

# County launches plan to boost tourism sector

## KITUI

By PHILIP MUASYA

The county government has rolled out a plan to market the region as a top tourist destination and improve the local economy.

The plan will be implemented in partnership with organisations such as Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Nature Kenya.

The county also aims to refurbish all the tourist sites and two national game reserves to make Kitui part of the national tourism circuit.

Tourism Chief Officer Khalid Ashur Mahmud said a 10-year tourism management plan has been crafted, proposals sent to key partners and funds allocated to attract local and foreign tourists.

"We shall put up hotels, tented camps and eco-lodges and revitalise gaming activities in all tourist sites and national game reserves in order to boost tourism development and raise our revenue base," Mr Khalid said.

### BIRD WATCHING

The tourist attraction sites include Mutomo Plant Hill Sanctuary in Kitui South, where a reptile park is already coming up. There is also Kanyonyoo sanctuary, famed for zebras and giraffes, and Mumoni Forest, which has been mapped as a bird watching area. Others include Ikoo Valley and the mystical Nzambani rock.

Others are South Kitui National Game Reserve, which borders Tsavo East National Park and Mwingi National Game Reserve, which neighbours Kora and Meru national parks. Plans are underway to fence the two national reserves.

The county government has already employed 38 game rangers to protect the two expansive national reserves



### KITUI TOURIST SITES

- Mutomo Plant Hill Sanctuary
- Kanyonyoo sanctuary, which is famed for zebras and giraffes
- Mumoni Forest, a bird-watching area, Ikoo Valley and the mystical Nzambani rock
- South Kitui National Game Reserve
- Mwingi National Game Reserve

County tourism officer Christine Mwendwa at Adamson Falls picnic site at Mwingi National Game Reserve. The site is popular with students. [PHOTO: PHILIP MUASYA/STANDARD]

and Mwingi National Game Reserve, said the national reserve has a lot of tourism potential since it borders Kora and Meru National parks.

"The reserve is the only gateway to the popular Kambi ya Simba in Kora. There is potential for hotels and tented camps as well as boating and fishing activities. The Adams picnic site which is found here is also very popular with school children and other visitors," Omondi said.

### WATERING POINTS

He added that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been drafted between Kitui County Government and KWS to rehabilitate Mwingi National Game Reserve by, among

others, restocking it with wild animals and establishing watering points for the wildlife. He said the MoU is awaiting signing by both parties.

Khalid said the county government has already constructed access roads within the national reserves and established three revenue collection gates at Adamsons, Masungwa and Kaningo and three more gates at South Kitui National Game Reserve.

"The gates are meant to enhance security, offer easy access to the park and for revenue collection," he said, adding that water purification points will be established. The water will be drawn from the giant River Tana, which cuts across Mwingi reserve.

against charcoal burning, grazing and illegal farming. A rangers' camp has already been put up at Kaningo where the rangers work closely with KWS to protect the sites.

"We have already written to the Ministry of Interior to allow our rangers to train at Manyani in a bid to enhance security in our national reserves," Khalid noted.

Paul Omondi, the warden in charge of Kora National Park