IMCG Field Excursion and Scientific Symposium East Africa

13 – 24 February 2027

Lead Organizations: Michael Succow Foundation
In collaboration with: Greifswald Mire Centre, Peat4People Project, Wetlands International, Ecofinder International and other partners in Uganda, Rwanda and East Africa.

Introduction

The 2027 IMCG Field Excursion and Assembly is scheduled for 13-24th of February 2027 in East Africa covering the peatlands of Rwanda and Uganda. The aim will be to illuminate the critical peatlands of East Africa and ongoing conservation work. This will be imperative in exchange of East Africa Peatlands knowledge and associated efforts of conservation, restoration and wise use of peatlands. The excursion will cover peatlands in Rwanda and Uganda covering the Kagera, Lake Victoria, River Nile and Albertine Rift Landscapes.

Objectives of the visit:

1. To exchange knowledge between peatland conservationists in East Africa and the international peatland community.
2. To provide opportunities for showcasing and networking on East Africa peatlands conservation between peatlands researchers and conservationists in East Africa and elsewhere.
3. To raise the political profile of the peatlands in East Africa and by extension Africa to help improve prospects for conservation.

Indicative Field Excursion Plan

Dates	**Place (overnight)**	**Activity / Goal**
Sunday 13 February	Kigali - RW	Arrival of participants
Monday 14 February	Kigali - RW	Nyandungu Eco-park (morning)- Umusambi Village (afternoon)
Tuesday 15 February	Byumba - RW	Akanyaru – Busuro (Morning)- Rucahabi (evening)
Wednesday 16 February	Byumba - RW	Visit Rugezi (Transitional bog- morning)- Affluent (afternoon)
Thursday 17 February	Byumba – Kabale	Visit Mulindi Tea plantations (morning) - Border crossing and vehicle operators switch
Friday 18 February	Kabale - UG	Visit Kabale (transoundary of Mulindi) and Nyamuliro peatlands (potatoes farming)
Saturday 19 February	Kabale - UG	Visit Echuya Swamp and Muchuya Forest reserve

Sunday 20 February	Masaka - UG	Visit to P4P demo site in Nabajjuzi (3 sites- transitional bog, subsistence gardens and main valley)
Monday 21 February	Kampala - UG	Drive to Kampala with a stop at large scale rice plots and Mabamba Bay (birdwatching)
Tuesday 22 February	Kampala – UG	Peatlands in Kampala: Lubigi urban Munyunyo floating mat gardens
Wednesday 23 February	Jinja - UG	Mpologoma Eddy Covariance monitoring site
Thursday 24 February	Entebbe - UG	Departure of remaining participants

Estimated Cost of this trip per person is Euro 750 including transfers, accommodation and meals (based on attendance of 32 people, so this is an approximate)-

Please note that Flights should be purchased/organized separately. Participants from low- and middle-income countries (Dual citizens of high-income countries are not eligible) and students may participate at a discounted fee which will be decided on individual basis. Please indicate if you meet such criteria and require financial support in your expression of interest (see below)

Interested in attending? Next steps:

Please note your interest for this trip by replying by email to **samer.elshehawi@succow-stiftung.de** no later than **30th November 2026**.

Further information, including deposit requirements and confirming your place will be provided shortly after the closing date for noting interest.
Note: There may be opportunities to sponsor participants from East Africa and the global south. Please indicate your request for financial support when expressing interest.

Scientific symposium: If you are interested to share knowledge from your work in East Africa or on lake-margin and valley-bottom peatlands, please let us know. If there is sufficient interest, we may host a scientific symposium.

Additional information to the sites and route

The systems we visit in our excursion are mostly highland valley bottom peatlands (1,200–2,500 m) or lake margin papyrus swamps (~1,100–1,200 m). Vegetation is typically dominated by Cyperus papyrus (papyrus), sedges (Carex, Cyperus spp.) and occasionally Sphagnum moss (in higher altitude peat bogs). They are widely used for agriculture (drainage, seasonal cultivation), grazing, water supply & hydropower regulation, papyrus harvesting and fishing. Here is a short description of each site, arranged by elevation:

1. Muchuya (Echuya Forest Reserve, Important Bird Area/Uganda)

- Elevation: ~2,300 m
- Vegetation: Sedge-dominated peat (Carex), tussock grasses, giant lobelias
- Type: High-altitude valley peat swamp
- Current use: Biosphere reserve *forest oriented*

Reference:
Ellison, M. 2009. A survey of Echuya Central Forest Reserve, Uganda, for the breeding population of Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri*. *Scopus*: 7-10.
https://bigodiafricaexpeditions.com/2023/09/21/echuya-forest-reserve/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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2. Rugezi (Rwanda)

- Elevation: ~2,000 m
- Vegetation: sphagnum mosses, Miscanthus, Cyperus spp., papyrus stands
- Wetland type: peat depth expected to reach 15-20 meters
- Current use:
    - Conservation/restoration focus: RAMSAR site in the process to become a National Park.
    - Hydropower regulation
    - Former agriculture: tea plantation, raised beds & grazing (now restricted)
- Reference:

Grundling, P.-L., Grootjans, A. P., & Linstrom, A. (2016). *Rugezi Marsh: a high-altitude tropical peatland in Rwanda.* In: Finlayson, C.M. et al. (eds.), The Wetlands Book. Springer, Dordrecht.

a) 

b) 

c) 

Figure. a) A picture of Rugezi's southern (upstream) transitional bog systems, where the sphagnum peat is limited to the top 30-50 cm indicating the "recent" succession to a bog system limited to the upstream areas, b) close up of Rugezi in the southwestern section of the peatland, which was not converted at any point, c) Middle sections of Rugezi with fen conditions and relic drainage channels (source: Samer Elshehawi)

3. Mulindi: transboundary peatland between Uganda and Rwanda

- Elevation: ~1,500–1,800 m (estimated highland wetland range)
- Vegetation: Papyrus, grasses, sedges (typical Rwandan marsh vegetation)

- Wetland type: Valley bottom peatland
- Current use: Agriculture tea plantation, grasslands for grazing



Figure. left) Tea harvesting in Mulindi peatland, Rwanda (Source: BBC link below), right) website article on tea quality based on the growing medium(area) (source: https://coopthemulindi.com/#)

Reference:

Ge, J., Mupenzi, J. de la Paix, Habiyaremye, G., & Bazimenyera, J. de D. (2010). *The Environmental Impact of Industrial Agriculture: The Case of Mulindi Tea Plantations in Rwanda. Journal of American Science,* 6(12), 1578–1590.

HYCOGEC Consults (2020). Consultancy service for feasibility and technical design study for the development of Mulindi marshland in Gicumbi district. https://greenfund.rw/greengicumbi/sites/default/files/2021-12/Consultancy%20design%20for%20Mulindi%20Marshland.pdf

BBC article: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-60914807

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4. Kabale (Uganda)

- Elevation: ~1,800–2,000 m
- Vegetation: n/a
- Wetland type: Valley bottom peatland
- Current use:
    - Intensive agriculture (Irish potatoes, vegetables)
    - Drainage and terracing common

Reference**:** Langan, C., Farmer, J., Rivington, M., Novo, P., & Smith, J. U. (2019). A wetland ecosystem service assessment tool: Development and application in a tropical peatland in Uganda. Ecological Indicators, 103, 434–445.



Figure. Raised bed agriculture in Kabale (credit: Jenny Farmer, https://drfarmerjen.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/kabale-wetlands-site-description-june-2014.pdf)

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5. Nyamuriro (Rubanda/Uganda)

- Elevation: ~1,800–2,000 m (Rubanda highlands)
- Vegetation: Formerly papyrus dominated
- Type: Valley bottom peatlands
- Current use:
    - Intensive agriculture, mining, construction pressures
    - Ongoing conservation efforts (GCF project)

https://mwe.go.ug/projects/GCF-Wetlands#:~:text=Project%20Overview-,GCF-Wetlands,NDCs)%20and%20sustainable%20development%20goals.

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6. Akanyaru–Cyohoha–Rweru system (Rwanda)

- Elevation: ~1,300–1,500 m
- Vegetation: Extensive papyrus swamps, floodplain grasses
- Type: large peatland complex with interconnected valley bottoms and floodplains. Peat depth reaches up to 30 meters in the middle sections of Akanyaru
- Current use:
    - Agriculture (major conversion pressure)
    - Peat extraction for energy production
    - Fishing and transboundary water management

Reference: Pajunen, H. (1996). *Peatlands in Burundi, their extent, development and use.* Geological Survey of Finland / International Peat Society.



Figure. ***Top****: Rucahabi tributary peatland to Akanyaru system with raised bed subsistence farming areas (Samer Elshehawi),* ***Bottom****: Satellite image of Rwabusoro in Akanyaru: Former peat extraction holes (up to 8 meters). Current extraction below the road (lower side of the picture). Extraction commissioned for Gishoma peat power plant. Other areas are used as raised beds agriculture and infrastructure (new road).*

7. Nyandungu Eco-park (Kigali/Rwanda)

- Elevation: ~1,300–1,400 m
- Vegetation: Papyrus, Typha, grasses
- Type: Urban wetland / marsh (Kigali Wetland Rehabilitation projects)
- Current use:
    - Eco-park (rehabilitatio project)
    - Flood control and recreation

Information:
https://www.rema.gov.rw/our-work-1/projects/ldcf-iii-5
https://arcosnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/City-of-Kigali-Wetland-Master-Plan_Final-Vol-2_2019.pdf
https://gggi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Nyandungu-Wetland-Eco-park-13-compressed.pdf

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8. Nabajjuzi (Masaka Ramsar City/Uganda)

- Elevation: ~1,200–1,300 m
- Vegetation: Cyperus papyrus dominated in the main downstream valleys, Cyperus spp. in the upstream sections
- Type: Valley bottom peatland
- Current use:
    - Protected RAMSAR site
    - Subsistence farming, Infrastructure (Roads), clay extraction
    - Water purification, biodiversity conservation

Information:
https://rsis.ramsar.org/fr/ris/1639
https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/agriculture/masaka-becomes-east-africas-first-ramsar-city-NV_126261_032026



Figure. Nabajjuzi is currently a demonstration site to building technical capacity and baseline information on peatlands in Uganda under Peat4People project. The picture is taken during setting up one of the peat mapping activities.

9. Mabamba Bay (Lake Victoria/Uganda)

- Elevation: ~1,130 m
- Vegetation: Dense papyrus swamp
- Type: Lake margin floating mats
- Current use:
    - Fishing
    - Ecotourism (birding, shoebill habitat)
- Information: https://rsis.ramsar.org/fr/ris/1638



Figure. Bird-watching ecotourism is an important part of the community livelihood around Mabamba Bay (Photo: Samer Elshehawi)

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10. Munyonyo (Lake Victoria shore)

- Elevation: ~1,130 m

- Vegetation: Papyrus, aquatic plants
- Type: Lake margin floating mats
- Current use:
    - Urban development (hotels, recreation)
    - Floating gardens
- Relevant reference: Saunders, Matthew J., Kansiime, F. & Jones, M. B. (2012). Agricultural encroachment: Implications for carbon sequestration in tropical African wetlands. Global Change Biology, 18, 1312–1321.



Figure. The picture is taken during one of the policy awareness workshops on peatlands role in climate change mitigation on a pathway between the floating gardens in Munyonyo.

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11. Lubigi (Uganda)

- Elevation: ~1,130–1,200 m
- Vegetation: Papyrus, Typha, grasses
- Wetland type: Large urban wetland (Kampala)
- Current use:
    - Wastewater filtration
    - Agriculture encroachment
    - Flood buffering

Relevant reference: John K. Kayima, Aloyce W. Mayo, Joel Nobert (2018). Ecological Characteristics and Morphological Features of the Lubigi Wetland in Uganda. Environment and Ecology Research, 6(4), 218 - 228. DOI: 10.13189/eer.2018.060402.

12. Mpologoma (eastern Uganda floodplain)

- Elevation: ~1,100–1,200 m
- Vegetation: Papyrus, floodplain grasses

- Wetland type: Riverine floodplain wetland
- Current use:
    - Rice cultivation
    - Grazing
    - Seasonal flooding control

Recent publication:

https://royalsocietypublishing.org/rstb/article/381/1956/rstb20250048/482868/Carbon-dioxide-and-methane-emissions-from-plants

Note: The peatland has one of the Eddy covariance towers within the TropeaCC of Exeter University

https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/tropeacc/sites/mpologoma-wetland/

Route to the excursion can be followed here: https://maps.app.goo.gl/Rfgp3VVM1JCUEJz37

Please note that due to Google Maps limit on 10 points that Lubigi is also in Kampala (after Munyonyo site):