



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Kenneth Karaya wins the flagship Extreme event at the Tropic Air 10to4 Mountain Bike Challenge this year attended by both Kenya Wildlife Service and Kenya Forest Service. The weekend of diverse events raises millions of shillings to protect Mount Kenya and support its surrounding communities.

Meru and Laikipia, February 2019 (Mount Kenya Trust) – Kenneth Karaya took the title on the 130k Extreme two day challenge at the **Tropic Air 10to4 event**, taking the title from David Kinjah, who was unable to participate this year. Kenneth completed the course in 6:42:09, almost an hour ahead of Geoffrey Muthiani Ssendegey who took second place. Nicola Green took the women’s Extreme title, with Rita Zagoni in 2nd place.

The 2019 edition of the 10to4 included a total of 10 separate events with the introduction of a new course on the first day of the Extreme. This weekend was the 17th edition of the **Tropic Air 10to4** with over 400 people from East Africa and around the world taking part in a variety of challenging mountain bike races, a mountain bike Enduro event and a six-hour horse ride with 31 participants including guides.

The first day takes riders in a gruelling 73.6km loop around the stunning Borana Conservancy, teaming with well protected wildlife. On the Friday, running concurrently, was the Altitude Horse ride and Enduro event, while the Classic, Rush and Slide were flagged off on Saturday, followed on Sunday by four Braeburn MINI 10to4 races for children 4 years old and up.

Karaya said that he put in a great deal of training in a bid to win the title from David Kinjah and Davidson Kamau who have been sharing the title for years. At 23, Kenneth is part of a new generation of super cyclists who started getting involved in cycling tours and events at the age of 16. Kenneth trained for the 2019 Tropic Air 10to4 despite the fact he had no sponsorship, he just kept hoping for another chance to participate. Kenneth works with Baisikeli Adventures, a biking tour company and a cycling club. Rakesh the founder of Baisikeli came up with the sponsorship for the Baisikeli team giving Kenneth the chance to show his metal. Kenneth has taken part in the 10to4 4 times now, previously as part of the Safari Simbaz and said that he ‘wants the opportunity to defend his title for the next 5 years’.

Susie Weeks, **Mount Kenya Trust’s** Executive Director says that the **Tropic Air 10to4** is a lifeline for the projects of the Mount Kenya Trust, which relies on donations and the 10to4 to fund their growing portfolio of projects including patrol teams for the protection of the forests and resident wildlife, community support, forest regeneration, human wildlife conflict mitigation and direct support to the Kenya Wildlife Service and Kenya Forest Service. A

portion of the 10to4 proceeds also go to Borana Conservancy's Education project and to the Ngare Ndare Forest Trust who use the funds to pay for their rangers and equipment.

Alex Sane, of the Safari Simbaz who were racing for Tropic Air, told us that 'The extreme was really tough and broke some personal barriers for me. It's not often that you get the opportunity to get something to shift in your mind and push your limits.' Asked whether he would take part again Alex said 'Of course! Moving the goal posts is what it takes to become a real champion.'

"Mount Kenya's ecosystem services are vital to 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 ecosystems for everybody who relies on them" says Weeks. "Personally, I'd like to say a huge thank you Borana and Lewa conservancies who pulled out all the stops this year to increase surveillance and security at the event. Rangers from Borana, Lewa, Ngare Ndare Forest Trust, the Kenya Wildlife Service and Mount Kenya Trust were positioned all along the courses over a vast area to keep cyclists and wildlife safe, a total over 150 rangers were looking out for the participants along their way.'

When asked about the event, Jamie Roberts, managing director of Tropic Air, this year's headline sponsor, said "Tropic Air is very proud to be to have been asked to be the title sponsor of the 10to4, and also proud to be in a position to do so, having established a solid business at the foot of Mount Kenya."

"Although this is just the 2nd year of our sponsorship, for several years we have supported the 10to4 providing a helicopter to track the riders, for casevac and aerial filming. Our association with the Mount Kenya Trust goes back more than a decade. We have always admired their work and commitment to conservation of the forests and the support they give to community projects. They work hand-in-hand with the Kenya Forest Service, the Kenya Wildlife Service and many conservation stakeholders, and thanks to such partnerships and dedication, Mount Kenya remains in good sted."

Thank You To Our 2019 Sponsors & Partners



ENDS

NOTES FOR 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

eventmanager@mountkenyatrust.org

Susie Weeks: +254 722 436 641

sweeks@mountkenyatrust.org

* * *

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 from 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 elephant, leopard, giant forest hog, and a small remnant population of 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. Only one elephant was poached on Mount Kenya in 2018.
- 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

ENDS