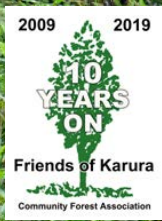
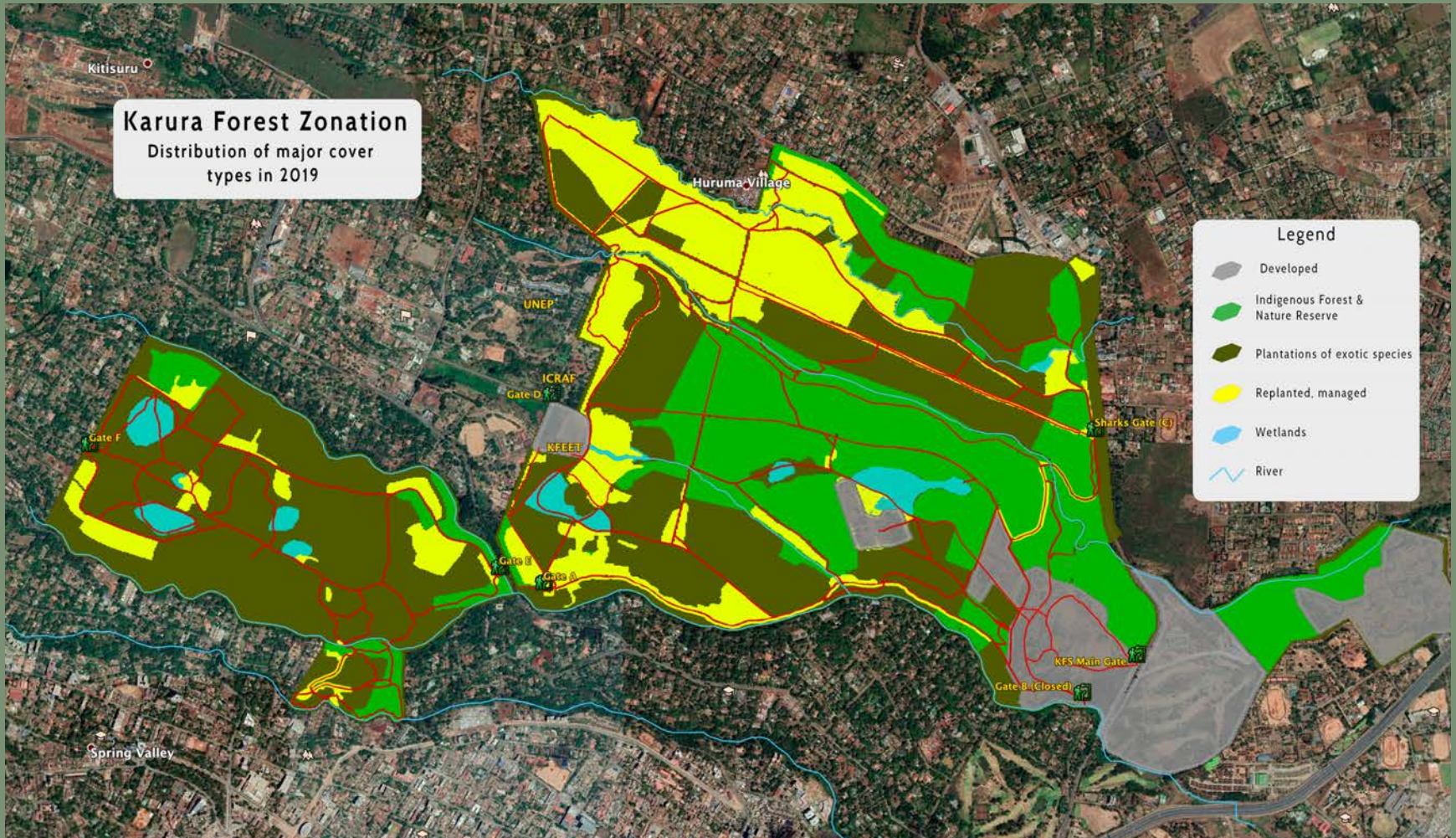


Friends of Karura Community Forest Association

TENTH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

Ten Years of Participatory Forest Management
with the
Kenya Forest Service
2009-2019





Working map for planning and tracking progress in reforestation and ecosystem restoration. Yellow shows areas cleared of invasive species and replanted to date. See Legend, above and page 4.

Front Cover: The opening to the public of the Family Trail in Karura Forest, 16 May 2009: the start of the forest's ten-year recovery

Friends of Karura Community Forest Association

TENTH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

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The Kenya Forest Service
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Kenya's 2005 Forests Act made visionary provision for the establishment of Community Forest Associations (CFA) for each forest in Kenya. In 2009, inspired by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai's campaign to rescue Karura and indeed all the nation's forests from greed-driven development, a group of the Karura Forest Reserve neighbouring stakeholders joined forces to establish and launch the Friends of Karura CFA (FKF). Since then, with unprecedented support from local corporations and communities and under the aegis of Kenya Forest Service (KFS) two five-year Strategic Plans, FKF and KFS have worked together within the terms of a carefully negotiated Joint Management Agreement for Karura. The results speak for themselves: in a decade, Karura has revived from a place to be avoided to one of *the* places in Nairobi to be visited. This report highlights the progress made over the last ten years.

FKF Mission

To manage and sustain a world-class, well-conserved, safe and secure Karura Forest Reserve in partnership with the Kenya Forest Service and Nairobi neighbourhood stakeholders in order to provide ecosystem services and a place of tranquility for all Kenyans.



INFRASTRUCTURE



New office block for FKF and KFS Karura Forest staff



Bridge over Gitathuni River in Sigina block

When the Friends of Karura Community Forest Association (FKF) was registered in 2009, the forest reserve was all but abandoned due to lack of resources, with no development or maintenance, just nefarious activities that made the forest a no-go zone. Preparing the forest to welcome and accommodate visitors had to start from scratch.

First came the erection of a 15 km electric fence that secured the forest from uncontrolled entry and established ownership. Around 50 km of tracks and trails were cleared and sign-posted including various five, 10 and 15 km colour-coded circuits for walkers and bikers. A paved 1.5 km circuit called the Matembezi Trail facilitated access to the forest for mobility-challenged visitors.

Nine bridges were built over rivers and streams. One hundred and fifty benches were deployed along the trails throughout the forest. A paper map of the forest and an app for smart phones have been produced to guide visitors. Picnic sites with a total of 70 table-and-bench combos surrounded by large playing fields have been established in four locations. Two events venues, one with a paved and lit wheel-chair friendly access, two with automatic watering systems and boreholes provide another revenue stream. The road to the main Limuru Gate, the car park and the rest of the way to the top of the hill has been paved for easy and safe access regardless of weather.

Gate houses, large-capacity parking areas and washrooms equipped with bio-digesters have been built at all five gates. A 700 sq. m, state-of-the-art office block named the Karura Forest House has been built at Limuru gate to accommodate FKF and KFS forest station staff. A fibre optic cable connects all the gates to the office for a fully integrated digital revenue collection system and security camera network.



Picnic site near Obstacle Course at Sigina Gate-F

RESULTS

- ✓ A well maintained, secure forest
- ✓ Suitable, secure amenities for visitors
- ✓ A state-of-the-art office block
- ✓ Integrated digital revenue collection

INFRASTRUCTURE

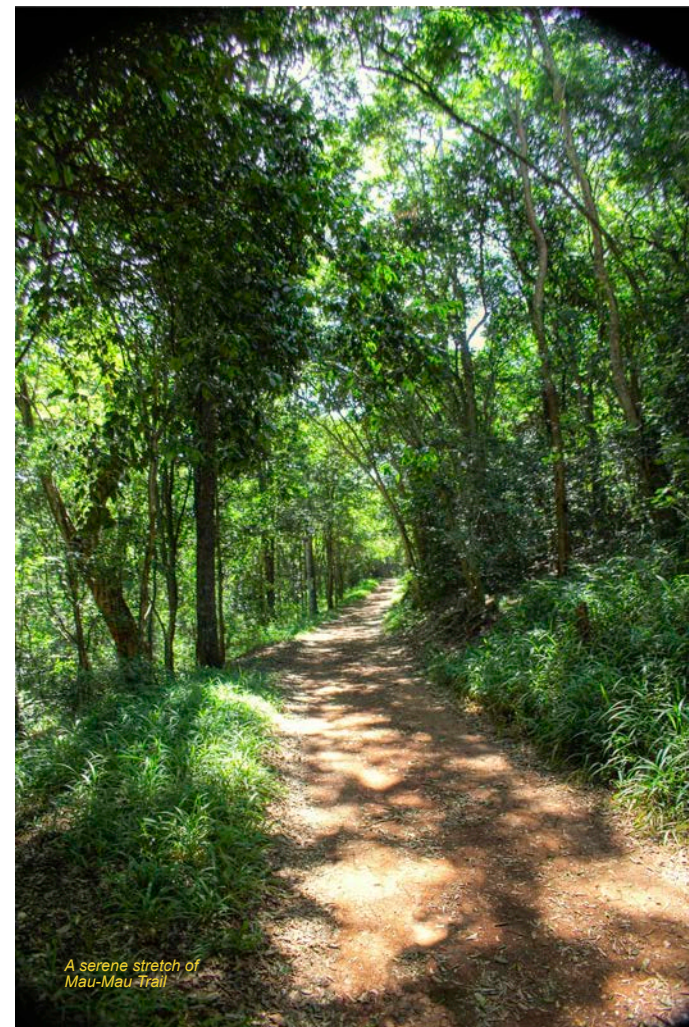
Keeping over 50 km of tracks and trails clear of *Lantana* and broken trees, collecting litter and emptying some 50 monkey-proof bins, repairing infrastructure and amenities, keeping the electric fence clear of weeds and fully functional, extensive patrolling to ensure the safety of visitors — those are some of the routine tasks that forest staff carries out 365 days a year to keep the forest green and tidy for an ever-growing number of visitors. Eighty-five people are permanently employed by FKF and 14 by KFS to carry out these daily tasks.

The single-use plastic ban declared in August 2017 established Karura as a trail-blazer in protecting public spaces against plastic pollution. It contributed greatly to making the forest one of the cleanest amenities to visit in Nairobi and protecting its wildlife from harmful ingestion of plastics.



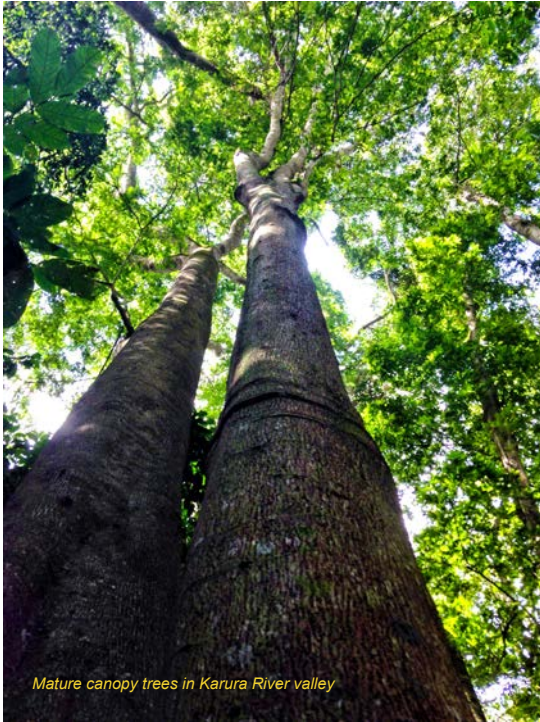
RESULTS

- ✓ 50 km of maintained tracks and trails
- ✓ Waste water re-cycling at all gates
- ✓ A plastic-free public space
- ✓ Job creation for the surrounding communities



PROJECTS

Reforestation and Ecosystem Enrichment



Mature canopy trees in Karura River valley

The FKF-KFS joint management plan goal to return Karura to its natural state is well on its way with some 220 ha (540 acres) having been restored (see inside front cover for map). The aim is to reduce the dominance of exotic plantation species and replace them with indigenous trees and shrubs. The current logging ban in force in the country interrupted the plan in 2017. The recently established FKF indigenous tree nursery ensures that a wide variety of suitable species of trees and shrubs is available at all times.



Huruma community members re-planting cleared areas with indigenous trees

All the clearing, planting and tree-care work has been supported by gate fees and membership subscriptions, as well as by the many generous private and corporate donors who have 'adopted' patches of forest and replanted thousands of trees. Women's groups from Huruma informal settlement on Karura's northern boundary carry out most of the physical work.



RESULTS

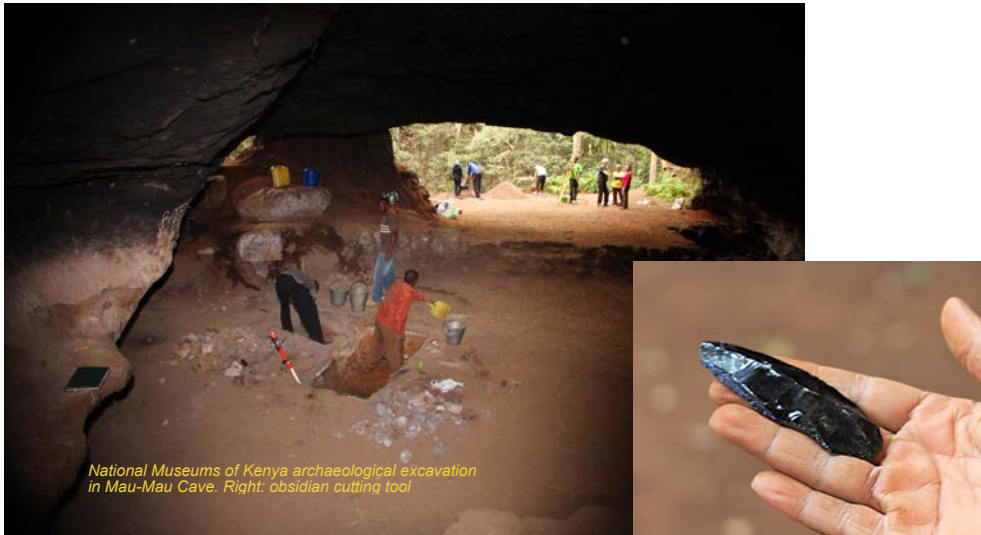
- ✓ 220 hectares cleared of invasive species and regenerated
- ✓ 45% of the forest now indigenous, up from 25% in 2010
- ✓ Nearly 80,000 indigenous trees planted
- ✓ Over 300 contracts issued, mostly to women's groups

PROJECTS

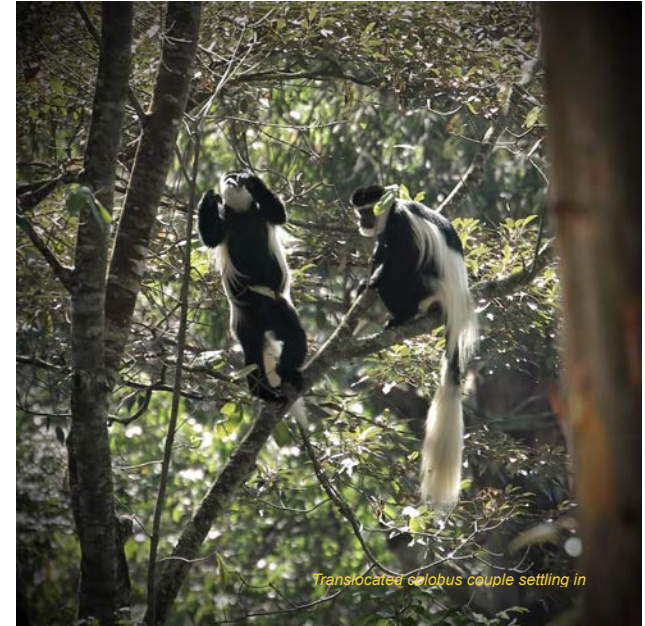
Colobus Monkey Reintroduction & Archaeological Excavation

The highly successful FKF Colobus Monkey re-introduction project translocated according to IUCN specifications 132 individuals in twenty-two family groups rescued from alienated habitats in Kipipiri near the Aberdares. Thirty-eight births conceived in the forest have been registered as of mid-2019, a sure sign that the primates settled remarkably quickly in their new environment, creating a new attraction for visitors.

An archaeological excavation project was carried out in two of the caves in the Karura River valley. Many artefacts were discovered: obsidian and stone tools, pottery shards, teeth and bones of various animals. Most date from the Late Stone Age at 4,350 years, but some are estimated at between 50,000 to 300,000 thousand years old. A palynology study examined pollen in the soil layers to shed light on the changing climate and vegetation in the forest over several centuries.



National Museums of Kenya archaeological excavation in Mau-Mau Cave. Right: obsidian cutting tool

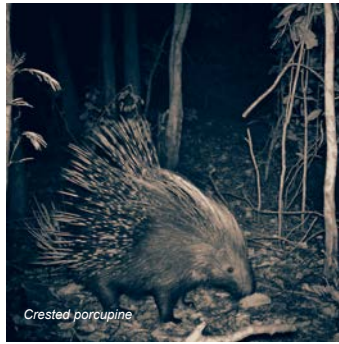
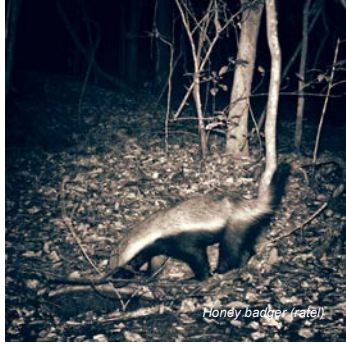


Translocated Colobus couple settling in

RESULTS

- ✓ 168 Colobus now in residence
- ✓ 94% overall success rate of the translocation
- ✓ One of the world's most successful large-scale arboreal primate translocations
- ✓ Prehistoric past of the forest brought to light

RESEARCH



Karura is a very popular place for students and researchers to carry out studies on forest-related subjects, due to its location within the city and the support and guidance they receive from the Science Advisory Committee of Karura. Over 30 scientists, interns and students on attachments have benefited so far. The scientific studies cover the carbon sequestration capacity of the forest, the purifying effect of the forest on rivers traversing it, and the various impacts of invasive species on biodiversity and wildlife, among many other topics.

Other FKF funded research projects include Inventories of mammals, birds and plant species. Reintroduction of indigenous orchid and rare tree species is being facilitated by the newly-established FKF tree and shrub nursery.

The FKF 'KaruraKams' — nine still and video camera traps — have revealed a fascinating array of 22 species of larger mammals, with the ratio of carnivores to herbivores 'captured' as evidence of a healthy and recovering ecosystem.

The FKF Colobus follow-up project involves a multifaceted behavioural and biological study of the newly established colony in the forest. This is a unique opportunity to study an arboreal primate population from an entirely known baseline.

RESULTS

- ✓ New focused research opportunities for students and researchers
- ✓ Improved knowledge of wildlife abundance and behaviour
- ✓ Contributions to knowledge of upland tropical forest ecology



EDUCATION

Karura Forest has become a favourite destination for school parties from both public and private schools. Children of all ages visit the forest almost every day for environmental and natural science studies. At least 80,000 have visited the forest in the last 10 years organised by KFEET (Karura Forest Environment Education Trust), thereby contributing to one of the most important elements of the FKF mission: environmental awareness. Educational packages suitable for various age groups have been developed to make those visits more meaningful. FKF funds are set aside to cater for transport and lunch for schoolkids from disadvantaged areas far from the forest. Fifteen hundred children have benefited so far.

An FKF bursary fund has been set up to give scholarships to deserving secondary school children from the Karura community. Over 100 children have received bursaries. This programme is instrumental in demonstrating how the forest can give back to the community.

The EDCLUB computer lab in Huruma Village informal settlement bordering the forest is a great success. Village teenagers each week 'meet', interact and learn via Skype from mentors in a dozen schools in the United Kingdom using the 'SOLE' (Self-Organised Learning Environment) method that encourages kids to explore subjects in which they are most interested.



School kids on outing at KFEET event area



Eco-tour Guide Jane Njoguina answers kids' questions



Education Officer Lucy Njoka lecturing students

RESULTS

- ✓ Increased number of school children visiting the forest
- ✓ Enhanced awareness of the role of forests
- ✓ Scholarships paid for by forest income
- ✓ Subsidised trips for disadvantaged schools

COMMUNITIES



Community members clearing invasive *Lantana camara*

Casual and contract work in the forest has all along been done by people, mostly women, from Huruma Village and other nearby informal settlements. Every day up to 100 or more work in the forest on maintenance and regeneration projects. This is over and above the 85 FKF permanent employees who largely come from the neighbouring communities. Over the last 10 years Karura has become a major source of income for the surrounding communities, turning the forest from a place of fear and danger to one of opportunity and livelihood improvement.

An FKF-led project aimed at improving the livelihood of surrounding communities through nature-based enterprises and capacity building for peoples' participation in forest governance and management was organised for the community. Ninety-eight members from five community groups were trained in beekeeping, forest tourism guiding, and participatory forest management (PFM) practices. A honey plant was established to support beekeeping.



FKF Former Chair Karanja Ngoroge addresses students at Amani Garden

This community is well represented on the FKF Board because of the significant role the forest plays in their livelihood.

Karura staff benefit from training courses organised from time to time such as first aid, CPR and firefighting, as well as drill practice and other paramilitary training organised by the KFS ranger corps for the FKF Scouts.

RESULTS

- ✓ Steady employment for local communities
- ✓ Improved livelihood through income-generating activities
- ✓ New skills for community members
- ✓ A constituency dedicated to long-term protection of the forest
- ✓ Practical experience with PFM



FKF Karura Forest Scouts being put through their paces by KFS officers

SUSTAINABILITY

The internationally recognised success of Karura mandates a responsibility for FKF and KFS to continue protecting and enhancing the forest for the enjoyment of the public. This responsibility in turn implies a need for the forest to be financially self-sufficient and sustainable in the pursuit of its mission. Thus, in support of proper planning, budgeting and implementation of the forest workplan, steady and predictable revenue streams have been put in place.

The bulk of the income generated by Karura is managed by the KFS-FKF Joint Management Committee and derives from: entrance fees including annual passes, guiding fees and groups; parking fees; events; picnic fees; and photoshoots.

Income for the CFA comes from: membership fees, map sales, bicycle rental, River Café commission, and donations.

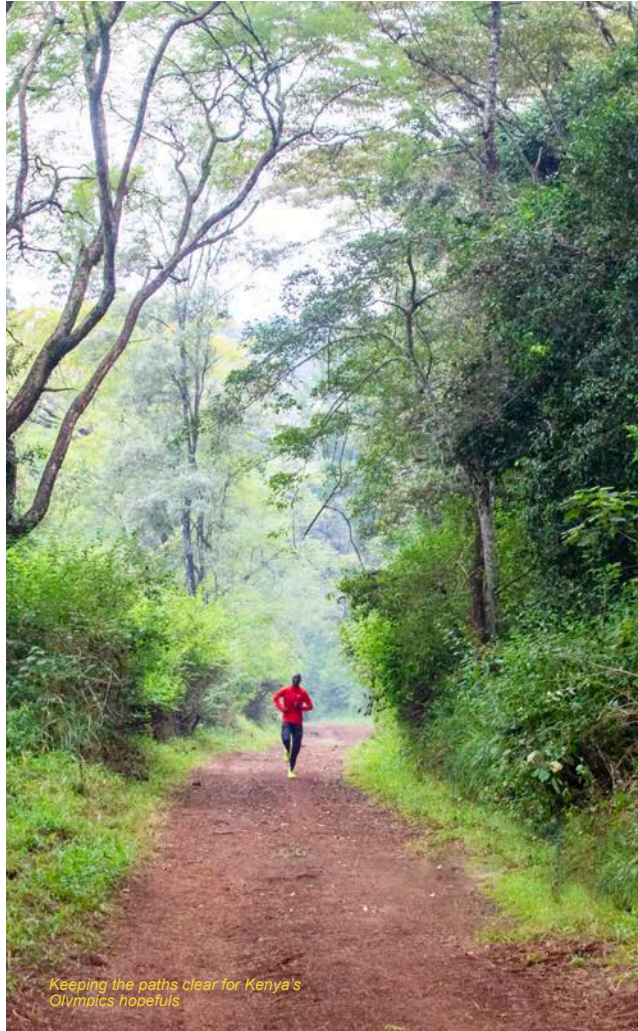
An integrated digital entrance fee collection system and security camera network have been installed at all the gates to streamline and secure revenue collection and security operations.



RESULTS

- ✓ Well-designed joint management system
- ✓ Good example of participatory forest management (PFM)
- ✓ Secure revenue streams
- ✓ A future for Karura unimaginable in 2009
- ✓ A People's Forest resonating with the vision of Prof. Wangari Maathai

CHALLENGES



Keeping the paths clear for Kenya's
Olympics hopefuls

It hasn't been all smooth sailing during the last 10 years.

The most significant biological threats to the forest are invasive species, mainly *Lantana camara* and Mauritius thorn, which can literally choke the forest to death. While all the infested parts of the indigenous forest have now been cleared, a number of plantation stands still have many invasives and provide a source of re-infestation. The current blanket logging ban has temporarily thwarted the plan to fell old and degraded exotic blocks to be replaced with indigenous species. Constant ground surveillance is required to keep the situation under control. On the plus side, the struggle against invasives provides jobs for the community.

The other existential threat to the forest is land grabbing, be it for real estate or pressure for high-impact tourism and other commercial enterprises. Most of the illegally awarded title deeds for plots in the forest were revoked in 2017, and a recent landmark judgement in an important case involving Karura forest land ruled in favour of the forest. That said, the threat of land-grabbing is still as strong as the human greed behind it, and vigilance remains the order of the day.



Part of the FKF-KES team jointly
managing Karura Forest Reserve

LOOKING AHEAD

As the FKF-KFS partnership is celebrating its 10th anniversary, Karura is in a much better state than when FKF became its champion in 2009 following in Wangari Maathai's footsteps. The financial situation is sound and stable. The forest's 30,000-plus visitors a month are by all accounts satisfied. The forest is in great shape. FKF is determined to continue to soldier on with the KFS, fulfilling its CFA mandate, while remaining alert to present and potential threats.

The lodestar guiding the partners in all their endeavours in the forest is the strategic management plan agreed between KFS and FKF every five years in consultation with all stakeholders. The first plan stressed Infrastructure and Security; the second, Education and Research. All the goals and activities mentioned in both plans were achieved if not exceeded. The third plan to start in 2020 will be geared towards Outreach and Inclusiveness. Of course, managing infrastructure, maintenance, security and safety, controlling the ever-growing number of visitors and forest conservation will always remain the mainstay of the Karura Forest workplan.

Given its highly coveted location, if Karura is to stay on the map, it will have to remain in the limelight as a flagship recreational forest. It is important that the Karura success story be heard loud and clear everywhere for the highly efficient CFA business model it represents. So many other primarily recreational forests could follow the Karura example, and FKF is committed to help them achieve what only a decade ago seemed impossible.

Another goal for Karura will be to pursue with vigour its mission to enhance forest awareness as widely as possible. This means reaching out to people of all walks of life, all generations, using resources now available and Karura itself as a platform to promote forest conservation, ecosystem protection, landscape restoration and the constitutional right to a clean environment for all.

May Karura remain the People's Forest, forever.



FACTS & FIGURES

FRIENDS OF KARURA FOREST

- ✓ Registered October 2009
- ✓ 818 Members (of which 107 Life)
- ✓ 7 neighbourhood associations &
- ✓ 8 community user groups represented
- ✓ 85 people employed
- ✓ 15,000 person days of work per year
- ✓ 100 secondary school bursaries awarded
- ✓ > 40 Kenyan corporate CSR donors

KARURA FOREST RESERVE

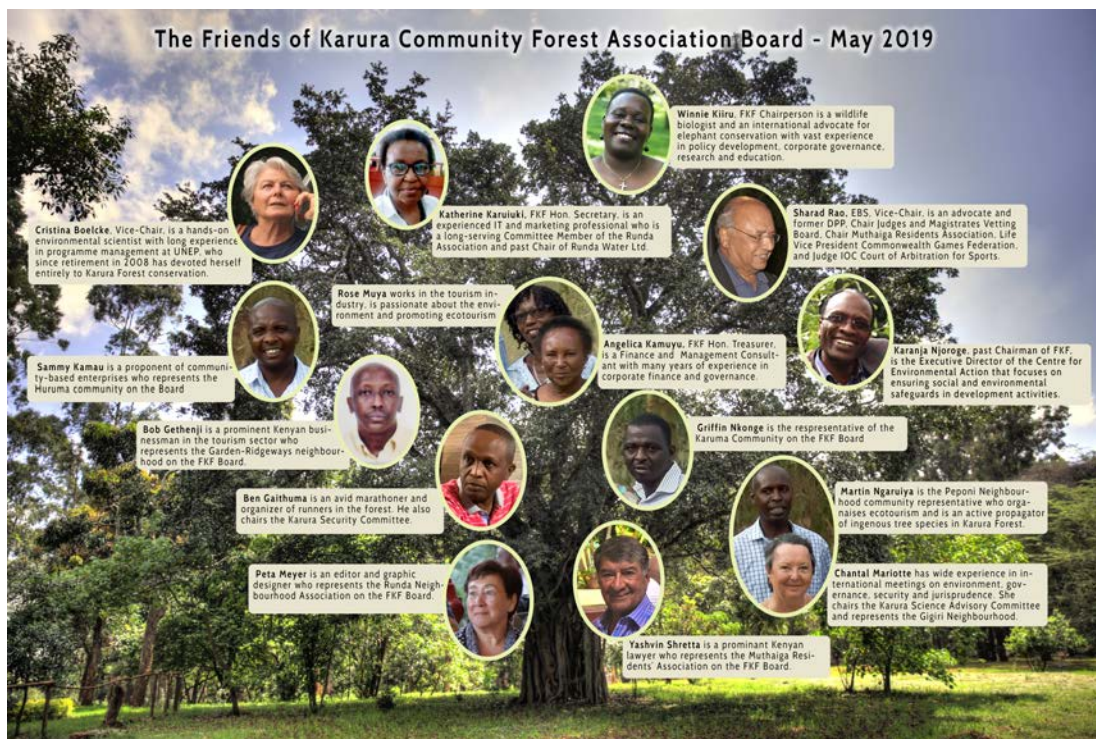
- ✓ Gazetted 1932
- ✓ 1,041 ha (2,500 acres)
- ✓ 50 km of marked, managed trails
- ✓ 5, 10 & 15 km colour-coded jogging trails
- ✓ 4 entrance gates with amenities
- ✓ > 80,000 trees planted
- ✓ 220 ha of restored indigenous cover
- ✓ 22 mammal species populations recovering
- ✓ 160 re-introduced guereza colobus monkeys

FOREST VISITS

- ✓ > 2 million visits since 2009
- ✓ > 30,000 visits a month
- ✓ 70% of visitors Kenya citizens
- ✓ TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2014-19
- ✓ No. 2 of 100 places to visit in Nairobi

“...a park that rivals New York’s Central Park, London’s Hyde Park, or Sydney’s botanic gardens.”

- Richard Quest, CNN



Support the work of the Friends of Karura Forest by renewing your membership or becoming a new member. Your membership helps to protect the forest and restore it to its natural state, for all of us to enjoy and for the benefit of future generations.

Membership starts at just KES 1,500 a year. As a member, you are also eligible to apply for the Annual Pass, an exclusive benefit of membership that entitles you to free entrance to the forest for one whole year.

Get more details on our website, www.friendsofkarura.org.

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Friends of Karura Forest, Nairobi, October 2019

*Back Cover: When invasive
species are cleared away,
Karura's indigenous trees reach
for the sky*



If we cannot sustain the environment, we cannot sustain ourselves.

Wangari Maathai

