

KENYA MUSEUM SOCIETY
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# Who are we? Where are we?

# Kenya Museum Society Presents KNOW KENYA MORE! 31st October to 5th November 2011

Louis Leakey Auditorium, Nairobi National Museum
Full Programme including field trip Ksh 6,000
Single Individual Lecture Ksh 500
Students with ID, excluding field trip Ksh 2,000

Tickets available at the Kenya Museum Society Office Kipande Road Entrance • 020 2339158 • 020 374 3808 • 0724 255299 info@kenyamuseumsociety.org

M-PESA Account no: 400800

Proceeds to fund the development of exhibitions at the National Museums of Kenya





## **New Waves of Kenyan Films**

To be screened during the Know Kenya More! Course

We will screen three short films, all directed by up-and-coming women directors. These fiction films were entered into major film festivals around the world, earning wide acclaim.

Do not miss the opportunity to watch these films which are rarely screened at commercial movie theatres!!



#### TAHARUKI (SUSPENSE) (2011) DIRECTED BY EKWA MSANGI-OMARI

In the violence and chaos of post-election Kenya in 2007/2008, a man and a woman from opposed ethnic groups work together to save vulnerable children from a cartel engaged in human trafficking. When things go wrong they must face impossible choices as they strive to complete their mission.



#### ZEBU AND THE PHOTO FISH (2010) DIRECTED BY ZIPPY NYARURI

Zebu is a clever boy who decides to free his father from his endless debt to a local businessman so that he can find money to get medicine for his sick mother. On one level an engaging and sometimes funny story and, on another, a revealing look at small scale cycles of debt and exploitation in the lives of subsistence fishermen.



## WEAKNESS (2009) DIRECTED BY WANJIRU KAIRU

Nicky, an alcoholic on the road to recovery has a problem. Severely in debt to his belligerent older brother Robbie, Nicky needs yet another loan to tide him over, on this occasion to pay the fees for his teenage daughter, Lola, to attend college. But when the sibling rivalry boils over, the brothers get more than they bargained for.



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A vendor shows a participant baskets made from recycled plastic bags at the morning market of the 2010 Know Kenya course. The course features selected vendors of handicrafts each morning.

# How to know Kenya more

In just over 90 days, the Kenya Museum Society is going to host its feted event about all things Kenyan. In keeping with the dynamism that is Kenya, this year's **Know Kenya More** features both traditional elements, such as behind the scenes tours, as well as a few changes, including the day timings and Kenya music, in response to participant feedback.

We will explore the cultural communities of northern Kenyan and learn a perspective not often shared in the current events of the day, understand the precarious existence of primates in Kenya, and revisit the footsteps of early Western explorers across East Africa through maps.

We will interact with museum

staff and the various collections during the "behind the scenes" tours, a highly anticipated activity for both NMK and KKM participants.

We will showcase the creative arts from Kenya—modern dance and traditional benga music as well as some local films.

And we will get some modern perspective through lectures on the media and elections as well as women in business. Each presenter has a unique perspective they want to share and collectively they will help us know Kenya more.

So, open your date books and save the dates: 31 October to 5 November. The provisional program is available on the website, www.kenyamuseumsociety.org.

We look forward to your joining KMS in an ongoing exploration of Kenya, its people, its cultures, and its natural beauty.



The start of the race, first one of what G4S plans as an annual event.

# Racing through Karura



A volunteer plants trees, part of restoration efforts at Karura.

Forest hosts new events, including weddings and upcoming USAID 50th anniversary celebration

The inaugural G4S Karura Cross-country Challenge, a one-of-a-kind eco-race, was held in the Karura Forest Reserve on Saturday 30 July, 2011. About 600 runners took part in the race with over 15 corporate teams participating which included teams from EABL, G4S, Access Kenya, and the Serena, Tribe and Fairview hotels, among others.

G4S plans to make it an annual event and bring in more participants and businesses.

The money raised by the race will fund the Karura Forest's activities to convert the forest to a safe, eco-friendly place. Over 4000 people are visiting Karura every month. Many more wedding ceremonies are being held at Karura which is only a few kilometers from the city centre.

The western part of the Karura forest, popularly known as Sigiria, has now been secured with an electric fence and opened up to the public with scout patrols and G4S security at the gates. The Sigiria side is lesser known to visitors. It has a beautiful wetland with three rivers crossing through it. Bushbuck, duikers and bush pigs can be spotted in this area. We welcome you to sample the sights in Sigiria!

USAID which is celebrating its 50th anniversary here in Kenya (The U.S. government is the largest bi-lateral donor in Kenya) will use the new KFEET auditorium in Karura to show a documentary film on its work in Kenya and the field in front as a venue to launch the celebrations in the first week of November. Karura Forest is a very special and significant place—and the party a way of showcasing the forest.

USAID partners will also feature their products and explain them to guests: tree planting, passion fruit, flowers, dairy, Samburu bead making, HIV-AIDS testing and counseling, family planning, and treated mosquito nets.

Karura Forest is our venue for this year's Know Kenya More! last day outing.

#### KNOW KENYA MORE!

#### APPEARING AT THE KKM! COURSE



Ketebul Music was established in early 2007 by stakeholders in the Kenyan music industry with the aim of discovering and promoting local talented musicians and performers of African traditional and contemporary music. Over the years Ketebul Music has also ventured

into research based documentary production with the aim of preserving the diverse fusion of traditional sounds of Kenya and East Africa through the documentation and archiving of the work of musicians who have shaped the various genres of music from the region over the past six decades. 'Ketebul' is derived from the Luo language of Western Kenya and it means, drum sticks.

Ketebul Music is based at the GoDown Arts Centre, where they run two audio recording and production studios and a video editing production suite. It is an unprecedented outfit in the East and Central African region with a unique quest in capturing history--- a rare interest on the continent and is today home to highly skilled professional and music enthusiasts.

Join the Ketebos during this year's Know Kenya More! info@ketebulmusic.org www.ketebulmusic.org



The rat chews roots of the African arrow poison plant then slathers its sides with toxic saliva.

## "Touch me and you're dead"

NMK mammologist discovers how the African crested rat triggers a fatal dose of poison to would-be predators

By Dan Whipple, Tracker editor

In high altitude wooded areas of Kenya, the African crested rat lives a languid existence, protected from predators by a poisonous defensive package on its fur. Bernard Risky Agwanda, head of the mammalogy section at the National Museums of Kenya, says the rat has co-evolved with one of Africa's most poisonous plants—Acokanthera schimperi, or the African arrow poison plant—using the plant's toxins as a shield. The animal also has a method unique among mammals for acquiring its poisonous defense.

In new research in which Agwanda was a major participant, scientists have discovered that the rat chews the roots of Acokanthera, then slathers the mixture of saliva and poison onto its sides to create a poisonous defense to repel predators. "Mouthing or touching the animal, you die," Agwanda says.

"Based on the history of this animal, the belief was that it has got poison glands

#### NEWS FROM NMK

under its skin, and that it was capable of releasing it, just like sweat. That was our hypothesis which we started working with," Agwanda says.

But Agwanda's new research, published in collaboration with several other scientists in the online Proceedings of The Royal Society B, found that in fact the actual mechanism by which the rat obtains its poisons is far more mysterious. "It has special hair on each flank, which was different from its other hair. The hair, instead of being cylindrically solid like any other, has got small pores and smaller filaments which help it to absorb this semi-liquid poison, just like the wick of a lamp."

When the rat is attacked, it exposes these poison-bearing hairs to the mouth of its attacker. The predator receives a dose of the poison the rat has applied, sometimes a fatal one.

Acokanthera produces a ferocious poison which has been widely used by many African tribes and pastoralists, especially those who hunt or fight with arrows. It is popular nowadays with poachers, because as little as five cc's can bring down an elephant. "It doesn't need a deep wound to become effectively lethal," Agwanda says. "It just needs a scratch."

"The African crested rat is a fascinating example of how a species can evolve a unique set of defenses in response to pressure from predators," said Dr. Tim O'Brien, senior scientist of the Wildlife Conservation Society and a co-author on the study. "The animal and its acquired toxicity is unique among placental mammals."

The crested rat occupies wooded habitat at elevations of 1,800 to 3,000 meters above sea level. Agwanda says the best habitat for it today is in the Aberdares, but it can also be found around Mt. Kenya , the Mau Forest, on Mt. Elgon, and in Laikipia, Nanyuki, and Limuru. Its population density in good habitat can reach five individuals per hectare. The rat was first described in 1976 from a specimen purchased in Somalia, although subsequent investigation indicated that this specimen was actually from the Aden coast.

Agwanda is interested in the evolutionary adaptation the rat has made. He says that its defense, while unique, is an imperfect evolutionary strategy. In order for a predator to learn of the hazard, it has to bite the rate, which can result in injury to the rat as well as to the predator.

The team's research is now turning to two other questions. The first is what protects the African crested rat from the poison that it puts in its mouth? Acokanthera is deadly in even small doses to most other animals, but the rat chews it with impunity. The second question involves how the skin is adapted to protect the animal from self-destruction. Answers to these question could lead to antidotes.

Learn more on Mammology section collections during the Know Kenya More! course (see page5).

A big thank you to Smart Signs for donating Signages at the entrance door & signage on the left window frame on the top (going towards the exhibition hall) for the KMS shop.



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September 2 - 4 Sirimon Bandas, Mt. Kenya

September 22 - 28 (3 nights)

Koitobos House & Kapkuro bandas - Mt. Elgon

October 15-20

Ngurunit, Northern Kenya - Camel Safari

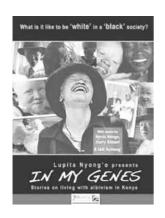
November

Kerio Valley - Marich Park

December

Lake Turkana - Koobi Fora - Ileret





# Screening of "In My Genes"

What is like to be "white" in a "black" society?

An acclaimed documentary film directed by Lupita Nyong'o

gnes may not seem like someone with much to laugh about. For one thing, she has albinism—a lack of pigment in the skin and eyes—and her

appearance has provoked prejudice from family, friends and strangers since she was born. But despite all odds, Agnes refuses to lead a life of sorrow.

This fascinating and inspiring documentary shares the stories of seven people's experiences of living with albinism in Kenya, a predominantly black society. While each person's story is unique, they all have one thing in common: they know what it is like to stand out uncomfortably in a crowd!

Introductory Talk:

Mr Timothy Aseka, Programs Officer, Albinism Society of Kenya

28 September 2011

Refreshments 6:00 pm

Doors open 6:45 pm

Louis Leakey Auditorium, Nairobi National Museum

Donation: Non members Ksh 500, Members Ksh 400, Students Ksh 200

Proceeds to fund the development of exhibitions at the National Museums of Kenya.

#### FESTIVALS AND AWARDS FOR "IN MY GENES:"

- Real Life Pan-African Film Festival, Accra, GHANA May 2009 (Official Selection)
- New York African Film Festival, New York, NY, USA April 2009 (Official Selection)
- Salt Lake City Film Centre "New Face of Africa" Screening Series, Salt Lake City, UT, USA October 2008
- Zanzibar International Film Festival, Stone Town, ZANZIBAR July, 2008
- Africala Film Festival, Mexico City, MEXICO April 2008 (Winner: Souvenir Selection)
- Pacific Kino Garden Film Series, Portland, OR, USA June 2008
- Five-College Film Festival, Northampton, MA, USA February, 2008 (Winner: "Best of Festival" & "Best Documentary")
- Kenya International Film Festival, Nairobi, KENYA October, 2007

#### ACTIVITIES



#### MORNING BIRD WALKS

Every Wednesday morning at 8:45 These three to 3.5 hour walks are organized by Nature Kenya. Participants meet at the upper Museum carpark off Kipande Road. Members who have books or binoculars they no longer use are urged to donate them to Nature Kenya.

**Cost:** Ksh 200 per person; Free to KMS members

For more information, please contact tel: 2725471/0727 300933

**Email:** office@naturekenya.org

#### SUNDAY BIRD WATCH OUTING

Every third Sunday of each month Meet in the upper staff carpark off Kipande Road at 9:00 a.m. Bring binoculars, water and a picnic lunch.

For more information contact tel: 3749957/3746090

Email: office@naturekenya.org

#### NGONG ROAD FOREST WALKS

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust nature walks are held on the first and third Saturday of each month at 9:00 a.m. Meet at the stairs leading to the restaurant at the race course.

For more information contact Simon Ng'ang'a at tel: 0729840715

**Email:** 

office@ngongforestsanctuary.com

#### MORNING TREE WALK

Every last Monday and every second Saturday of each month. The walks, which start at 9:30 a.m., focus on trees and shrubs. They are offered by Friends of the Nairobi Arboretum (FONA)

Participants meet at the FONA tree centre. A hat, drink and tree books are recommended equipment.

**Cost:** Ksh 100 per person; free for Nature Kenya and FONA members.

For more information contact tel: 3749957/3746090

Email: fona@naturekenya.org

# Museum grounds as classroom: The Medicine Shield Garden and beyond

By Mary Ann Burris, TICAH

he museum compound is being beautified and turned into a living classroom. Four new commemorative benches have joined the 29 pieces of sculpture in the garden areas of the Kenya National Museum grounds. These are the creations of young Kenyan artists, enhancing the living exhibits on the paths to the Quarry Pond, in the Grass Demonstration and near the Mother Earth sculpture.

The trees and plants are living exhibits in the garden outside the museum walls. Visitors can stroll and learn about the ecology of Kenya, or simply enjoy the sculptures spread through the compound.

Every month, hundreds of Kenyan school children visit the National Museum in Nairobi. They come in noisy buses, excited by the special feeling of being out of school and together on a field trip. They come to have fun and to learn! These outdoor spaces are a part of their experience.

The Snake Park and the skeletons of early hominids top every child's list. The beautiful Medicine Shield Garden is a close second. Next to the Snake Park, the garden has circular stairs and paths in Kitengela Glass mosaic. The shape of a shield filled with totems and symbols divides the beds, housing over 100 Kenyan medicinal plants. The Medicine Shield Garden was named for this design, and also to invoke the notion that our plants, as sources of food and medicine, can shield us from disease.

A circular bench under a medicinal tree is beside the Garden on the lawn. Since TICAH (Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health) and Sanctuaries Landscaping designed and built the Medicine Shield Garden in 2007, TICAH staff have been on hand to receive visitors in the Garden. TICAH maintains the garden, and welcomes community groups there to study plants and herbal medicines. Visitors can also enjoy the riparian forest, sitting among sculptures carved by local artists from three felled gum trees with a grant from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. Visitors, young and old alike, can walk on the newly cleared paths to the Quarry Pond, where kingfisher and terrapin are there to greet them.

Community groups also visit the Museum. TICAH runs HIV/AIDS programs that teach about household health; programs about nutritious foods and herbs; and water cleaning methods to help a family avoid illness. Graduation ceremonies are held in the Garden. Community members listen to talks by TICAH botanist-in-residence George Chemaket, or they hear from an invited herbalist, nurse, or



The Medicine Shield Garden at the Nairobi National Museum

agronomist.

Whether filled by a group of school children from Nyeri or a group of grandmothers caring for AIDS orphans in Korogocho, the outdoor classroom is a lively place, a wonderful opportunity to instill excitement about Kenya's plant life. Almost everyone recognizes at least one or two of the plants growing in the Medicine Shield Garden. Others know many of them, recalling their local names, remembering how their mothers made tea from them when they were sick.

To strengthen the educational side of the Garden, we have just completed a set of teaching plans. There are lessons for elementary school through high school and college. Some lessons allow visitors to taste the plants; others talk about how to recognize medicinal uses or cultivation methods or pollinators. We are always looking for partners who want to contribute. Our next step will be to create educational signs along the pathways, laid out to create a self-guided nature and art tour through the grounds.

## **KMS Membership Registration Form**

Please use BLOCK letters

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr/Family Name

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Names of children (under 18)				
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**David Odhiambo** worked as a driver for Monkeynastix, as well as a personal driver for me and my family from 1st September 2007 to November 2010, when we relocated to Nigeria. David did an excellent job in this position, and was an asset to my family, as well as to our organization. He is a competent and very careful driver with an excellent track record. During his tenure with Monkeynastix, David was responsible for driving staff to classes and assisting with the carrying of our exercise equipment. Not only did David drive me and my staff around, he also paid all the bills, often did my banking for me, kept the cars in immaculate condition, and even walked and washed our dogs at times. He was also responsible for managing all the monkeynastix equipment and promotional materials, and keeping constant stock of these.

David was never late for work and was always cheerful. He was very reliable and hardworking. He would be an asset to any employer and I highly trecommend him for any endavour he chooses to pursue.

Sincerely, Jenny Greenwood

Contact: David - 0722 995 445 or Jenny Greenwood +234 80 232 14590

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