



Kenya: A Natural Outlook: Chapter 15. Importance and Dynamics of the Mangroves in Kenya (Developments in Earth Surface Processes)

Bernard K. Kirui

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Mangroves are important ecosystems in Kenya, producing goods and services of immense importance to the communities living adjacent to them. Their coverage is estimated at 46,590 hectares and is found along the 536km coastline which extends over 3° latitude from 1°42' south to 4°40' south. Mangroves are common features in protected bays, creeks, estuaries and river deltas spread all along the Kenya coast. Two communities of mangroves (fringe and creek) formations occur along the Kenya coast. The largest formations occur in the north coast around the Lamu area and at the River Tana delta. Nine species of mangroves are found in Kenya with *Rhizophora mucronata* and *Avicennia marina* being the dominant species. The mangrove management in Kenya is contained in the Forest Act of 2005 where it is treated as part of the natural environment (forests/flora). The act created Kenya Forest Service with the mandate of managing forests in Kenya including mangroves. The legislation also provides for comprehensive community involvement in forest management through creation of community forests associations. Through its licencing system, the service regulates the harvesting mangroves. However, due to lack of comprehensive management plans, coupled with lack of resources to monitor harvesting system used by mangrove cutters, mangrove cutting is unregulated in all areas. Participatory management is also at its infancy stages. In this chapter, the status of mangroves in Kenya, their uses, dynamics and threats (anthropogenic and natural) are discussed and suggestions made on their wise use.

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