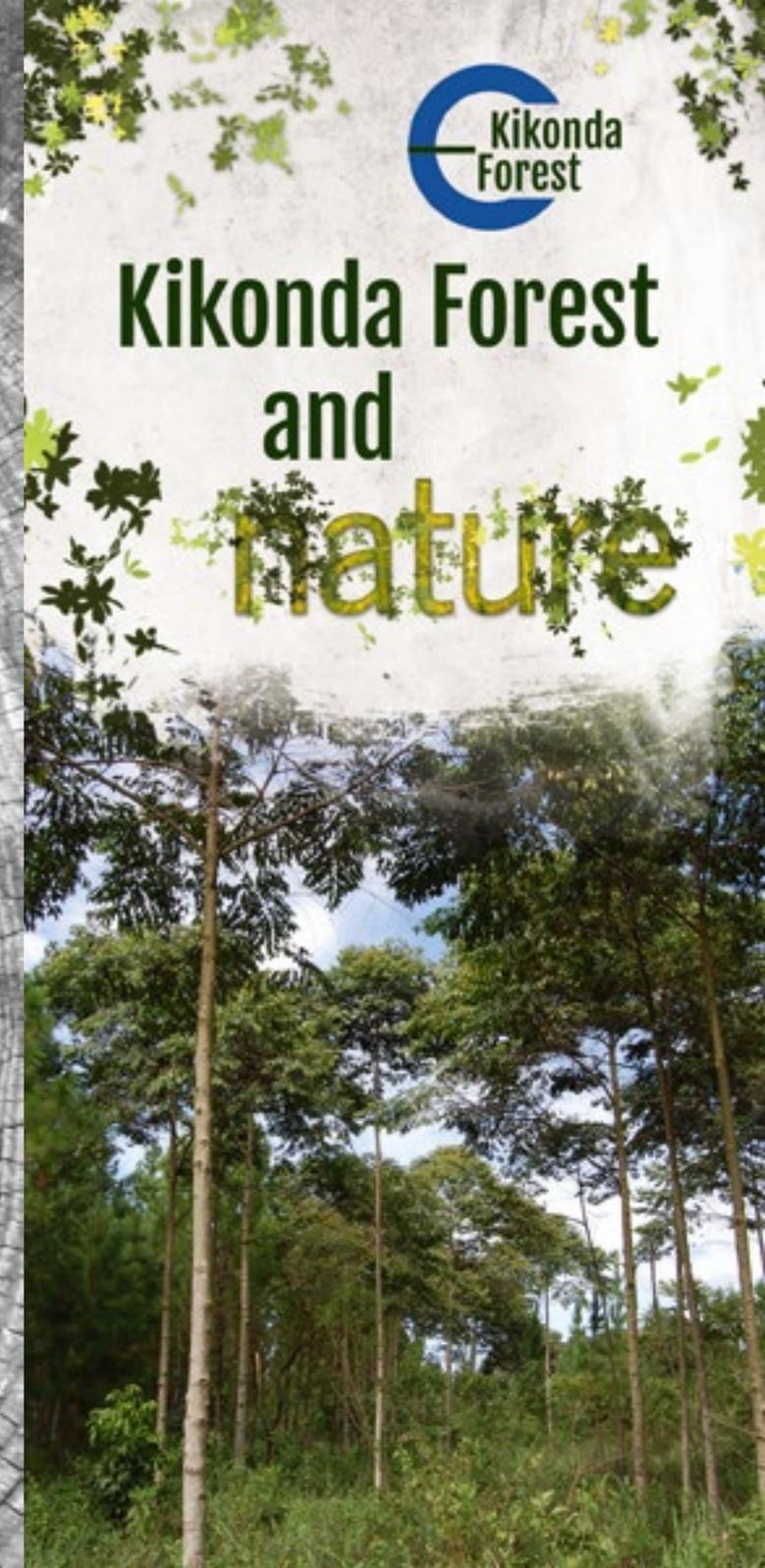
The striped kingfisher is a species of bird in the tree kingfisher family. It was first described by Edward, Lord Stanley in Salt's Voyage to Abyssinia in 1814 as "Chelicut kingfisher". The genus name Halcyon comes from a bird in Greek legend generally associated with the kingfisher. There was an ancient belief that the halcyon nested on the sea, which it calmed in order to lay its eggs on a floating nest. The species' name chelicuti derives from Chelicut in Ethiopia, the location at which Stanley's type specimen was obtained.



This is a highly territorial bird which will chase off not only others of the same species, but also shrikes, doves and rollers. The territory may be up to three hectares in size, and hold 100 tall trees. It is surveyed from a treetop by its owner, who sings from before dawn intermittently until after midday.



Kikonda Forest and nature



Who we are

Kikonda Forest is a forestry company licensed by the government of Uganda to establish and manage a commercial forest on over 12000 ha of land in Kikonda central forest reserve.

The 50-year license running till 2051 is meant to enable us to supply the much-needed timber to the Ugandan market and elsewhere it may be in high demand.

As tree growers we don't want to work against nature, we want to be part of it. So it comes natural that we take care not only of our timber trees but we also want the animals and plants living next to them to prosper and flourish.

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Plantations – an important factor to protect natural forests

The forests of the tropics are exploited for timber and transformation to agricultural land. One approach to counteract this trend would be the commercial management of mix-species forests. This strategy however was developed and gained popularity in the temperate regions of Europe and North America. Contrary to these temperate forests, tropical forests have a very high diversity of tree species of which only few are of commercial value and even fewer are well researched in terms of their requirements when grown for timber. Due to that scientific background, we follow an approach called "mosaic forestry". This means that areas of intensively managed single-species forests alternate with set-aside areas that are left to natural regeneration. Native trees are planted as trials to generate know how and options for the future. And looking at it on a regional scale, our planted forests help to reduce the logging pressure from Uganda's last rain forests like Bwindi – home to the rare mountain gorillas! This approach to forest management is endorsed by NGOs like Greenpeace and WWF.

Water and soil preserved

Like any other plant, our Pine and Eucalyptus trees use water and take out nutrients from the soil. In fact, they use less water than many food crops like maize or bananas. The Kikonda area receives a lot of rainfall and has no free running water bodies close to steep slopes where silting could become a problem. When trees are harvested, the leaves and needles that contain most of the valuable minerals are left to decompose and be available for the next generation of trees. We are here to stay, so long-term availability of water and fertile soil are as important to us as to our neighbours and to the wildlife.

Climate protected

As part of their mechanism to produce the energy they need, trees take out Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. CO₂ is considered to be the main cause of global warming which brings droughts, floods and erratic weather conditions to all parts of the world. The trees planted at Kikonda Forest reserve will store significantly more CO₂ than the degraded vegetation that would be here without us. Hence the trees contribute to the protection of the climate world-wide. And on the local scale trees help to reduce temperatures and increase humidity.



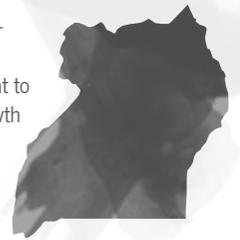
Careful usage of chemicals

At young age, trees need protection against aggressive weeds and termites. The chemicals we are using are the least toxic available and approved by the Forest Stewardship Council. They are non-residual, meaning that shortly after application they dismantle into elements that are non-toxic. Staff working with chemicals are given all applicable training and personal protective equipment. Nevertheless we strive to further reduce the usage of chemicals as far as possible.



Tackling invasive species

Plants like bugweed and lantana were introduced to Uganda as an ornamental plant in gardening but have become a serious threat to the native vegetation. Very vigorous in growth they outcompete many other plants. In the Kikonda Forest Reserve, these so called "invasive" species are removed as far as possible.



Nature conservation outside the forest reserve

Nature knows no boundaries, so also us we extend our efforts beyond the limits of the Forest Reserve. Without charge, we have supported over 350 farmers with more than 300,000 tree seedlings on top of on-going technical advice. Further, we train so called "farmer induced reforestation" which encourages farmers to let natural trees re-grow on their land as part of their combined agricultural and forestry land-use. 200 households received fuel saving stoves, over 300 households got trained in advance livestock management – both factors reducing the logging pressure on the remaining natural forests and bush-land.



Safe haven for animals and plants

Long time ago, the greater Kikonda area was a savannah alternating with forests. The increasing need for agricultural land and timber coming from a growing population and a more resource demanding life style let the natural vegetation and animal life disappear. Even though the Kikonda Forest Reserve was declared "for tree planting only" in the 1960s already, uncontrolled logging, grazing, poaching and burning degraded the ecological value heavily. With the reserve now being managed for sustainable forestry, more and more animals find the vegetation and habitat they need for a good life. More than 100 bird species and more than 15 mammal species have been spotted in Kikonda. Regular counts conducted by University researchers monitor the development of their abundance.