

IN MEMORIAM: PATRICK NTHUSI MUTHOKA

20 February 1962–14 February 2018



Patrick Nthusi Muthoka died on 14 February 2018 at Mater Hospital, Nairobi, after a long illness brought about by kidney failure. With his passing on, Kenya lost one of its leading scientists in plant conservation. Patrick was instrumental in setting up the Plant Conservation and Propagation Unit (later renamed the Plant Conservation Programme) in 1992 at the National Museums of Kenya,

which he headed until his demise. The establishment of the Nairobi Botanic Garden largely relied on his vast experience in *ex-situ* plant conservation as well as his network of collaborators that spanned the globe. He loved working with farmers to embrace sustainable utilization of useful and threatened indigenous plant species. Under his leadership many farmers in the drylands of Tharaka-Nithi, Makeni, Kwale, Mbeere and Kitui counties established long-term community environment conservation activities through various programmes such as the AMSAL Trees and Mycorrhiza Project (1989–1992), the Plant Conservation Project (1992–1998), Millennium Seed Bank (1998–2010), Useful Plants Project (2011–2014), and the Optimisation of Pesticidal-plants: Technology Innovation, Outreach & Networks, or OPTIONs (2014–2017). Patrick had a passion for environmental protection and coordinated many Environmental Impact Assessments across the country to mitigate biodiversity impact of infrastructure and industrial development projects. He had an eye for detail and was a talented organizer and scientific writer. He was diplomatic when necessary, a great negotiator and to many of us a great friend.

Dr. Patrick Nthusi Muthoka was born on 20 February, 1962 as the third born child of the late Muthoka Mutio and the late Ndungwa Muthoka at Kyenzi village, Kilungu location in Machakos District, now Makeni County. He attended Kyandumbi Primary School, then proceeded to Thomeandu Secondary School and finally to St. Paul's High School Kevote, Embu, for his advanced level certificate. In November 1984 he joined the University of Nairobi to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany and Zoology, graduating in December 1987. Between 1989 and 1990 he undertook a Master of Science degree course in Resource Management (Forestry) at the University of Edinburgh. From 1997 to 2000, he pursued a second Masters Degree in Philosophy, Biology, at the University of London (Kings College), United Kingdom. During his long-standing

collaboration with staff at the Royal Botanic Garden's Kew Millennium Seed Bank, he was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Horticulture (Wild Seed Storage Physiology) at Maseno University in 2008. Having joined the National Museums of Kenya in 1987 as an Assistant Research Scientist, he rose through the ranks to the position of a Senior Research Scientist and Head of the Ex-situ Conservation section. His publications ranged from reviewed papers, book chapters and conference proceedings, a selection of which is here annexed.

In addition Muthoka greatly supported the education of young people. He offered leadership and support to local schools near his home area, At the time of his demise, he was the chairman of the Board of Governors of Kivani Secondary School. He would not only conduct harambees to support the schools financially but would also source donations of equipment from his international collaborators and friends to support these schools. He mentored many young people and has supervised a number of MSc and PhD theses.



Dr. Patrick Muthoka, doing what he enjoyed most, here with staff of the Gallmann Memorial Foundation, Ol Ari Nyiro Ranch. Photograph by T.R. Pearce.

Socially Patrick was a simple and a humble person, despite his great academic and professional achievements. He worked equally well with his peers, his seniors and those below him in the office. He was generous and was always among the first to help whenever a colleague was in need.

He is survived by his wife Eunice Mbeneka Nthusi (m. 1991) and two sons, Frank Mutisya Nthusi and Paul Mulei Nthusi.

Geoffrey Mwachala, Itambo Malombe & Mathias Mbale

PUBLICATIONS BY PATRICK NTHUSI MUTHOKA

Books chapter

Muthoka, P.N., R.J. Probert, S.A. Coomber (2003). Seed quality development in selected Kenyan wild plant species. In R.B. Smith, J.B. Dickie, S.H. Linington, H.W. Pritchard & R.J. Probert (eds.), *Seed Conservation – Turning Science to Practice*. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Pp. 135–149.

Reviewed papers

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- Morris, K. & **P.N. Muthoka** (1996). Botanic Gardens and Conservation. An Opportunity for Kenya? *Swara* **19**(1): 28–30.
- Simiyu, S.W., **P.N. Muthoka**, J. Jefwa, B. Bytebier & T. Pearce (1994). Conservation status of the genus *Saintpaulia* in Kenya. In L.J.G. van der Maesen, X.M. Van der Burgt & J.M. Van Medenbach de Rooy. (eds), *The Biodiversity of African Plants*. Proceedings XIVth AETFAT Congress, 22–27 August 1994, Wageningen, The Netherlands. Springer, Dordrecht. Pp 314–344.