



**Guide to Common Freshwater Fishes of Kenya**  
**By Wanja Dorothy Nyingi**  
**Moran Publishers, 136 pages**

**Available from National Museums of Kenya and TextBook Centre**

Fish are one of the most fascinating and important components of Kenya's biodiversity. One of the great challenges facing understanding and appreciating the diversity of fish in Kenya has been the lack of an accessible guidebook. As many of us who occasionally bother playing around fish with rods and lures can attest, often one pulls something out of the water that one doesn't immediately recognise and this can be very frustrating.

The publication of this delightful little book fills a large gap in our knowledge and ability to identify fish in Kenya. Dr Nyingi has put together a compact publication that will prove useful to anyone interested in identifying the fish that they catch or observe in rivers, lakes and wetlands across the country. Inspired by the work of Dr Luc De Vos, the late curator of Ichthyology at the National Museums of Kenya, this is an

outstanding work that he would have been very proud of.

Kenya's freshwater fish diversity presented in this book covers species like the enigmatic African Lungfishes, the strange Elephant Snout-fishes, Stone-bashers, Catlets, Labeos, Squeakers, Suckermouts, Pipefish and the bizarre Nile Pufferfish are just some of the wonderful species featured, alongside the more familiar Nile Perch and many different kinds of Tilapia. The use of common names for the different fish species make this a very accessible work and hopefully this will encourage more interest in our fish diversity.

The diversity is presented in the context of the major inland freshwater basins of the country: Lake Victoria, the Rift Valley and inland lakes, Athi River and coastal rivers, the Tana River and the Ewaso Ny'iro system. Each short species account includes valuable details on the distribution, behaviour and some natural history of the fish. This provides a useful baseline from which naturalists and anyone interested in fish can now reference their observations across the country.

One of the striking things that comes across in this guidebook is how localised some of the fish diversity is. For example, Lake Turkana in Northern Kenya has 48 recorded fish species, and a large number of these are endemic. With this lake now threatened by large-scale developments on the Omo River, this highlights how important it is to document and understand the biogeographic patterns of our precious biodiversity in order to more effectively conserve it.

The book also provides basic information on the importance of each species in terms of fisheries. This is very useful baseline data as fisheries management and biodiversity conservation can sometimes clash. The most infamous example is the introduction of the Nile Perch into Lake

Victoria, where the fish had evolved without this voracious predator and were consequently largely gobbled into extinction. Today we continue introductions of exotic species like the charming Rainbow Trout (an important sport fish), without really thinking about the long-term ecological consequences on streams and species evolved over millions of years in isolation without this predator. This book highlights the beauty and diversity of Kenya's fishes and why they are worth learning more about. ●

**Reviewed by Dino J. Martins**