

PREFACE

When we first visited Mt. Kenya on 17th August 2011, we were impressed by the magnificent and beautiful scenery of the amazing land. In the morning, we drove up along the Sirimon Track. It was bush zone below the mountain, but gradually replaced by dense *Podocarpus* forest, with *P. milanjanus* being the most common and few *Afrocarpus gracilior*. The towering trees stood erectly on both sides of the road and in the deep forest, with the trunk regularly slightly left or few right rotated. Then the vegetation was gradually replaced by *Hagenia*-Bamboo. *Hagenia abyssinica* of the rose family, endemic species in tropical Africa, is distributed from Ethiopia to Zimbabwe and from Kenya to Congo. The only species of alpine bamboo is *Yushania alpina*, which is widely distributed in the high mountains of east Africa. Over the altitude of 3,300 m, it was the typical heath zone and scattered with giant *Lobelia* and *Dendrosenecio*. After a short rest at Old Moses Hut, we continued to climb up along the rough mountain road under the guidance of the guide Caesar. We finally arrived at a lower peak of 4,200 m a.s.l., and along the way was typical moorland, where giant *Lobelia* and *Dendrosenecio* became dominant plants, marking the magic alpine vegetation of high mountains in East Africa.

Since then, we have visited Mt. Kenya several times and went through different routes, such as Naro Moru Track, Kamweti Track, Burguret Track, Timau Track, Meru Track, Chogoria Track etc. We also organized some hiking events across the mountain, and visited different types of vegetation, such as bushland, rainforest, bamboo zone, heath zone, moorland and even the alpine rocky zone. During these investigations, we took a lot of photos of different vegetation types and plants of the mountain. Later on, we arranged and identified these photos and hope to publish a popular handbook, which reflects the plant diversity of Mt. Kenya.

Mt. Kenya has a huge biodiversity and it is the most important habitat and breeding site for different kinds of wildlife. Based on our preliminary estimation, there are over 1,500 plant species living here, and more than 15 are endemic to this mountain. This book records 500 common plants of Mt. Kenya living in different altitudes and habitats, most of which are indigenous species, and few are common exotic, cultivated or horticultural varieties.

This guide is an easy-to-carry field handbook, with colored pictures and refined texts. We hope it will bring pleasure and satisfaction to readers, especially the tourists who are keen on mountaineering of the high mountains of east Africa.

Editors

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