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**David Kinjah takes back his title of 'King of the Mountain' as the Tropic Air 10to4 raises millions of shillings to protect Mount Kenya and its surrounding communities**

**NANYUKI, February 2018 (Mount Kenya Trust)** – For the 5th time David Kinjah has won the **Tropic Air 10to4**, taking back the title of 'King of the Mountain' from teammate Davidson Kamau. Both men competed in team Tropic Air.

This weekend saw the 16th edition of the **Tropic Air 10to4** take place. With over 400 people from across the globe (including competitors from as far away as the USA, Japan and New Zealand, and as near as Timau, Meru County) taking part, this event is one of the best-kept secrets on Africa's adventure tourism calendar. The 2018 events programme was bigger than ever with the introduction of 3 new events - The Enduro, The Altitude Horse Ride and The Chase, and it is expected that the event as a whole will have raised more than **KSh. 6 million** for the **Mount Kenya Trust's** social and environmental projects.

Kinjah, driven by passion, determination and wisdom, won both the 90km Hardcore on Day 1 and the 64km Roller Coaster Classic on Day 2, coming in a total of 28 mins ahead of his team mates. He even managed a personal best completing the Day One race in sub 4 hrs for the first time ever.

When asked how he felt about his achievement Kinjah said that he was very happy to win the title at the age of 46, and he hopes that his efforts are an inspiration for younger cyclists. He went on to say that he hoped in the future that many more youngsters would take up the title and keep the event going. Something he is passionately working on with his Safari Simbas cycling trust.

The **Tropic Air 10to4** – named because its signature race begins at an altitude of 10,000ft on Mount Kenya and ends on the Savannahs of Borana Conservancy at 4,000ft – has continued to grow since it began back in 2002.

Susie Weeks, **Mount Kenya Trust**'s executive director, has previously said that the **Tropic Air 10to4** is the Trust's most vital fund-raising event and this still continues to be the case. The event is also key in raising awareness of the mountain and its fundamental role as a water tower for the whole country - an estimated 95% of the water in Nairobi's taps started its journey on Mount Kenya.

"The event has become the number 1 mountain biking challenge in Kenya," says Kinjah. "Playing a vital role in raising funds to protect the mountain. It's the one event that people should come to and either race, ride, run or just enjoy as it all contributes to conserving the mountain."

One competitor, taking part in the new 30k Altitude Horse Ride was 13 year old Tyra Behr, who was awarded the 'Jasper Horwood' prize for raising the most amount of money for the Mount Kenya Trust. This award was set up in memory of a young rider who loved the 10to4. "When I heard how much was required to feed the Mount Kenya Trust Ponies for a year I wanted to be able to raise enough money to do this," says Tyra. In fact it costs \$1000 to feed the horses for a year so she reached and surpassed her target.

Funds raised by the event go directly into conservation projects of Mount Kenya, including the reforestation of more than two million trees in its National Reserve, five security teams who help to reduce illegal logging and poaching, community health projects for over 40,000 people, one of Kenya's major elephant corridors, human-wildlife conflict mitigation, fire fighting support and education.

"Mount Kenya is the heart and lungs of the country and is a vital part of Kenya's economic and environmental prosperity. Thanks to the funds raised by everyone who took part in this years **10to4** we are able to continue to protect its forests and fragile ecosystems," says Weeks. "Personally I'd like to say a huge thank you to all who took part, from our valuable partners, the brave competitors and everyone who kindly volunteered - without all of you this wouldn't have been such a success."

When asked about the event, Jamie Roberts, managing director of Tropic Air, this years headline sponsor, said "We are very fortunate to fly over the mountain regularly and are a big supporter of the mountain in all its forms. It has been a real privilege to be asked to support this event as the headline sponsor and we are delighted that it has been such a success."

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### NOTES TO EDITORS

**About Mount Kenya Trust** – Mount Kenya Trust was established in 2000 to help protect and restore the integrity of Mount Kenya's forests and wildlife by partnering with Government agencies led by the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Kenya Forest Service, communities, and other organisations.

**Media Contacts:** Leafy Rous, +254 740 967 679, [media@mountkenyatrust.org](mailto:media@mountkenyatrust.org)  
Susie Weeks, +254 722 436 641, [sweeks@mountkenyatrust.org](mailto:sweeks@mountkenyatrust.org)

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### [Mount Kenya Fact Sheet](#)

#### Mount Kenya

- Kenya's **highest mountain**, and the second tallest in Africa, it is an extinct volcano formed about 20 million years ago that was covered by an ice-cap for most of its existence
- Batian, the highest peak, is **5,199m** or **17,057ft** above mean sea level, and 16.5km south of the Equator
- In Kikuyu culture, some believe that God, or **Ngai**, lives on Mount Kenya. In one legend, Ngai rested on the mountain while on an inspection tour of Earth. Ngai took the first man, Gikuyu, to the top to point out the beauty of the land he was giving him

- The **Mau Mau Caves** at the foothills of Mt Kenya near Nanyuki are historically significant. During the Emergency, between 1952 and 1960, Mau Mau Freedom Fighters used these caves for storing supplies and as a hideout from British colonial forces
- There are several **vegetation** bands from the base to the summit, including thick forests, bamboo zones, grassy glades, moorlands, tussock grasslands, and sedges
- As many as **81 plant species** are **endemic** to Mount Kenya, including giant lobelias and senecios, which are flowering plants, and a local subspecies of rock hyrax
- The mountain and its surrounding habitats are a refuge for Kenya's second-largest population of **elephants** and its third-largest population of **lions**, both of which are 'vulnerable' to extinction according to IUCN. Endangered **African Wild Dogs** and near-threatened **Mountain Bongo** also live here
- **President Uhuru Kenyatta** directed KWS to raise the national flag on Batian peak at midnight on December 12, 2013, to commemorate 50 years of Kenya's independence

### Why is Mount Kenya so important?

- More than **four million Kenyans** live in the six counties ringing Mount Kenya – Meru, Laikipia, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu, and Tharaka – and most congregate on the mountain's fertile slopes where rainfall is highest
- **Millions more people** in Nairobi, around the Tana River Delta, across north-eastern Kenya, and even as far away as the Somali border, rely on water from rain that originally fell on Mount Kenya
- It plays a critical role for all of Kenya **collecting and storing rainfall** and water, feeding the country's largest river, the Tana, which through hydropower generates up to **50% of Kenya's electricity**
- An estimated **95% of the water in Nairobi's taps** started its journey on Mount Kenya
- It provides water for major **irrigation** schemes
- Kenya's third longest river, the **Ewaso Nyiro**, runs from two main tributaries that start at Nyandarua and on Mount Kenya, and continues through Laikipia then waters a huge area of arid northern Kenya before dispersing into the desert
- Its celebrated rich **biodiversity** includes the Afro-alpine moorlands, giant heath, East African bamboo, and major types of forests including mixed closed canopy forest
- **Wildlife** includes elephants, leopards, giant forest hogs, and mountain bongo
- **Bird** species are also abundant

### The protected areas

- An area **four times the size of Nairobi** is protected on Mount Kenya: 715 sq. km in the National Park towards the summit, and 2,100 sq. km including the National Reserve covering most of the forest belt
- The National Park was established in 1949. UNESCO listed it as a World Heritage Site in **1997**
- **A third of Kenya's elephants** – roughly 11,000 individuals – live in habitats sustained by the mountain, e.g. Laikipia, Samburu. Of those, **2,600 elephants** live in the Mount Kenya National Reserve

### Who is in charge?

- **Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)** is the National Park's custodian, and has a mandate to protect the wildlife and the habitats of the National Reserve's indigenous forest

- **The Kenya Forest Service (KFS)** manages commercial forest plantations and helps protect the indigenous forest itself in the National Reserve

### What threats does the mountain face today?

- **Timber** logging: most of Mount Kenya's camphor trees have been lost in the past 30 years
- **Charcoal** logging
- Bushmeat **poaching**
- **Water** extraction

### How are things already improving?

- Illegal activity has decreased since a landmark 1999 aerial survey. Large-scale logging has declined and there is impressive forest generation. Where forests were destroyed in the 1990s we have an obligation to **ensure indigenous trees** are put back
- Mount Kenya Trust's horseback patrol team has seen a **50% reduction in illegal activities** they encountered between 2014 and 2015, from 168 to 81 incidents (e.g. logging, grazing, snaring)
- Ivory poaching peaked in 2011 and 2012, as it did nationwide, but KWS has since controlled poaching with the help of communities, partners, and better laws. The number of **elephants killed for ivory has dropped by more than 80%** in the Mount Kenya National Reserve since 2012, according to the KWS Senior Warden there
- Elephant **fences** and the internationally renowned Mount Kenya **elephant corridor**, spearheaded by Mount Kenya Trust, have reduced human wildlife conflict significantly. The corridor's success led to an extension of the Mount Kenya World Heritage Site. More fencing and two more elephant corridors are planned
- KFS formed **Community Forest Associations** under the new forest act, improving livelihoods for communities bordering the forest, and giving them stronger rights
- Communities **may farm crops in some forest areas** in return for planting trees, under the Plantation Establishment and Livelihood Improvement Scheme
- Mount Kenya Trust with KWS and other partners is increasing awareness about the importance of forests and wildlife, **particularly in schools**
- Mount Kenya Trust's Community Health Care Programme brings **wider health coverage** for forest communities
- Mount Kenya Trust's indigenous **tree-planting projects**, with KFS, have regenerated hundreds of hectares of forest and provided **income for community groups** who run the tree nurseries that provide seedlings
- Mount Kenya Trust's **wildlife guards** are all from the Mount Kenya area, and their influence is changing attitudes to poaching. Their actions, alongside KWS's dedicated rangers, have saved many animals from snares, traps, and domestic hunting dogs
- Successes were only achieved thanks to **extensive partnerships** between all the institutions working for Mount Kenya, and these links and joint efforts are strong. However, growing populations, climate change, finite resources, and water supplies that are not equitably shared, together mean there is work still to be done. **We cannot afford to be complacent, and we all need all the support we can get**

### Public–Private Partnerships

- KFS and KWS's main civil society partners on Mount Kenya are **Mount Kenya Trust** and **Rhino Ark**

- Mount Kenya Trust runs community and monitoring projects and has worked with KFS to **reforest degraded areas** since 2004
- With KWS, Mount Kenya Trust **fenced much of the western side** of Mount Kenya to mitigate human wildlife conflict, and continues to help communities **maintain those fences**
- Rhino Ark worked with the International Fund for Agriculture Development (Ifad), KFS, and KWS to replace the existing two-strand fence ringing the mountain with the **Mt Kenya Electric Fence**, which is fully game-proof. Already, 170km has been installed, from the south east of the mountain to the north, with a focus on the Upper Imenti Forest, a human-wildlife conflict hotspot. See [www.rhinoark.org/mt-kenya-fence-project/background-4](http://www.rhinoark.org/mt-kenya-fence-project/background-4)

#### What's happening to Mount Kenya's glaciers?

- **92% of the ice cap has melted** in the last 100 years, and scientists predict the rest could disappear before 2050
- Glaciers store and release fresh water seasonally, replenishing the rivers and groundwater that supply people and ecosystems. With smaller glaciers, **there is less ice to melt**, affecting agriculture, home supplies, hydroelectricity, and industry in the lowlands and cities far from the mountain
- Elsewhere, rising temperatures cause glaciers to retreat, but in East Africa things are different. A 2016 study found the largest glacier on Mount Kenya, the Lewis Glacier, is melting because of **decreasing atmospheric moisture** rather than increasing temperatures

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