



FRIENDS OF FORT JESUS

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFJmombasa/>

NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2019

Dear Friends,

Our 40 year celebration and book launch on 19th February was a great success, thanks to the hard work of all those who helped with the organisation. We received tremendous support from the Fort staff and our many well-wishers. We were delighted to see some old faces from NMK, past FFJ members and a group of Zanzibaris from the Stone Town Conservation Society who were attending a workshop in Mombasa. This newly formed society is akin to FFJ and their members had a lot to learn from us. Special thanks to all council members, especially vice chairman, Nabat and Kalim who took charge of the seating and decoration and Issa for his every reliable catering.

There has been a lot of interest in the FFJ book and sales at the event were good. Marlene has very kindly signed copies of the book, available from Kalim Hassanali - Email: kalimhassanali@gmail.com Tel: 0735 209 814. There is no fixed charge but any donation above 750/= will be appreciated to cover the cost of publishing the book.

Construction works for the Mama Ngina Gardens facelift have revealed a layer of archaeological remains of ancient Swahili settlements that may have existed from as early as 9th century. Part of the area has been cordoned off to allow for a more detailed archaeological survey that is presently being carried out by Abungu Heritage Consultancy. A number of artefacts have been found – bones, metal, beads and pottery. Of particular interest is the

Caledon pottery, a preserve of the wealthy and this suggests existence of affluent societies. There are plans to protect the excavations with glass and introduce information panels to create an outdoor museum. Dr Patrick Abungu notes that there are many layers of history buried in Mama Ngina Gardens, that of the Swahilis, Portuguese, British and Kenyan. This find will tell the story of Mombasa's rich heritage.

A post in Nature Kenya's website raises alarm over the depletion of African Grey Parrot population by as much as 99% over the last twenty years. The species is found only in the African equatorial rainforest in a belt stretching across West and East Africa. The birds are in great demand, kept as caged exotic pets. Their ability to mime human voice makes them even more attractive. Despite the international trade ban parrots poaching and sales are rife. Poverty fuels poaching and illegal trade. Over 80% of the birds sold are from DRC; the rest from West African countries. In Kenya the parrot's habitat is the Kakamega Rain Forest. Happily the species have not suffered the same depletion as other areas. Major markets are in the near and far east, Pakistan being the leader. The internet and social media are a big boost to the illegal trade. Most of the sales are conducted online. Joint effort is needed by government enforcement agencies, airlines and social media platforms. Above all, there is need to address the root cause of poaching by provide alternative means to earning a lively hood other than poaching. Taibali Hamzali, Chairman

PAST PROGRAMMES

Saturday, 16th February

Bird Walk: Nguuni Nature Sanctuary



White-throated Bee-eater
Photo: Doris Schaule

We started our bird walk with the sighting of some House Sparrow, which everyone was familiar with; the Red-faced Crombec however proved to be a challenge. This small, greyish, near tail-less bird moves fast in the tree canopies and is hard to spot in between the dry twigs! On our way to the wetland a Slender-tailed Nightjar gave it's roosting site away by flying up briefly before settling again on the ground, almost undistinguishable against the background due to its camouflaging colour and patterns. As its name suggests, this species is a nocturnal insect hunter after sunset and can sometimes be seen in the headlights on the road leading to the picnic site. African Open-billed Stork, Yellow-billed Stork, Black-headed Heron and Great White Egret took to the sky at the wetland as we approached. A family of Palm-nut Vultures circled overhead while White-throated Bee-eaters and Grosbeak Weavers were also duly recorded in the app of the Kenya Bird Map. By the end of our 2 ½-hours bird walk and with combined efforts of 6 dedicated FFJ bird watchers, our count stood at 57 species including Pygmy Geese, Black-bellied Starling and the (almost) resident Striped Kingfisher.

(Doris Schaule)

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Tuesday, 19th February

40 year celebration and launch of publication: FFJ Story



The Friends of Fort Jesus 40th Birthday was celebrated in great style with the past Chairman Marlene Reid launching and signing her book 'FFJ, the 40 story'.



Over a 100 people turned up for the event. The guests included a delegation from Zanzibar representing the Stone Town Conservation Group, past and present NMK staff, FFJ members and all our stakeholders.



The evening started off with short speeches by Chairman Taibali Hamzali, Marlene Reid and Fatma Twahir, followed by many delicate biting's supplied by Essa Khediwallah and his daughter Rehana. Essa has provided samosas and drinks at the society events since the early 80-ties. At the same time there was signing of the books made available against a donation to FFJ.

Top down: (i) A good turnout. (ii) Nyali Players and Singers and (ii) book signing by Marlene. Photos: Doris Schaule and Steve Okoko

The 275 page book was compiled from newsletters and Marlene's memories. I am still only halfway through the book

but what strikes me is the many sites and buildings which are no longer there or are inaccessible. It is sad but makes the book even more valuable by recording the history and activities of the society and the cooperation with Fort Jesus staff. The publishing done with very limited funding and voluntarily inputs have its drawbacks - the small black and white photos could have been better reproduced.

Later we enjoyed a varied and ambitious entertainment programme, introduced by the MC Raphael Igombo. The acts included the Deeja's Group of Poets and a talented Dancer Khadija and recitals and songs by Nyali Players and Singers, with Phillippe on Flute and Saxophone, Aliya D'Silva on Flute, Susie Horne on Piano and Jim Horne Vocalist. The evening came to a crescendo with the Indian music and songs from Harish Bhatt – a one man electronic orchestra that enlivened the evening.

It was a fitting recognition of the achievements of the 'Friends' warmly acknowledged by Fatma Twahir, Principal Curator of Fort Jesus Museum.

(Compiled from notes by Lars Asker and Martin Nelson)

Saturday, 2nd March

'Mombasa's Heritage' Essay Prize giving

This brief event was the culmination of essay competition titled 'Mombasa's Heritage' held last year and one that the winners were looking forward to. We had very good attendance. Almost all the winning schools were represented by students, teachers and parents. Also present was FJ curator Ms. Fatma Twahir

FFJ chairman, Taibali Hamzali said the essay competition was intended to create awareness in heritage and all students who participated have a better understanding of heritage.

Madhvi Shah summarised the comments from the judges Nabat Jamal, Debbie Wanje and Raphael Igombo, Fort Education officer.

The judges were all impressed with the high standard and the participants understanding of heritage.



Kreeshna Mehta reads out her winning essay.

Photo: Taibali Hamzali

The essay winner, Kreeshna Vivek Mehta of Oshwal Academy read out her essay to the audience. Kreeshi Shavadia, also of Oshwal Academy and Hadijah Mwidau of Shree Swaminarayan Academy recited some delightful poems on heritage.

The prizes were given out by the Principal Curator, Fort Jesus Museum, Ms. Fatma Twahir who lauded the partnership between FFJ and NMK. The event ended with a vote of thanks by Selina Uballa.

FUTURE PROGRAMMES

Saturday, 16th March

Bird Walk at Msumarini, Kikambala

This month's bird walk is at Msumarini, Kikambala. For ease of directions meet Doris outside the main Tusky's Supermarket in Mtwapa (near the weighbridge) at 2.30pm sharp.

For more information see our Facebook page or contact: Doris Schaule Tel: 0722 277752. Email: dorischaule@gmail.com

Tuesday, 19th March at 7.15pm at the Fort
Useful plants of Kaya Kauma and Kaya Tsolokero
Illustrated talk by Dr Jolly Najat, Pwani University

The forested areas in Kilifi, Kenya are preserved as Kayas that are managed by the local communities while others are gazetted as national reserve forests. The diversified vegetation in these Kayas has successfully fulfilled the needs and livelihoods of the local communities. The Kaya forests have been used as the main source of various useful products by the local communities. In this study, Kaya Kauma and Tsolokero were evaluated to document the useful ethnobotanical important flora. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared to interview the herbalists and the Kaya elders. The study revealed that 57 and 66 useful species were used by local residents and the herbalists for medicinal formulations inside Kaya Kauma and Tsolokero respectively. These useful plants were further classified on the category of their uses as food, medicine, constructional, aesthetic, firewood, any belief associated or any other uses as stated. Out of these 14 medicinal plant species were further tested in the laboratory and their efficacy against bacteria was validated.

Dr. Najat has done extensive research on Kayas and author of numerous publications. This promises to be a very interesting and informative talk from an expert! Look forward to seeing you.

DIARY FOR FEBRUARY

Saturday, 16th March

Bird walk, Msumarini

Tuesday, 19th March:

Talk by Jolly Nabat: Useful Kaya plants

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