



KENYA MUSEUM SOCIETY

TRACKER

June 2020



What is the name of the item in the picture?

Who uses the item?

How is the item used?

See pages 5 and 10

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KMS Upcoming Events

Feb – Dec 2020

By participating in KMS events, you are helping support projects of the National Museums of Kenya.

Evening Talk – June 20th MCC	Exploring the history of ancient African Postponed Jewellery By Dr. Donna Pido Muthaiga Country Club, 7pm
Evening Talk – Wed 19 August	The Demand for Kenya's Ivory in Asia: Past & Present By Lucy Vigne Tamambo Karen Blixen Coffee Garden, 7pm
Evening Talk – Sat 22 August	The Demand for Kenya's Ivory in Asia: Past & Present By Lucy Vigne Muthaiga Country Club, 7 pm
Evening Talk – Sat 19thSept. @ MCC	TO BE FILLED
Evening Talk – Sat 10th or 17th Oct @ MCC	TO BE FILLED
Art Show 30th Oct – 1st Nov @ NMK	Annual Affordable Art Show See p 3
Evening Talk – Sat 14th or 21st Nov @MCC	TO BE FILLED

KMS and NMK and the Coronavirus

The KMS office and the shop are physically closed for the duration, in other words until further notice, all depending on the virus and the government's guidance and/or directions. But office staff are still working. Email: info@kenyamuseumsociety.org. And goods can be purchased from the shop – see p. ?? Stay connected with KMS through Facebook ([@MuseumK](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumK)) Twitter ([@MuseumSociety](https://twitter.com/MuseumSociety)) and Instagram (museumssociety)

KMS Council and Staff wish you all well – stay safe, stay well.

Staff of the Museum have continued to work during the pandemic. Some have been working on refurbishment of some aspects of the Nairobi Museum itself, or other projects, including Hyrax Hill (more on that in a future issue).

Research and administrative staff have been largely working remotely but are now in the office. They are hopeful the Museum itself will re-open soon – with suitable precautions.

Looking further ahead (hopefully!):



Kenya Museum Society

Presents

**THE DEMAND FOR KENYA'S IVORY IN ASIA
PAST AND PRESENT**

Lucy Vigne

Ivory Trade Researcher

WEDNESDAY, 19 August 2020

TAMAMBO KAREN BLIXEN COFFEE GARDEN

Welcome drink 6.30 pm, Talk 7.00 pm

Tickets and Reservations:

Ksh 1,500 Talk and drink

Ksh 3,500 Talk, drink and dinner

Payment Options:

- M-PESA Paybill no: 400800, Ac/No:

6571570019

- Cash



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WWW.KENYAMUSEUMSOCIETY.ORG

➤ Lucy Vigne will be speaking on the same topic at another KMS Event:
Muthaiga Country Club, August 22 7 p.m.

Booking details are as for the Tamambo event.

The Affordable Art Show

It is that time of year when the Art Show process begins. In fact it has begun. The date is October 30th (the Friday night when we have the opening party at which many sales also take place) until Sunday November 1st. The letter to artists inviting them to submit their works of 2020 has already gone out.

The slightly tentative note about this will, however, surely come as no surprise. The government has said it expects the peak of the COVID-19 cases to come in September or even October.

So how do we organise a virus-free, virus-resistant AAS? Last year nearly 500 people attended the Friday night bash. They were fairly crammed into the space, and were barely a few inches apart, let alone two metres. And they got a drink as part of their admission, and were served with snacks – not compatible with masks.



KMS Council is still wrestling with the problems: how to organise submissions by some hundreds of artists (600 last year) standing at an appropriate social distance from each other? How to collaborate in having the paintings etc. – handing up the tools and then the painting - from a distance of 2 metres (see the photos from last year's Art Show)? And returning the unsold works of art raises the same problem – in the past we have tried to get them all back to the artists in one afternoon!

We have not solved these problems yet. But meanwhile we had to start the AAS ball rolling, and hope that it will not have to be stopped abruptly at some stage.



@ KMS Shop



New arrivals at the KMS Gift Shop!! #Kids collection

Are you interested in keeping your kids happy and engaged as they gain knowledge in quarantine?

KMS Bookshop has new and interesting titles in stock!

For your convenience, we will deliver your book purchase to your home.

1. When Bat was a Bird –Ksh 1,650

This is a very interesting book whereby after reading book the children will find out exactly why monkeys fear leopards, why the Reed Warbler babbles, how Jabulani outwit the Lion not forgetting when Bat was a Bird. The book features twenty four fresh and exciting stories with memorable creatures both real and magical. Information boxes provide supporting information about the people, animals, reptiles, insects and the birds of Africa. The readers will be able to enjoy over 90 full-colour illustrations that bring the wealth and beauty of African wildlife alive.

2. When Hippo was Hairy-Ksh 1,650

The book features 36 fascinating animal stories from African mythology. It has beautiful full colour illustrations of every animal and with black and white illustrations in most stories plus a map of Africa locating animal habitats. The children will be able to find out what really happened for Hippo to become hairy and other tales from Africa

3. The cheetah who ran too fast- Ksh 1,000

The book is a lively and beautifully illustrated collection of stories straight out of the African bush. These tales for children, written in verse, should be read out loud so that parents and children alike can enjoy their suspense, thrills and laughs. As the world gets

busier, parents need to create opportunities to build strong relationships with their children and share family values in a creative way. The memorable characters in these eight stories will delight and entertain children, while teaching them important and valuable lessons

Place your orders today and enjoy a 5% discount

Payment

M-PESA Paybill, Business No: 400800, Account: 6571570019

Contacts 0713 354 926 or info@kenyamuseumsociety.org

Deliveries are made within 2 days after an order is placed (Reasonable delivery fee applies)

Word search

C	U	L	T	U	R	A	L	H
D	O	O	W	F	A	C	T	E
T	A	I	F	B	I	C	S	R
U	S	E	F	D	A	M	E	I
R	D	G	A	F	U	B	R	T
K	P	M	I	E	U	Y	D	A
A	O	T	S	I	G	R	A	G
N	R	U	R	D	S	M	E	E
A	M	C	H	A	I	R	H	S

This is perhaps for our younger members.

This game will enable you to answer the questions under our cover photo, namely:

- 1. What is the name of the item in the picture?
- 2. Who uses the item?
- 3. How is the item used?

For the background see p. 10; for a hint as to the words, see p. 7; and if you had difficulty locating the words in the grid, see page 26.

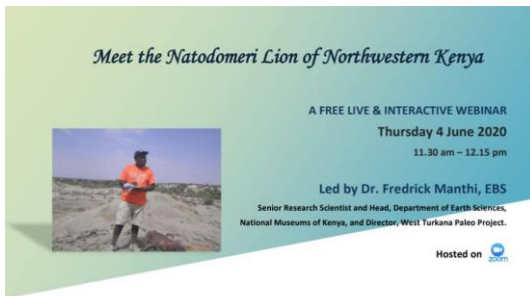
NOTE: words may appear in any direction.

COVID – 19 NMK and KMS activities online

The National Museums of Kenya and the Kenya Museum Society (separately or in collaboration) have been innovating in terms of reaching out online.

Museumscapes

This of it as a “scape” in the sense of a suffix “used to form nouns referring to a wide view of a place, often one represented in a picture as in landscape, seascape and cityscape”, OR as an escape from the confines of life under COVID – 19. Either way, they may broaden your horizons.



Here is an account of the first Museumscape:



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Dr Frederick Manthi on the Lion of Natodomeri*

On June 4th a group of people gathered (virtually of course) for the first event in a new venture of KMS – presentations via Zoom by researchers from NMK, and others. The first was led by Dr. Fredrick Manthi, Senior Research Scientist and Head of the Department of Earth Sciences.

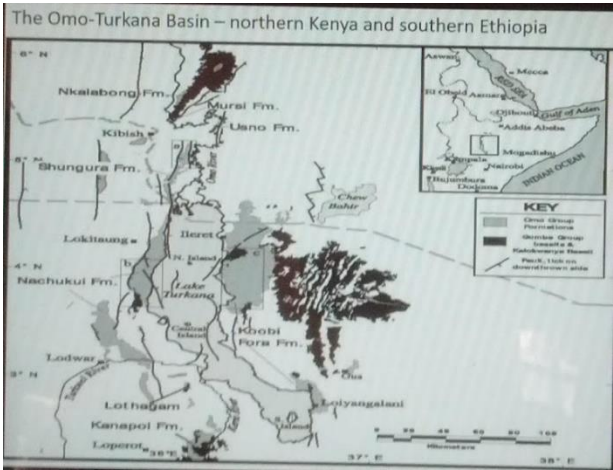
Despite a few techno-hitches 17 people plus Dr Manthi were logged on and tuned in. His theme was the Lion of Natodomeri.

* From notes by the *Tracker* editor, photos off computer screen by my not very technologically advanced mobile phone.

Before getting to the remarkable heart of his talk, Dr Manthi filled us in on the background. He explained that for a long time all research on palaeontology was the preserve of Europeans. But now research by Africans, on Africa for Africans, has come of age. Kenya has really been prominent in learning about the biological cultural history of our species. And the National Museums of Kenya play a major role. He

added that KMS has been a valued contributor.

The Great Rift Valley has been the main focus of research, notably the Omo-Turkana Basin (where Dr Manthi works), Lake Baringo Basin and the Olorgesailie Basin not so far from Nairobi. That huge valley stretches from the Red Sea to Mozambique.



Why has the Rift Valley been such a fruitful source of interesting material?

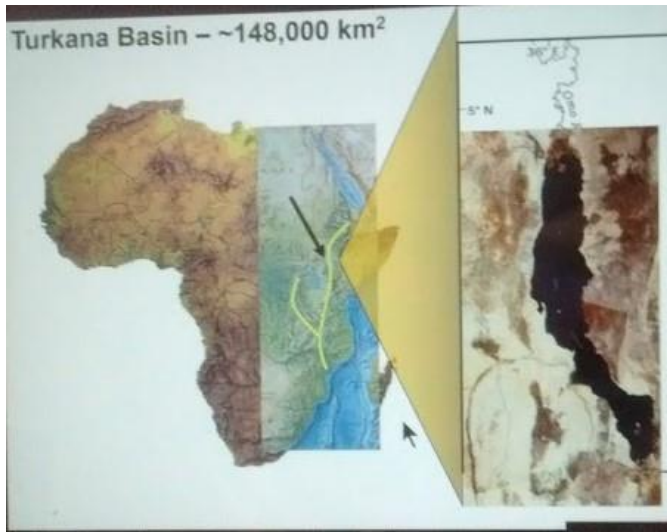
The story goes back to 25 million years ago when the Rift Valley began to form. There were lakes in the valley before the current ones. They contributed to an environment conducive to the development of many forms of life.

The ancient Omo River was very important. The remains of animals that died were washed to various places, and there was a wonderful environment for fossil formation. For fossils to form the bones have to be buried immediately so that they are not damaged by scavengers.

[Continued on next page]

The Word search words – see p. 5

HEADREST	NOMADIC
HERITAGE	CULTURAL
ARTIFACT	MUSEUM
CHAIR	TURKANA
COIFFURES	WOOD



The same process took place in Baringo.

Dr. Manthi and other researchers have been looking for the relics of our ancestors and have been finding the first signs of stone tools. Their result will soon be published

Places like Olorgesailie have yielded many tools that contribute to a history of technological

development from the earliest time.

The Lion

In 2013 Dr Manti was working north of Lodwar. He was introduced by Frank Brown from the University of Utah to the Kibish Formation – best known in Ethiopia [where homosapiens remains now dated to about 195,000 years ago have been found], but extending into Kenya.

In 2015 he went with a team and spent four days there. They found 156 fossils, including the Big Lion. Dr Manthi should have been there now, but has been confined to Nairobi due to the COVID virus. He hopes they will be able to go back next year and continue their excavations.

The lion is the biggest ever described. It is slightly larger than a Russian specimen from about 200,000 years ago.

The Natodomeri lion is the same genus and species as the modern lion, but a very much bigger sub-species. In fact, about 200,000 years ago many species were mega-fauna, much larger than their modern descendants. Giant elephants, antelopes and hippos have been found. The lion had great prey!

From that area the last African relics of what is now the exclusively Asian elephant were found. And early pigs also appeared here.

The researchers are still making discoveries. Before long they should be able to publish very interesting results including about our human ancestors.



Following up on this topic: Kathy

Vaughan, of the KMS Council, who is organising this Museumscape series, has put together some additional material on this first topic. There is also a link to a recording of the Lion of Natodomeri event:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16JO5HxJO8sv-QpZ022ov6XXSuw3pq1FvRWqm2kCsFGA/edit>

Online Lecture Series:

In order to keep our members well-informed, KMS has partnered with Zarek Cockar Safaris to host a series of webinar lectures on Natural History. Although these lectures are primarily aimed at safari guides, we believe our members will benefit too and are welcomed to join

Number 2 by Zarek Cockar, “Gold Level” guide and a board member of the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (KPSGA) was held on June 15th.

Taxonomy and Scientific Names for Guides: This was designed to help guides learn how a basic understanding of taxonomy and scientific names can help enrich their guiding abilities. Other participants will benefit from this lecture as well.

The cost was: KMS members Kshs 750/- (included a donation to Kenya Museum Society); FREE for paid-up KPSGA members (you can make a donation to KMS)

➤ Watch for future events.

NMK Virtual Learning Sessions.

The National Museums of Kenya announced in May: “through our Education Section, is proud to introduce the first Virtual Museum learning session this Saturday 16th May 2020, from 10am on zoom. Targeting children between 5-12 years, this session aims to introduce the young ones to our vast resources on insects. Kindly register your children by sending an email to nmkeduc@museums.or.ke and we’ll share the link for the activities.”

The second was on cultural heritage, and we are privileged to be able to include an account of that from a young KMS member:

By Keli Mullei (age 11)

Today, Saturday 23 March 2020 the Education Department held a zoom session to explore cultural heritage. We entered the session and were asked where we were from. There were about 15 to 20 on the calls.

The adults first gave a task to draw thinking about shapes and form. Then the people in charge showed us an object and we were asked what it was. We were told it was a Turkana headrest and we were told more about it.

Headrests were used in Turkana many years ago and are still in use to this day. Headrests were used as chairs and a place to rest your head so you do not ruin your hairstyle!

We closed the session with being given a challenge – to create our own headrest at home.

I like games so I decided to create a word search based on the session. You will have seen the questions and the word search puzzle itself on page 5. There is a list of the hidden words on p. 7.

The answers are on page 26



Nostalgia section: a past trip (from March/April 2009 *Tracker*)

To mark its 50th anniversary, KMS is revisiting (as it were) its past activities. The oldest Tracker the office was able to produce is from April/May 2009. So I looked at this and the June issue (just eleven years ago) for interesting reminders. -ed.

From April/May: “Kenya Museum Society Trip to Tsavo East 20 – 22 February 2009”

By Adine
Storer

This
magnificent
beast (photo
by Adine
Storer) was
on the cover
of that issue



Not only was this my first trip to Tsavo East, this is my very first time in Kenya. I was very eager to see everything, as it would all be new to me.

After a bright and early start as we all met up at the National Museum, we immediately ran into dreadful traffic going south on the Mombasa Road. I come from Boston in the US, and thought I had seen all sorts of potholes, crazy driving and congested traffic. But just as I had never seen a wild elephant or a baobab tree, I had never been in this kind of Road Warrior situation: Dust billowing thick in the air revealing only at the last minute pot holes the size of a VW bug, traffic coming at us on both sides of the road, sometimes three side by side, huge looming trucks, wild matatus painted wild colors, even a giant flatbed truck with no cab at all – only the driver, wind-blown in his seat, racing toward Nairobi at a speed surely higher than 80kph! Luckily our driver, Joseph, was up to the challenge.

Finally we reached the paved road and it was relatively smooth sailing from then on. We saw lots of people in towns and in between on the road, selling fruit or charcoal. We saw donkeys, cows, and goats. When we finally caught a glimpse of some zebras I knew we must be getting near our destination.

After five and a half hours, we arrived at the Voi Wildlife Lodge. Greeted by waitresses bearing glasses of fruit juice in the vast “lobby,” I felt I had arrived at Fantasy Island: giant thatched buildings with lily ponds, palm trees, two swimming pools, a spa, two bars, with blue hills on one side and the park stretching out on the other. The board at the front desk listed the animals seen just that day at the lodge’s very own watering hole – elephants, giraffe, buffalo and various birds. I was eager to



go on the late afternoon game drive.

At the park gate we ran into a little Kenyan bureaucracy. I thought I’d seen badly organized, molasses slow offices in Boston – but as with the

Mombasa road, I was surprised yet again. I chalk it up to another interesting Kenyan experience to write home about.

Finally out on the Kanderi Swamp Circuit, we saw many wonderful animals: impalas, helmeted guinea fowl, superb starlings, waterbucks, yellow necked spur fowl, a red billed hornbill digging in the dirt, gerenuks, a family of baboons, and three groups of elephants all at a distance but with babies which was good to see.

We were told that the elephants of Tsavo East are particularly leery of humans because of poaching. The elephants are also red because of the very red earth in the park. When we had almost completed our circuit, and long blue shadows stretched across the red dusty road, we came upon a group of vans parked on the roadside – LIONS! Two females were resting drowsily on a little hillock. They paid us no notice. To frame the picture perfectly, two secretary birds perched in a nearby tree and shook their wings out.

Sunday the 21st was the day we crossed the Galana River. Because of the height of the water and poachers and bandits in the lands north of the river, no one has crossed in over ten years. Narinder in particular was eager to get



across. Driving north from the park entrance, the landscape changed, and the soil turned more yellow than red, and we could see the Yatta plateau rising up ahead on the other side of a green belt that showed where the river was. A concrete causeway had been built to ease the crossing and with all this dry weather, it was completely above water. Crossing was a synch! Best of all, as we rolled along we saw a group of hippos submerged as much as they could manage in the low water.

Up on the plateau it was dry and dusty. We all got a good coat of red dust over our faces as we stood peering out of the top of the van. Along with trees decorated with weaverbird nests, the major feature of the landscape was enormous termite mounds. Most of the mounds were dome shaped, and unremarkable but for their size. Several mounds were more fantastic, shaped like castles with walls and turrets. One mound rose two to three meters straight up in a thin tower. We stopped for a picnic lunch in the combined shade of a tree and a termite mound. Animals we saw up in the plateau were elephants, giraffes, and zebras, as well as many birds. The sighting I enjoyed the most was a cheetah. Joseph stopped the van fast, and shut off the motor so as not to disturb the cat. We all got a good look. Unfortunately, once the cheetah was gone, the van wouldn't start! So we all got out and gave it a push and it started right away - much easier than trying to push a car out of an icy snow bank in Boston!

After coming back down the plateau to cross the river at a different location, we were treated to the sight of three different elephant families bathing in the river. One group had an enormous male who was easily twice the size of the largest female in his group. There were also tiny babies who seemed keen to get in the water despite the danger of crocodiles. The larger member of the family would stand in a protective circle around them and they splashed and rolled.

Before heading back to Nairobi on Monday the 22nd, we got one last drive through the park. After seeing some buffalo, and zebras with foals, we went to Mudanda Rock – an old lava rock that looks like strips of beef laid out to dry in the sun. From the rock we got a great view of a watering hole and watched some lesser kudu and warthogs. The mud surrounding the hole also showed the long dragging tracks of elephants.

Bidding Tsavo East goodbye, we headed north on the Mombasa road to Nairobi. We took advantage of the hospitality at the Sikh temple in Makindu to break up the long trip. The clean, cool and shady gardens and building were a delight after the hot dusty road. I've never been in a Sikh temple in my life, so it was another first. I carefully covered my head with a scarf as we went in to eat, not knowing what to expect. Delicious and familiar smells welcomed me in. Perhaps Boston is not so far from Kenya as I thought. The curries, rice, masala tea, and pudding were just like my favorite vegetarian dishes at our local Indian restaurant in Boston.



Cheers to Narinder for organizing yet another marvelous KMS trip. I relished all the new experiences, and am delighted to have found similarities between two places that once seemed so far apart and now feel a lot closer: Boston and Kenya.

Marich Pass- Easter Weekend

The museum exhibits information on pre-colonial times and Kenya's struggle for independence as well as the history and artifacts of the Pokot People. We had a picnic lunch on the lawns of the museum before continuing on to Marich Pass. The last forty kilometres of "road" to Marich pass is very bad and made up of pieces of tar linked by pot-holes. It took us about one hour forty minutes to negotiate this stretch—it was a pleasure to get onto the short sand road to the Field Studies Centre at Marich Pass where we would spend the next three nights.

The Field Studies Centre is situated in a forest clearing on the banks of the Moruny River. Facilities are quite basic with only a few rooms having en-suite facilities, the rest have shared ablutions. There is no hot water but the water is from a well and is quite drinkable. There is electricity in the main building for a few hours each night. We took a walk up the river before dinner and saw some local people fishing and panning for gold. The walk enabled us to stretch our legs after the day's drive.

Saturday saw an early start to go to the market at Lomut. On the way back we stopped at the Wei Wei irrigation project where we were able to rest our feet in the cold river before lunch under the trees. From there we drove down a sand road to a wetlands area about 15kms from Sigor hoping to see crocodiles.

The area is very picturesque but the water level was quite low and the local community had started farming the area so it seems that the crocodiles had moved on. We had fun crossing the swing bridge across the river, while trying not to bounce the bridge too much. We arrived back at camp just before dark, in time for a scrumptious dinner of grilled lamb and choma.



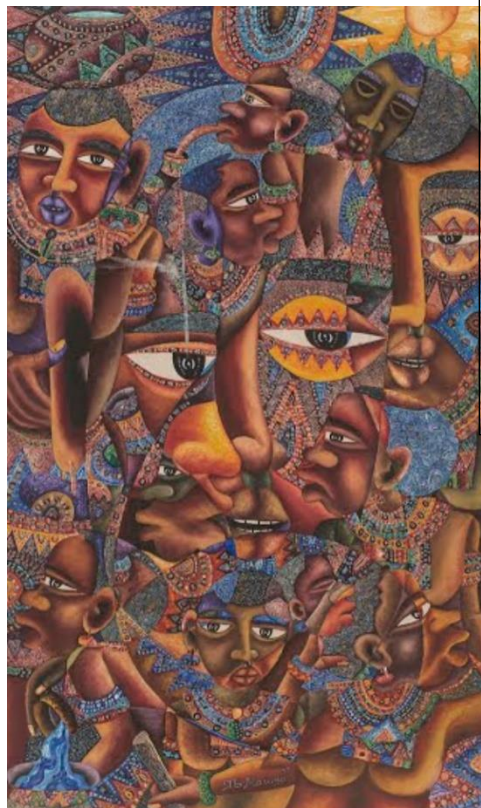
Sunday took us north through the Nasalot Nature Reserve, once renowned for its abundant wild life, to the Turkwell Gorge, site of the Turkwell Hydroelectric plant. After almost interminable delays due to "security" despite being expected, we were eventually allowed to go up the plant management centre. We were given a run-down on the operation of the plant and taken up to the dam wall and into the generating room some four hundred meters into the hillside. The Turkwell dam was completed in 1993 and the Hydroelectric plant is capable of generating approx. 15% of Kenya's electricity requirements but, because of the low water level in the dam, only one turbine is used at a time. After the tour we retired to the country club for lunch. The club was quite crowded because of the soccer match on the TV that afternoon. We planned an early return to camp to prepare for a daybreak start back to Nairobi the next morning.

After an early breakfast we started back to Nairobi arriving at the Nairobi museum at around four in the afternoon.

A great trip was had by all. It was an opportunity to see places not normally visited and to meet, make friends and travel with interesting people all keen on undertaking adventures.

A Very Big Thank You to Narinder for all the arrangements made to make this memorable trip possible.

You will have received this message from the KMS office by email:



Are you missing the chance to visit museums? Thanks to Google Arts & Culture you can take a virtual tour of selected museums around the world including Nairobi Museum galleries, Kenya's 7 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Shujaa Stories and more....
Enjoy!

Tour

Link: <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-museums-of-kenya>

#KnowYourMuseums

#OurMuseumsOurHeritage

#VirtualTours

Articles

Charming Snakes by Dr. Valerie Jeffries, FLS*

(photos by the author and Dr Geoffrey Kephah).

A seminar on "Reptiles and Snakebite" was held at the Kenya Snakebite Research and Intervention Centre (KSRIC) near Nairobi on March 11th 2020, organised by Mrs Margaret Cooper and of course by Professor



* Dr Valerie Jeffries completed her genetics PhD at Leeds University and worked in aquaculture, then education including for the Open University, UK. Study of evolution remains her principal interest, not least of the Haplochromin Cichid fish in Lake Victoria.

John Cooper, together with Dr. Atunga Nyachieo, (Chief of Research IPR) for the benefit of Kenyan vets, wildlife park managers, museum curators, students, and anyone interested in snakes. The director of IPR, Dr Hastings Ozwara, welcomed participants to the seminar, attended the lectures, and closed the proceedings.



1 Valerie and others viewing snakes with Geoffrey Kephah

The new IPR Conference Hall was crowded, showing that snakes are an up-and-coming sector of animal husbandry. Some of the final year veterinary students will have been inspired to join the “Snake Charmers”, who volunteer and learn at KSRIC with mentor Dr Jessicah Murere, who is also responsible for the health and welfare of the reptiles in the Nairobi Snake Park, National Museums of

Kenya (NMK). This work requires much knowledge and experience, as reptiles indicate stress and ill-health less obviously than mammals.

Before the formal presentations started, Margaret Cooper announced that she and her husband had just returned from Baringo, where they met their old friend Jonathan Leakey, now in his 80th year. Jonathan is the eldest son of Dr Louis (L S B) Leakey, the founder of the Institute of Primate Research (IPR) and was the first curator of the Nairobi Snake Park. Jonathan had sent good wishes to the seminar and expressed his pleasure that so many young Kenyans were now interested in reptiles. Jonathan Leakey had been interviewed by the Coopers and a feature about him, including a video, will appear as a separate item on the FFON website*.

Are you doubting whether your first response to finding a snake on the path would be “Does it feel unwell?” You are not alone. Local communities naturally have a primary interest in their own welfare and no sympathy for snakes.

* <https://thefrightenedfaceofnature.com/tag/kenya/>.

But KSRIC biochemical research has a medical purpose, and the scientists have a close relationship with the nearest hospital so that research and clinical knowledge can interact. It saves human lives. Motorbike ambulances can send an expert to the victim of a bite, bringing injectable antiserum as soon as possible. Antiserum is what your own blood produces when bitten, but often too slowly to save you.

Better to have a store of injectable antiserum purified from the blood of horses given a mild dose of the same venom. KSRIC plans their own antiserum production unit, including stables, for antiserum tailor-made to the bites of Kenyan snakes, maybe using more economical donkeys or camels instead of horses. And for the venom production, a supply of healthy happy deadly donor snakes is essential, so yes, the “Snake Charmers” must learn to tell how a snake is feeling!



3 Geoffrey Kephah at work with his snakes

black mamba which instantly reared when Geoffrey tapped his pen on the cage, showing its wide gaping black mouth.

2 Geoffrey Kephah and his assistant Fred Angole at work with the snakes

Here we come to the highlight of the Seminar: a tour of the Herpetarium by Mr Geoffrey Kephah. There are snake-restraining implements all along the corridor walls, protective clothing, alarm buttons, health and safety equipment of all kinds. The snake room is temperature- and light-controlled, with shelves of labelled plastic box cages. Each cage contains a water dish and an upturned cut-out bowl for a bedroom, and one small venomous snake. Geoffrey explained the importance of keeping the snakes content and showing their natural behaviour; for example, the green-scaled



Everyday staff, always working in pairs, check each snake's weight, skin condition, any evidence of parasites or agitation, and what could be described as degree of bagginess. Their food is mice, frozen then thawed, exactly enough to preserve freshness while not chilling their sensitive insides. All in the interests of a good yield of clean venom, which is in the interests of treatment, especially for rural people, who suffer most bites. To cope with venomous snakes as enemies you must treat them as friends, and respect all their legal rights as captive animals, as Mrs Margaret Cooper (UK/Europe and East Africa) reminded us. After 'milking' for venom, retired snakes are released to



4 John E Cooper, Geoffrey Kephah and Fred Angole at entrance to the Unit, in the beautiful Ololua Forest

appropriate habitat guided by Kenyan wildlife professionals, for conservation.

There were further presentations, including by Dr Jessicah Murere and Mrs Margaret Njeri (NMK, Kenya), Dr Jaanvi Patel (veterinary practitioner, UK), and Professor John E. Cooper (UK/Europe and East Africa).

Even before the welcome refreshments, the seminar participants were feeling more fondly towards our scaly brethren. So thanks to Professor and Mrs Cooper for another terrific day of instruction and entertainment, as the Coopers regularly provide in East Africa, Britain, and elsewhere.



5 John E Cooper chairing the formal presentations



6 The group tours the unit



9 Geoffrey Kephah discusses the work of the Unit

10 Dr Valerie, Dr Jessica and others listen attentively as Geoffrey Kephah explains how snakes should be kept – securely, but with attention to their welfare

Thanks particularly to Dr George Omondi, Head of KSRIC (<https://ksric-asrg.org/>) which is evidently becoming a major branch of the Institute of Primate Research (<http://primateresearch.org/>), located in the attractive and environmentally-important Ololua Forest, Karen, on the outskirts of Nairobi.

KSRIC is evidently becoming a major branch of the Institute of Primate Research, located in the attractive and environmentally-important Ololua Forest, Karen, on the outskirts of Nairobi. Neurotoxic snake venom is useful in neurobiology at IPR, even in endometriosis research. Partnership is advancing medical progress, all because some Kenyan vets actually do know how a snake is feeling.

8 Dr Jessica Murere, the “Snake Charmer”



TonyWild's MITigation Project

Article and photos by Anthony Ochieng

The earth is about 4.5 billion years old with a current population of about 7.5 billion people. This high number is always increasing. The earth's resource base is made up of different natural resources which do not increase with the increase in demand as a result of high population. This has rendered most of the earth's resources vulnerable to degradation through over exploitation to satisfy human needs.

As the world's populations grow exponentially, resource depletion occurs rapidly, leading to specific environmental concerns such as global warming, deforestation and decreasing biodiversity. Populations in developed countries trend toward using substantially more resources, while populations in developing countries feel the impacts on environmental biodiversity among other environmental challenges.

The result of this depletion is deforestation and loss of biodiversity as humans strip the Earth of resources to accommodate rising population numbers. Population growth also results in increased greenhouse gases, mostly from CO2 emissions.

With the scientific projections of what awaits humanity and other ecosystem components in the rise of environmental degradation, many have been inspired to take action in their small little ways which cumulatively bring a positive impact in environmental conservation and restoring of resource integrity. This has led to the rise of different nature based organizations, government agencies, private sector among other economic key players which focuses on initiatives to combat environmental challenges with the united nation environment program being at the helm of prompting wise use of environment.

TonyWild is an organization that visualizes protection of wildlife and nature by partnering with different existing initiatives to drive the conservation agenda by educating people on sustainable development with more emphasis on photography, film and science. TonyWild is a photo-led platform for sharing stories that enable relevant knowledge sharing of everything nature and wildlife. It envisions a generation that will



influence sustainable natural resource management through photography, film and science.

Among other programmes implemented by the organization is the MITigation project with the overall goal of restoring Biodiversity through tree planting.

The MITigation project is a start-up project that focuses on addressing how ‘negative environmental impacts’ may be avoided through ways like re-siting projects to more sustainable locations. If the relocation is not feasible, science-strong measures should be developed to reduce negative impact on the environment.

‘Miti’ is a Swahili word that means trees. Environmental ‘Mitigation’ is the process of addressing impacts on the environment caused by human action — notably those resulting from highway, energy, water, and other infrastructure projects. Trees contribute to the environment by providing oxygen, improving air quality, climate amelioration, conserving water, preserving soil, and supporting wildlife biodiversity.

The project is implemented in different schools in the country, targeting young minds - who we believe are the future leaders - to inspire them to make better decisions with a sustainable development mind-set. It nurtures young students into proactive environmental conservation and creating a network of young people who are conscious about the environment.

The main activity carried out through Mitigation is Restoration Cafés where we nurture young restoration supporting landscape restoration. We also carry out restoration programmes where we support restoration of development infrastructure sites by growing the right tree species

To encompass the economic pillar of sustainable development, through mitigation projects we promote restoration efforts that support communities’ livelihoods by engagement in sustainable nature based enterprises.

In restoration cafés, we involve young learners through experiential learning process that is backed with actions whereby we teach the importance of trees and wildlife in connection to restoration of biodiversity and put the teaching into practice. The students are always key as they grow and nurture the trees for four years where each adopted tree will have grown and requires minimal

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attention. Through this, the students are able to connect the class work to real world problems and the commitment to bring change by taking actions as well as change their behaviour in a positive way towards the environment.

Nature based enterprises in the Mitigation project involve giving environmental resources economic value and explain need to protect a resource as a source of livelihood to people. This is by developing ideas that can bring money to communities as they engage in conservation initiatives like establishing commercial tree nurseries, and making of beads.



In conclusion, the mitigation project is vital now at the time when the world is coming up with sustainable solutions to ever increasing environmental issues like climate change. Imagine supporting more than 84 schools in a 4 year project to grow trees to combat climate change. We create a pool of young minds who will in the future decision makers and who will centralize conservation

of natural resources at the core of development to achieve sustainability.

Environmental challenges are interconnected and requires synergies and partnership among organizations a tool that we employ in our project to bring all stakeholders together to support our conservation initiatives.

Birding Escapades during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Healthier Environment

by John Wanyoike (birder/guide at the Museum)

The Kenyan bird biodiversity of over 1000 species has really helped me to appreciate the environment. My birding excitement is all year-round as I'm very lucky to be surrounded by birds. With their sweet songs they wake me up each morning, bring me joy and peace of mind. Birds have beautiful feathers mostly put on when breeding seasons as we all enjoy heavy rainfall. The sound of bird song and rustling leaves lead me to take a deep sip of fresh air as I look for the birds



Malachite sunbird

Few things pull me out of a poor mood like the sudden appearance of a bluebird in my backyard - the Marico sunbird's blue against a green acacia tree. I rush to grab my binoculars to get a closer look, and as I turn the focus wheel, my cloudy, scattered mind refocuses too. The tiny Variable Sunbird's male beauty rewards me with a chest puff, a yellowish-colored breast popping against the brilliant purple bluish color. Birds help to calm the mind because when you're birding, you're almost in a different world as you

spot birds in all directions enjoying their colours, flight patterns and the way the feed the young ones. It's a skill of fine-tuned observation, which rewards the birder with a new perspective. It's an escape! All of the things that might be weighing you down in your daily life, you forget about them when you're birding.

When I take the binoculars looking through acacia trees surrounded by foliage, there are birds feeding all around, I can hear them tweeting as birds dash between bushes or hop up tree trunks. When looking at birds with a friend is always good to point out species



Bronze sunbird

directions so they can see and understand the joy of bird watching. Just being able to move around and pick out a particular sound or a particular thing to watch, is more fascinating than anything else. I actually have a lot of difficulty calming down in the city, with all the background noise and just everything that's going on. It's nice to come out and spend an hour or two in silence in this time of COVID-19 to watch birds in the city as you can record more than before, when there was a lot of noise. You use all of your senses

when doing it - keeping your ears and eyes open, listening to birds chirping - which contributes to concentration, restoration and stress recovery.

Research has found a positive association between the number of birds and trees in a neighborhood and residents' mental health. The need for more exposure to nature comes at a time of unprecedented biodiversity loss, with many threatened bird species and environments in the world. There are health benefits of birding in a group, since multiple studies show that social connections and friendships are key to a long, healthy life. Sharing a hobby that you are passionate about can connect you to others.

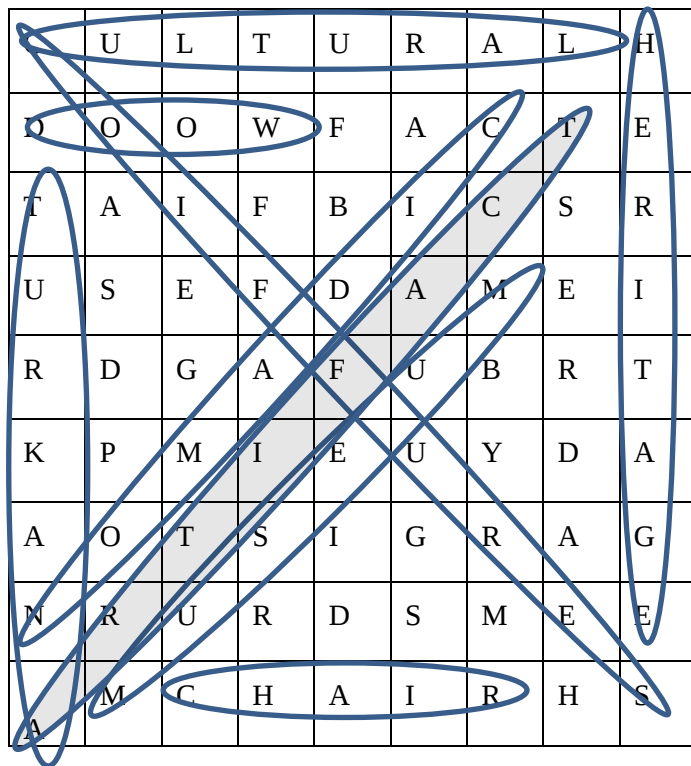
There's a huge birding community that awaits you. Personally, I follow a few people's blogs and Instagram to see what birds they are seeing in the world. I like that the world now is a global village, because this makes it easier to get to know people who live around me and around the world who I probably wouldn't have any other interaction with.

Grab some binoculars and look up, you don't have to go far to bird. Do it in your own backyard, in fact, backyard birders are the largest group of wildlife watchers in the world; millions do it that way to explore their city. I really would encourage anyone to just take a closer look at the trees in their surroundings. If people would develop an interest in birdwatching, they would become more concerned about the biodiversity (trees feed and shelter birds, birds feeds on mammals, reptiles, fish, insects and macro-invertebrates, and vice versa).

This is the generation that can save nature, care about the birds by starting to think, do they have food to eat and water to drink? A place to go? This takes your thoughts to the question: which parks do we have in the city and are we preserving the natural habitats where they breed?



The word search answers



* Not quite as neat as in the newspapers – and I had to shade in one answer to ensure that it stood out – ed.

About the National Museums of Kenya

(From *The Star*) The management of City Park is now under the Kenya Forest Service following a directive by the national government.

"The President has directed that henceforth the park will be put under the charge of Kenya Forest Service," Environment Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko said on Wednesday.

The park has for years been managed by the city government.

Tobiko said the KFS will be working in partnership with, among others, the National Environment Management Authority, which will be responsible for waste and air pollution management in the park.

The Kenya Forestry Research Institute (Kefri) will be in charge of research and development and together with the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) establish a module of the national botanical garden.

The NMK will also be responsible for the protection of national heritage and historical sites within City Park.

The World of Museums and Heritage

COVID – 19 items



No Touch, No Hands-On Learning, for Now, as Museums Try to Reopen (New York Times May 29)

On a normal day at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, giddy children line up to get a chance to be enclosed in a compact capsule capable of blasting off into space or to feel the stomach-turning lurch of operating a fighter jet.

Nowadays, just the idea of their children in such touchy-feely spaces is enough to evoke a good deal of cringing by parents: the joysticks, the VR goggles, the seatbelts — all shared by dozens of tourists who have passed through.

So in the second week of March, one day before the museum itself closed because of coronavirus, its leaders shut down one of the institution's most popular — and germ-

covered —attractions: flight simulators and virtual-reality machines that mimic the sensation of being a fighter pilot or astronaut.

Such is the dilemma these days for many museums across the country, particularly science and children’s museums, for whom the ethos for decades has been to encourage visitors not only to look, but to touch. All sorts of exhibits were installed and designed to provide people the opportunity to manipulate touch screens or press buttons to help them learn. Research has shown that hands-on activities, guided by a parent or museum staffer, are very effective teaching tools for children.

So visitors, for example, won’t be able to test their risk tolerance at one exhibit at the International Spy Museum in Washington, by inserting their hand into an opaque box without knowing what’s inside. (Spoiler alert: It may feel as though something is crawling on you.) “Clearly we’re not going to open an exhibit where you stick your hand in something,” said Jackie Eyl, the museum’s youth education director.

But visitors will be able activate touch screens and press buttons elsewhere, the museum said. It has bought disposable styluses that visitors can use in place of their hands, a low-cost solution that has caught on among museums of all kinds.

Touch screens, like these at the International Spy Museum, pose a problem for museums during the pandemic. Justin T. Gellerson for the *New York Times*

Other institutions are looking into antiviral coatings that can be applied to the screens or thinking up other outside-the-box solutions to avoid the need for touching. “If we can’t be hands-on, can we be feet-on?” Ms. Eyl asked.

The unfortunate news at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is that, for the near term anyway, it will have to close a very popular part of its permanent “Paleo Play Zone” exhibit, which opened in 2019. In normal times, children use miniature paleontological tools to find reproduced fossils in the sand of a “dig pit.” But it is impractical to clean the tools and the sand between visitors at the fake excavation site.

The New-York Historical Society invested heavily in touch-screen stations during an \$80 million renovation to its building that was completed in 2011, and they spent even more on that technology in 2015. Now, the museum will need to buy styluses for its

visitors, and is exploring the possibility of replacing touch navigation with voice activation.

Accessibility advocates are concerned that decades of progress in introducing multi-sensory features will be rolled back if museums turn into “no touch” environments, said Janice Majewski of the Institute for Human Centered Design, which consults for museums.

Museums are looking into voice- or gesture-based tools, too, so that visitors can have interactive experiences without touching anything. But it’s a difficult time to be spending on new technology amid the slumping revenues and layoffs that have come with the pandemic.

***Museum of Covid_19: the story of the crisis told through everyday objects* Oliver Wainwright Guardian May 4th**

There’s nothing like six weeks of house arrest to give you an elevated awareness of your surroundings. And it’s a phenomenon that hasn’t gone unnoticed at the nation’s grand repository of objects, the Victoria and Albert. “The pandemic has this weird way of bringing to the fore objects you would never have thought about,” says Brendan Cormier, senior design curator at the London museum. “Everything becomes heightened.”



With future exhibitions on hold and collecting in limbo, Cormier has turned his team’s attention to thinking about how the coronavirus has reframed the everyday, casting familiar objects in a very different light. Which is why the V&A is just about to launch *Pandemic Objects*, an online series examining how a range of

unremarkable items have become charged with new meaning and purpose.

“There are so many designed objects and inventions coming out of the pandemic,” says Cormier, citing all the hands-free door openers and 3D-printed face visors. “But it’s going to take time to work out which ones are actually useful.” He thinks there’s a danger that some much-touted innovations might end up being “vapourware” – flashy concepts that catch the attention of design blogs, but never come to fruition.

One of the first things to catch his attention was the wealth of hastily drawn homemade signs cropping up in shop windows around the world, explaining new delivery services and warning people to keep 2m apart. It seemed to say something about our relationship with technology and public messaging: the 1990s craze for inkjet printers promised everyone the professional finish of a publishing house in the comfort of their own home. Yet, three decades on, most of us seem to have thrown out our printers, sick of clogged-up, eye-wateringly expensive cartridges, and have embraced the paperless society. “In the moment of need, when the situation is changing so rapidly,” says Cormier, “we’ve gone back to pen and paper.”

Putting signs in windows quickly spread to the home, too, as a means of both expressing community solidarity and keeping the kids occupied. Headteachers encouraged pupils to paint hopeful rainbows and stick them in windows, fuelling neighbourly rivalry with evermore elaborate formations, ranging from chalk to neon paint and Lego bricks. It wasn’t long before this homespun movement was co-opted by the art world, with Damien Hirst offering his own butterfly-wing rainbow to download.

Further entries in the Pandemic Objects series will shine a spotlight on toilet paper, streaming services, cardboard packaging, balconies and more, one of the more triumphant stories being the revival of the sewing machine. “Despite all the hype around distributed manufacturing and downloadable customised designs, not many of us have a 3D-printer at home,” says Cormier. “Yet the great 19th-century invention of the sewing machine is still a ubiquitous household item.”

Other items

Remains of earliest purpose built playhouse found in east London Guardian May 10

Archaeologists believe they have found remains of one of the most elusive of all known Elizabethan structures – the earliest purpose-built playhouse in Britain and a prototype for a theatre that staged plays by a young William Shakespeare.

The Red Lion is thought to have been built around 1567 and probably played host to travelling groups of players. Its precise location has been the subject of conjecture and debate for a number of years, but archaeologists are as certain as they can be that they have found its remains at a site in the East End of London where a self-storage facility once stood.

“It is not what I was expecting when I turned up to do an excavation in Whitechapel, I have to be honest,” said Stephen White, the lead archaeologist on a team from UCL Archaeology South-East. “This is one of the most extraordinary sites I’ve worked on.”

The Red Lion playhouse was created by John Brayne, who nine years later went on to construct the Theatre in Shoreditch with James Burbage, the father of the Elizabethan actor Richard Burbage. The Theatre was the first permanent home for acting troupes and staged plays by Shakespeare in 1590. After a dispute it was dismantled and its timbers used in the construction of the more famous Globe on Bankside.

Before the Globe and the Theatre, there was the Red Lion, which was in effect a prototype, said White.

All that is known of the Red Lion comes from two lawsuits describing timber scaffolds or galleries around the stage. The stage measured 40ft (12.2 metres) north to south by 30ft (9.1 metres) east to west, at a height of 5ft (1.5 metres).

White recalled the mounting excitement when they realised they were discovering evidence of just such a structure. “We started finding timbers and then uncovered this whole structure. It was very exciting.”

Little is known about what plays were performed at the Red Lion, apart from a fragment of evidence about one called Samson, a lost play by an unknown writer.

Kenya Museum Society's Mission, Benefits and Annual Rates

Kenya Museum Society is a non-profit members' organization founded in 1970. Our mission is to support and promote the National Museums of Kenya, the custodian of Kenya's natural and cultural heritage that manages seven World Heritage sites, twenty museums and over a hundred sites and monuments across the country.

Membership

By supporting KMS with your membership, you are helping to preserve and promote Kenyan history, culture and artifacts. At the same time you'll have fun learning about Kenya in the company of people who enjoy the same interests as you.

Become a KMS member and enjoy:

- Free entry to all NMK managed museums, prehistoric sites and monuments
- Bird walk with Nature Kenya at KShs200, reduced rates in tree walks with Friends of Nairobi Arboretum
- KMS day and weekend outings, evening lectures, films and other programmes
- Entry to the Ololua Nature Trail at half price
- *Tracker* magazine (10 months a year) to keep you abreast of KMS and Museum news and activities
- Email updates on KMS and Museum activities
- Annual magazine *Kenya Past and Present*
- 5% discount on books on the KMS shop at the Nairobi National Museum
- Free borrowing of books from KMS library
- Free reading privileges at Nature Kenya/NMK library
- Reduced advertising rates in the *Tracker* and *Kenya Past and Present*

Single resident	KShs 1,750	One membership card
Resident family	KShs 2,500	Including children below 18
Students (Kenya resident_	KShs 300	One membership card
Up country	KShs 1,200	One membership card
Non resident	US\$ 50	One membership card
Visitors (valid one month)	KShs 800	One membership card
Business membership (Kenya)	KShs 6,000	Eight membership cards

To join: submit this form to the KMS office, the museum shop or at an event, or go online at <https://www.kenyamuseumsociety.org/kms-membership/> and pay by Mpesa.

KMS Membership Registration Form

Please use BLOCK letters

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Prof (*please circle one*)

Type of membership: Single resident/ resident family/Kenya resident student/up-country/Non resident/visitor(one month)/Business (Kenya) (*please circle one*)

Family name.....

First/given name

Name of spouse (for family membership)

Names of children (under 18) for family membership:

.....

P O Box with Code Email address

Tel Home..... Mobile

NEW MEMBER/RENEWING MEMBER (please circle one)

Please send *Tracker* by EMAIL/POST (please circle one)

Below for office use only:

Receipt No. Date

Membership No.

Amount paidCash/Mpesa/Visa/Cheque (circle one)

Cheque No. Bank.....

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