

NEWSLETTER



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IUCN Splits Giraffes into Four Species in Conservation Shake-Up



Giraffes have now been formally recognised as four genetically distinct species.

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Giraffes, long thought to be a single species, have been formally recognised as four genetically distinct species in a landmark ruling by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a decision expected to reshape global conservation efforts.

The IUCN's Species Survival Commission confirmed the reclassification following more than a decade of research led by Germany's Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre and the Namibia-based Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF).

"This recognition is more than symbolic. Each giraffe species faces different threats, and now we can tailor conservation strategies to meet their specific needs," said Dr. Julian Fennessy, GCF's co-founder.

The newly recognised species are the Masai, northern, reticulated, and southern giraffe. Although visually similar, genetic studies show divergences as profound as those separating polar and brown bears.

Field research and genome analysis, combined with recent skull morphology studies, confirmed the

117,000

Approximate number of giraffes left in the wild, and the IUCN Red List classifies the species as a whole as vulnerable.

findings, overturning a taxonomy that had grouped giraffes as a single species since 1758.

"To describe four new large mammal species after more than 250 years is extraordinary," said Prof. Axel Janke of Senckenberg.

The IUCN will now assess each species separately for its Red List of threatened species. Preliminary results suggest three of the four may qualify as endangered due to sharp population declines and habitat loss.

"What a tragedy it would be to lose a species we've only just discovered," said GCF Executive Director Stephanie Fennessy.

Aberdare Road Dispute: Judges Conduct Site Visit



Judges of the Environment and Land Court visited Aberdare National Park and Forest Reserve on July 18, 2025, to assess the contested Ihithe-Ndunyu Njeru Road project.

The visit, attended by representatives of both petitioners and respondents, allowed the parties to explain their positions directly on-site as the judges examined Kenya National Highways Authority's (KeNHA) proposed road route alongside alternatives presented by the petitioners.

When the matter returned to court on July 31, parties confirmed receipt of a report by the court's Deputy Registrar's on the visit. Petitioners, however, raised concerns that some key features observed during the inspection had not been reflected in the report. The judges took note of the problems and scheduled a hearing for September 18, 2025.

The plaintiffs are the East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS), Kenya Forest Working Group, the African Centre for Peace and Human Rights, and lawyer Lempaa Suyianka. The petitioners argue

that the proposed road threatens the Aberdares' delicate ecosystem, which serves as a critical water catchment for Nairobi and Lake Naivasha and provides habitat for rare species such as the critically endangered mountain bongo antelope. They maintain that alternative routes outside the park would significantly reduce environmental impacts while still meeting the transport needs of the local communities.

Respondents in the case include KeNHA, the Kenya Water Towers Agency, Norken International Limited, and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). Interested parties are the Law Society of Kenya, the National Museums of Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and the Kenya Forest Service.

This case remains pivotal in determining how Kenya balances infrastructure development with environmental protection. EAWLS will continue to keep its members and partners updated as the matter progresses.



TOP
Justice Lucy Gacheru of the Environment and Land Court seeks clarification during the on-site inspection.

BELOW RIGHT
Judges of the Environment and Land Court, together with representatives from conservation groups, government agencies, and interested parties, assess the proposed Aberdare road routes during the July 18 site visit.

Rangeland Management for Biodiversity and Climate Resilience



Stakeholders unite at the Nairobi forum on Sustainable Rangeland Management to chart the future of Kenya's rangelands.

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) joined over 40 partners at the National Stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Rangeland Management, held on July 28–29, 2025, at Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi. The forum brought together government ministries, county representatives, conservation organisations, researchers, and community groups to chart a collaborative path for the future of Kenya's rangelands.

Convened by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the forum was part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-7) National Child Project: "Strengthening Forest Management for Improved Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Resilience in the Southern Rangelands of Kenya." The project, running from 2023 to 2027 in Narok and Kajiado counties, contributes to the global Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Programme (DSL IP) led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and IUCN across 11 countries. Its main goal is achieving Land Degradation Neutrality by reducing

deforestation, desertification, and land degradation while promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Participants highlighted the need to work together on rangeland management, strengthen and enforce rangeland policies, control invasive species, support diverse community livelihoods, and promote inclusive and transparent governance.

"These conversations are vital in shaping how we collectively manage Kenya's rangelands to secure both biodiversity and community well-being," said Ann Mukaindo, EAWLS Project Officer.

EAWLS' participation built on its long-standing commitment to landscape restoration. Recently, the organisation concluded an initiative under the Global Environment Facility (GEF-6) Restoration Initiative Project: "Restoration of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya through Bio-Enterprise Development and Other Incentives" (2018–2025). Implemented in Laikipia, Isiolo, and Marsabit counties, the project restored degraded ecosystems through the Forest Landscape Restoration approach, while supporting communities to build bio-enterprises from non-timber forest



EAWLS Project Officer Ann Mukaindo engages stakeholders at the National Stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Rangeland Management in Nairobi.

products and services.

The project not only rehabilitated critical ecosystems such as Mount Kulal and the Mukogodo Forest landscapes but also improved the socio-economic well-being of the communities who rely on them — outcomes that continue to guide EAWLS's conservation work in Kenya's rangelands.

National Dialogue Calls for Stronger Mangrove Protection

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) participated in the National Mangrove Dialogue on July 25, 2025, at the Mnarani Beach Club, in Kilifi County, under the theme of Restoring Roots, Securing Futures: Mangroves for People, Nature and Resilience.

The annual forum, designed as a buildup activity ahead of the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystems, celebrated on July 26 each year, brought together government agencies, conservation organisations, researchers, and community representatives to chart a path for the future of Kenya's mangroves.

The National dialogue provided a platform to share Kenya's mangrove journey, highlighting advances in scientific research, community-led restoration, and partnerships. Participants also discussed the benefits of mangroves from policy, scientific, and community perspectives, while addressing gaps in financing, policy, and coordination.

A key outcome was a call to action to accelerate mangrove conservation and management, recognising their vital role in protecting biodiversity, sustaining livelihoods, and advancing Kenya's climate goals.



Participants at the National Mangrove Dialogue in Kilifi call for stronger protection of Kenya's mangroves.

The East African Wild Life Society also utilised the platform to inform the participants of the work being done to co-create a National Blue Carbon Ecosystems Network aimed at enhancing coordination and governance of Mangroves and Seagrasses in Kenya, supported by PEW Charitable Trusts and Fauna & Flora.

"This National dialogue presents a crucial platform for sharing best practices, enhancing coordinated research and on-ground action, and championing the recognition of mangroves as a cornerstone of climate resilience and community well-being. The voices of relevant stakeholders, especially local communities, are very critical in shaping the future of these vital ecosystems," said Kevin Lunzalu, EAWLS Marine Project Officer.

EAWLS's participation was part of the PEW-funded project "Influencing Climate Policy & Blue Carbon Ecosystems Conservation in Kenya," implemented in partnership with Fauna & Flora. The project aims to strengthen policy commitments and stakeholder coordination for the conservation of Blue Carbon ecosystems, mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes.

By reviewing national climate and environmental policies, spearheading the formation of a National Blue Carbon Working Group, and building awareness and capacity among communities and policymakers, EAWLS is working to ensure Blue Carbon ecosystems are recognised and safeguarded as critical solutions for climate action and sustainable development.



EAWLS Programs and Advocacy Manager Jabes Okumu participates in the National Mangrove Dialogue in Kilifi.

Talks on Global Plastics Treaty End Without Deal, States to Resume Negotiations

United Nations Member States ended 10 days of negotiations in Geneva on August 15 without agreement on a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution, pledging instead to resume talks at a later date.

"This has been a hard-fought 10 days against the backdrop of geopolitical complexities, economic challenges and multilateral strains," said UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Inger Andersen. "However, one thing remains clear: despite these complexities, all countries clearly want to remain at the table."

Delegates from 183 countries, meeting at the resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2), had sought to finalise a treaty text but failed to bridge

divisions over issues such as production caps, design standards, chemicals of concern, financing and compliance mechanisms.

More than 2,600 participants attended the session at the Palais des Nations, including 1,400 country delegates and about 1,000 observers from over 400 organisations. Civil society representatives — including Indigenous Peoples, waste pickers, scientists, artists and youth groups — staged protests, art installations and press briefings to press for more decisive action.

"While we did not land the treaty text we hoped for, UNEP will continue the work against plastic pollution — pollution that is in our groundwater, in our soil, in our rivers, in our oceans and yes, in our

bodies," Andersen told reporters.

INC Chair Luis Vayas Valdivieso urged delegates not to lose momentum. "Failing to reach the goal we set for ourselves may bring sadness, even frustration. Yet it should not lead to discouragement... I have no doubt that the day will come when the international community will unite its will and join hands to protect our environment," he said.

The treaty process was launched in March 2022 under UN Environment Assembly resolution 5.2. INC Executive Secretary Jyoti Mathur-Filipp said negotiators now face "the obligation" to make progress before the next session.



We Are Nature Challenge Unites Youth for Conservation



Young conservation leaders unite at the Nairobi launch of the “We Are Nature: Youth Biodiversity Challenge.”

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) joined over 270 young conservation leaders on July 24, 2025, at the launch of the “We Are Nature: Youth Biodiversity Challenge” in Nairobi.

The initiative, facilitated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and implemented in Kenya by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and the Kenya Youth Biodiversity Network (KYBN), uses Nature Buddy. This WhatsApp chatbot helps youth learn about biodiversity in English and Kiswahili, connect with a global community of changemakers, and take guided conservation actions. Successful participants earn certificates as recognition of their efforts as biodiversity champions.

Representing EAWLS, Vincent Fibanda, Climate Change Support Intern, joined fellow youth in signing the We Are Nature Pledge to protect and restore our planet’s biodiversity.

“This platform puts tools directly into the hands of young people, enabling them to take meaningful steps in conservation,” said Fibanda.

Discussions at the event also focused on aligning youth-led action with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Proposals included scaling outreach through social media,



EAWLS Climate Change Support Intern Vincent Fibanda leads a group discussion during the “We Are Nature: Youth Biodiversity Challenge” launch in Nairobi.

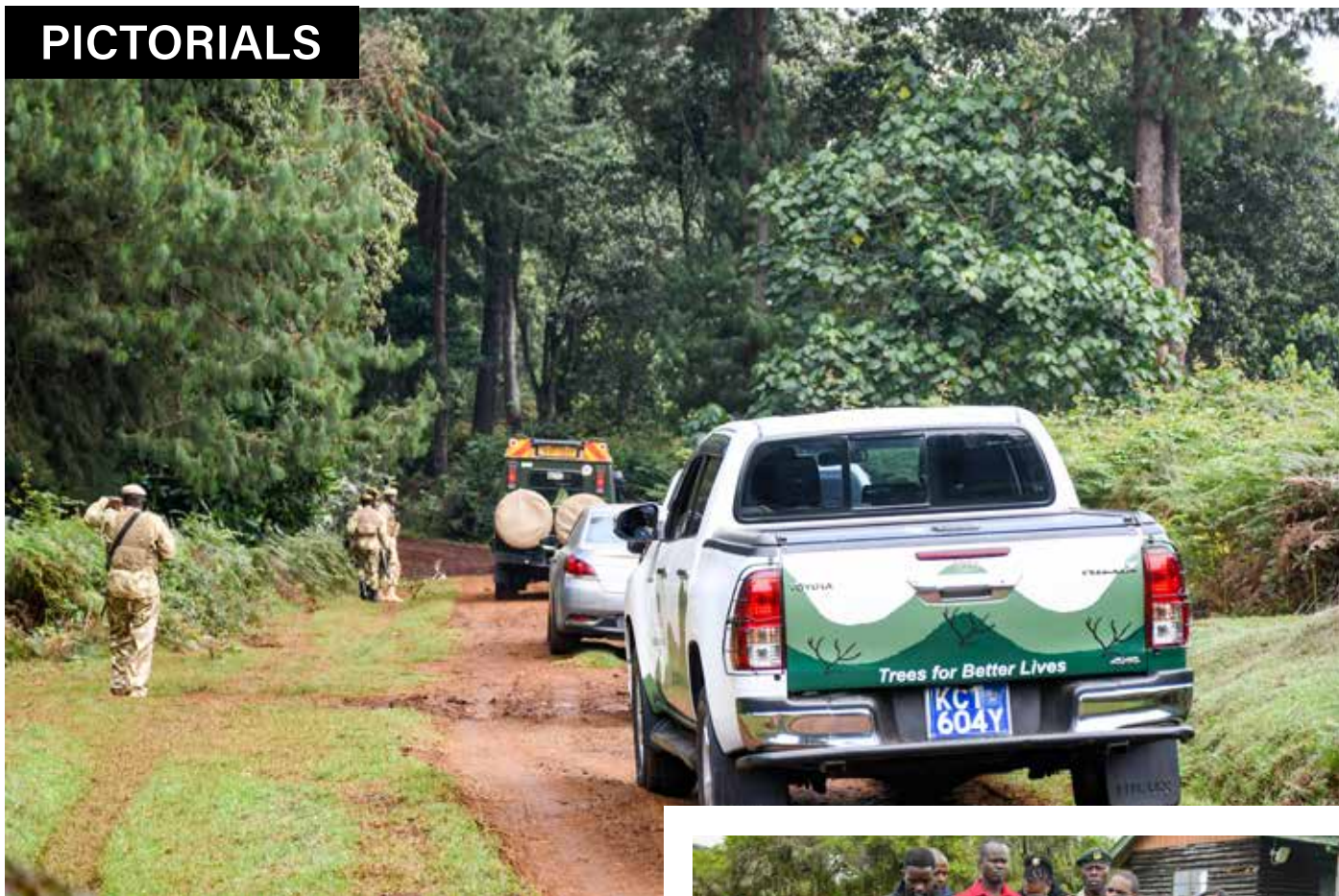
appointing regional ambassadors, developing USSD codes for rural youth without internet access, and introducing incentives such as digital badges and rewards.

Organisers stressed that youth are central to safeguarding biodiversity. By blending technology, innovation, and

grassroots action, the challenge aims to build a new generation of biodiversity defenders across Kenya and beyond.

Access the Nature Buddy WhatsApp chatbot to learn, connect, and take action for biodiversity: <https://wa.me/27609122441?text=Hey%21>. Share widely with your networks.

PICTORIALS



TOP

Part of KeNHA's proposed Ihithe–Ndunyu Njeru Road cutting through Aberdare Forest and National Park.

MIDDLE LEFT

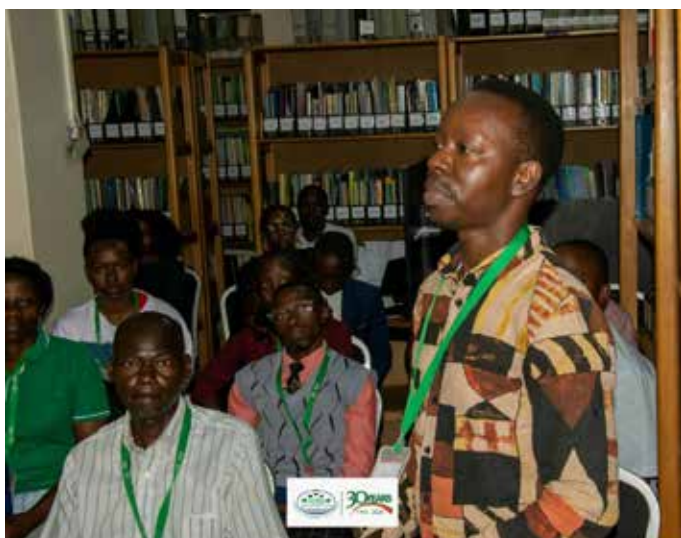
The Aberdares' sensitive ecology—lush montane forest highlighted during the judicial visit.

BELOW LEFT

Moses Esabu, EAWLS Membership Development Officer in Uganda, delivers a presentation during a consultative workshop on the development of the Uganda Wildlife Management Policy at Kabira Country Club, Kampala, on 20th August 2025. The workshop was spearheaded by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities in partnership with stakeholders.

BELOW RIGHT

Judges of the Environment and Land Court, together with representatives from conservation groups, government agencies, and interested parties, assess the proposed Aberdare road routes during the July 18 site visit.





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"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children"
(Native American saying)