

# SGG-ROTARY TROPICAL TREE-PLANTING PROJECT: FOREST RESTORATION AND REWILDING

## INTRODUCTION

Within Great Britain and Ireland there are many areas of marginal farmland where it is no longer economically viable to practise farming in the traditional manner. As modern farming techniques combined with complex trading arrangements have enabled the population to produce sufficient food on less land, new types of land use management have become established in the countryside. At the same time there has emerged a much greater interest in nature, reversing the long-term decline in biodiversity and visiting areas of natural beauty within the countryside. From these changes there has developed a concern for both forest restoration and rewilding.

As mentioned within the Heart4Trees project, there are some good examples of forest restoration and rewilding in Northern Britain. See <https://www.carrifran.org.uk> for details of how a once desolate valley on the Scottish Borders is being changed into a forested location with greater biodiversity. See <https://treesforlife.org.uk> for details of work to restore the ancient Caledonian Forest in Glen Affric and neighbouring locations. However, these are British schemes considered elsewhere. Within the African context where rural poverty and desire to use every scrap of land is widespread, forest restoration and rewilding projects are not common. Nevertheless, there are examples which we can support, and we expect forest restoration to be increasingly common in the future.

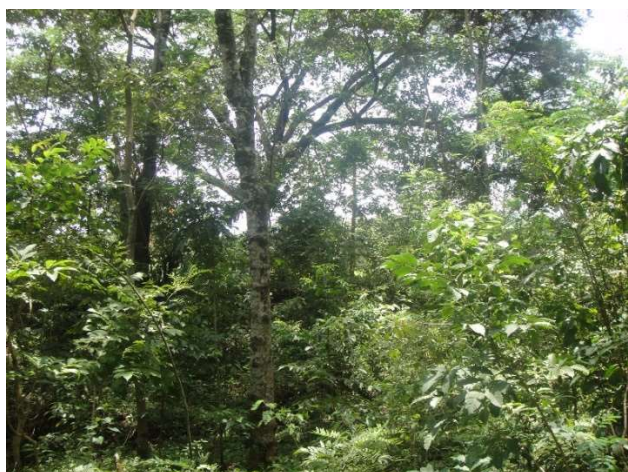
## FOREST EXTENSION IN EAST AFRICA

As SGG's priority task is to support small-scale farmers in their struggle out of poverty, we do not have many contacts whose concern is to maintain & restore forest dominated by a variety of indigenous species. Nevertheless, there are a few.



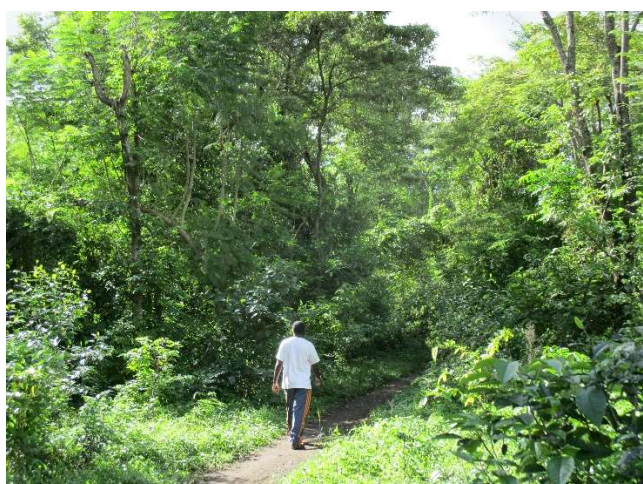
In 2013 SGG was aware of only a few patches of relic forest which were being restored or extended. Most of these were located on institutional land, either church or educational grounds, where there was spare land not needed for agriculture or on steep slopes unsuitable for cultivation. Here [see above left] SGG are monitoring recent tree planting of mainly indigenous species within the grounds of Huruma Convent, in Rombo District Tanzania. This is not for agroforestry purposes, but to help protect and extend a small relic of original forest nearby [see above right].





SGG's main area of activity is Busia County in Western Kenya. Here nearly all land, apart from the scrub-covered, rocky hills, is used for farming. Here nearly all SGG-Rotary tree-planting is within the agroforestry category. However, there are a few isolated patches of relic forest which the local Kenya Forest Service wish to protect and extend [see above left]. Occasionally a small-scale farmer with a love of nature and without a desire to make money from trees may plant and extend a small area of forest [see above right] to help maintain the biodiversity of the locality.

One aspect of tropical forest restoration is that such forests can be a prime attraction for ecotourism, so it is not surprising that many tourist lodges try to maintain the natural flora and fauna within their immediate locality. During the 2017-8 Rotary year when all rotarians worldwide were asked to plant at least one tree, the Rotary clubs of Tyneside, Whickham, Gateshead and Newcastle-Gosforth all contributed to SGG's first forest restoration and extension around Ngarasero Forest, near Usa River, Tanzania. This work is continued in the present project.



This is part of Ngarasero Forest [see above left], an area of relic forest near Usa River in Tanzania. There is a need to extend this forest which surrounds an ecotourism lodge and which is a significant part of the local economy. Much of the current planting is around the periphery of the forest so that it can be joined to neighbouring patches of forest and provide a better habitat for local wildlife. The above right photo was taken while monitoring recent tree planting in 2019.





This photo [see left] shows part of the core area of Ngarasero Forest. Within this zone the local Mali Hai youth group planted an estimated 900 seedlings of indigenous species such as *Cordia Africana*, *Albizia schimperiana*, and *Ficus* spp.

During the November 2019 monitoring it was difficult to find these young trees which were still well below the height of the bush canopy. What was evident during this incursion into the heart of the forest was that many of the trees present were 'wildings' ie. established without being specifically planted. Such natural forest regeneration offers great potential for carbon capture, so although SGG has few illustrations of this type of forest project, we expect this to become more common in East and Southern Africa in the future.

SGG would like to increase the number of SGG-Rotary projects which include natural forest regeneration, especially in preparation for COP26 in November 2021.

## FUTURE PROSPECTS

SGG is currently preparing a forest protection and restoration project in Malawi. We are cooperating with ZombaTreez, who have been working in partnership with local villagers to protect forest on the slopes of the Zomba Plateau. You can read all about their community-environment-forest restoration project if you browse [www.zombatreez.com](http://www.zombatreez.com). SGG's role in this project is to fundraise and find sponsors, so we hope that Rotary clubs will consider supporting the village community groups below in their efforts to restore their local forest..

