

CROWS NO MORE! PROJECT

Activity Report – July 2024, Eric Kinoti, Colin Jackson

Summary of Activities in July

The month of July has been a significant one for the *Crows No More!* project. The Starlicide poison that is in-country was finally delivered (though with possible complications – see more below). Three new staff joined the Crow team and will be working as field officers in Watamu, Kilifi and Malindi and are currently being trained. There has been a lot of planning and fundraising to enable the project to happen – THANK you to the many who have been donating. We welcomed a BBC team to film and document how the House Crow has affected biodiversity and people. Finance summary of the totals received and spent to run the project will be shown.

GREAT NEWS!! The poison is here...but...

After waiting for 20 years, the Starlicide poison has finally arrived and was handed over to Colin (A Rocha Kenya's Director) and KWS Watamu Marine Park Manager, Collins Ochieng', at the A Rocha offices. Upon opening the tin in a darkened room (light breaks it down), three unopened 500g packets of poison were present and one opened packet with 92g (total 1.592 kg). However, a concern is that the expiry date is in fact February 2024 raising concerns over its toxicity. 2.5g of the opened packet were used to make up a bottle of the liquid poison to test it and a small poisoning carried out on one of the sites we had been pre-baiting on for over a month on 30th July. Approx 80–100 crows were counted feeding on the poisoned bait and the following morning only five crows turned up suggesting all those which fed on it died. 36 crow corpses have been recovered and kindly buried by Capt Andy's along with the dead crows from the crow traps they run. However, a question about the strict legality of using expired poison is being discussed and we are waiting on KWS as the lead organisation for the project to give direction on what course of action should be taken.



From Left: Jan from Temple Point, Collins Ochieng' KWS Watamu Warden, Dr Andrew Matole and Cecilia Ruto (both Little Kenya Gardens) and Colin Jackson (A Rocha Kenya) receiving the poison.



Three new field officers (Kelvin Mazeras for Kilifi, Ziro in Malindi, Tune in Watamu) have been employed and trained to take up prebaiting, poisoning, access roosting and foraging sites as well as carry out counting activities. These are important activities as they are part of the assessment as the poisoning is being carried out. For example, the feeding sites provide good locations for pre-baiting and poisoning and roosts are the key sites for corpse collection. With the poison now in our hands and hopefully the green light given to go ahead despite it having expired, poisoning will start immediately with Watamu being the first.

Matsangoni roost count



As part of monitoring the small roosting sites, a roost count to estimate the number of the House Crows in Matsangoni was carried out during July. Birds counted coming in to the roost totalled 924 House Crows and two Pied Crows. A batch of crows was observed coming from the ocean side suggesting they are foraging widely and coming to roost in Matsangoni – which is what is expected though it would be interesting to know quite how far they go as Watamu birds also head to that area crossing over the mouth of Mida Creek every morning and returning every evening.

Tune one of the new staff of the Crows No More Project during a count in Matsangoni

BBC Crew

A Crew from BBC Kenya also visited to film about the crows. They visited several hotels in Malindi and Watamu to hear about the impact of the crows on tourism. More importantly, they sought scientific facts about the dangers that House Crows bring to the environment and the scope of how the future looks like if there are no intervention measures are taken. We saw this as a good opportunity to tell of what we are doing as well as letting the world know the consequences of introducing new species in new locations.



BBC crew team filming and interviewing Kirao, the lead A Rocha Research Officer

Wild bird rehabilitation

This month on the Watamu Rehabilitation Centre was busy with a kite, White-faced Scop Owls, Barn Owls, a Sacred Ibis and a Water Thick-knee all brought in for treatment.

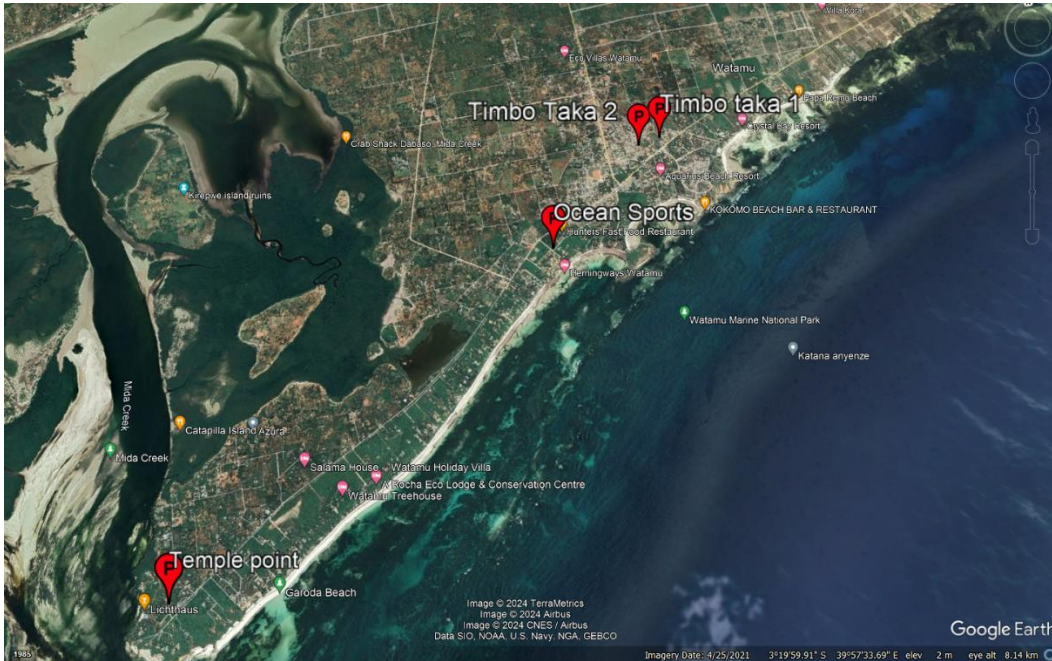
Black-Shouldered Kite

The kite was caught with lime along with Red-billed Quelea and had its outer primaries pulled out of wings. He also had a sore leg probably a result of being tied tightly. He is lucky he did not end up on the dinner plate and is now in the rehab. Pulling out primaries can lead to serious damage of the growth nodes of the feathers and can cause permanent damage. We hope it will recover fully and be able to be released again.

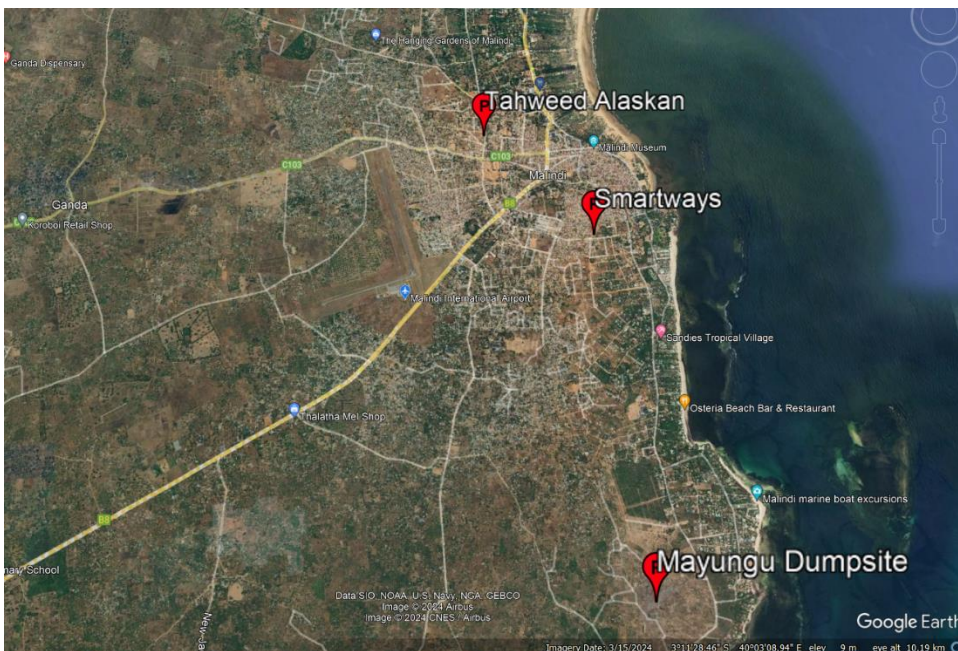
The **White-faced Scops Owls** fell out of a tree and were taken to Duncan Mitchell in Vipingo – which saved them from witch doctors who normally keep them for their rituals. The **Barn Owls** had their nest tree cut down as people were clearing the road of the bushes. Sadly, the **Sacred Ibis** has a broken wing (the metacarpus bone disconnected). We're looking after it but it may never be able to fly again. The **Water Thick-knee** was more fortunate. It was found wondering in Mida Creek and apparently unable to fly, It was caught by the guides at the boardwalk, was given fluids and released again in Mida a day later.

Additional information

Pre baiting sites/ poisoning sites



Watamu baiting sites



Malindi Baiting sites

Rescued birds



Sacred Ibis



Barn Owls



White-faced Scops Owls



Black-shouldered Kite



Water Thick-knee being released