

Welcome to Taita Hills, Kenya – a guide is now available!

- By Mercy Kariuki



Taita hills landscape (Photo: Lawrence Wagura)

A guide to Taita Hills' unique natural history has just been released. This book, authored by Lawrence Wagura, a naturalist and fieldworker based at the [National Museums of Kenya](#) is the first published guide for this important site. In simple language, backed up by colourful pictures, Lawrence comprehensively describes the site: he includes, among other topics, its history, geography, value, indigenous culture, and various types of plants and animals found there.

The book is not only useful for visitors and researchers; Lawrence also intends to use it as a tool for educating the youth and other residents of the Taita Hills on the value of conserving the site.

“With support from teachers, I have already been giving talks in schools in the area and I often take students for educational trips to the forests. I will now distribute free copies of the book to the schools, and in future use them for my educational talks”, says Lawrence. “With the initial support I got, only 400 copies of the book were printed. Although a good start, these copies are not enough. Some of the copies will therefore be sold to those who can afford to pay and the proceeds used to print even more copies that can be freely distributed to schools and communities”, he adds. Lawrence hopes that the book will also encourage tourists who venture into the lower Tsavo plains and other areas to include a visit to the Taita Hills, thus bringing income to the communities.

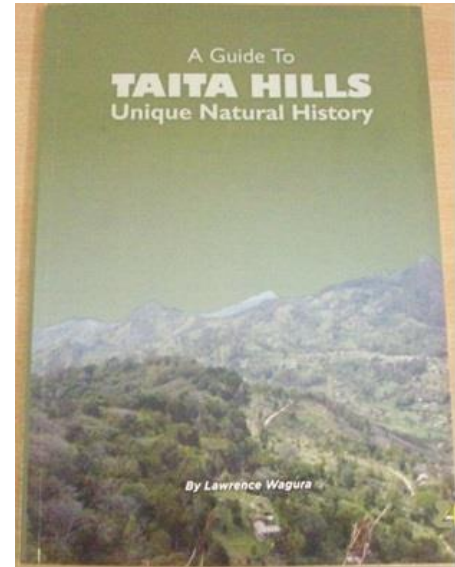
Previously published on the BirdLife International website on 20 August 2014

Note: Some hyperlinks may no longer be active

Located in south-eastern Kenya, the Taita Hills forests form part of the [Eastern Arc Mountains](#) and are part of the [Eastern Afromontane](#) global biodiversity hotspot. The hills rise from the Tsavo plains at 600 to 2200 metres above sea level. They have patches of rain forest at the hill tops, which act as water towers feeding the lowlands. They also support 34 globally threatened species. They are therefore categorised as an Important Bird Area (IBA), a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and an [Alliance for Zero Extinction](#) (AZE) site. They host over 200 bird species including the two rare, endemic and Critically Endangered birds: the [Taita Apalis](#) *Apalis fuscigularis* and [Taita Thrush](#) *Turdus helleri*.

Lawrence is excited about this initiative and thanks all who supported him in collecting information, editing the book and its printing. He is happy to see the fruits of over five years spent undertaking field observations in the Taita Hills.

Printing of the initial copies of the books was supported by [BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat](#) and [Nature Kenya](#) (BirdLife Partner) as part of a project funded by the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF).



*A Guide to Taita Hills Unique Natural History
book cover*