



## FRIENDS OF FORT JESUS

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### NEWSLETTER – JULY 2019

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Dear Friends,

The return to Kenya of some 14 Mijikenda *vigangos* was marked by a colourful ceremony at the Fort last month attended by top NMK and Government officials. The *vigangos* were returned by Denver Museum of Natural History, Colorado where they were in display. According to NMK's Mr Jimbi Katana who campaigned for their return, some 1,000 cultural artefacts were stolen from Kenya in the 1970's and 80's. In all, an estimated 2,000 *vigangos* removed from the graves have ended up in Museums and private collections in US and Europe.

*Vigangos* are totems carved in hardwood and installed, permanently, at the graves of the deceased who served as elders and spiritual leaders. They are an inalienable part of Mijikenda culture. Their removal from the graves portends a serious desecration of the deceased's spirit. It is a cause of distress to the descendants. A disturbed spirit is seen as a source of misfortune.

The *vigangos* case highlights the ethics of acquiring cultural property from non-Western countries. A growing interest and desire to acquire African objects of art has spurred a large scale removal of objects from Kenya and other countries. The underground trade in non-Western art is lucrative, running in billions of dollars. For example, the *vigangos* stolen in Kenya were bought for only \$50 and sold abroad for as much as \$4,000!

To curb the loss of Kenyan cultural art we need to enhance field surveillance to prevent theft, enforce legal compliance. Education is equally important. Very often the sellers and buyers do not understand the spiritual significance. Another drawback is that our museums lack the proper facilities to archive collections. Upgrading the capacities to acceptable standards is essential.

For the returned *vigangos*, Mijikenda tradition dictates that they must be returned to the owners; a difficult task given that many owners are not known.

Around the Fort, a forthcoming event of interest is the launch of an exhibition of photographs by Ms. Maddalena Stefanelli (name in art Leni Frau) on 15<sup>th</sup> October. The exhibition is sponsored by the Italian Embassy. We will circulate more details later.

In order to communicate more efficiently we would like to set up a WhatsApp group for those who wish to receive notifications of our events, etc. Note this will be only a message board for sending out notifications. If you would like to join this group please send your contact to our secretary Madhvi Shah by email ([ffjmsa@gmail.com](mailto:ffjmsa@gmail.com))

To all our Muslim members, Eid ul Hajj Mubarak!

Taibali Hamzali, Chairman

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Saturday, 20<sup>nd</sup> July Bird Walk at Vipingo Ridge

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Starting at 15.00 hrs means one doesn't want to waste even one minute until sunset and being at the prestigious property with different habitat we were open to any surprises.



**Giant Kingfisher. Photo: Doris Schaule**

Only a short distance from the gate we managed to record 22 species including African Golden Oriole, Green Malkoha (also known as Yellowbill, a migrant from the south of this continent. Sombre Greenbul and African Pied Wagtails made their voices heard. Our next destination was the old Mango Tree Forest, where we drove in a convoy. We didn't need

to walk far into the forest as we found African Green Pigeon, African Paradise Flycatcher and a stunning Narina Irogan perched below tree canopies; the call of a Tamborine Dove was duly noted too.

Next we had a look at the pond near the club house: White-browed Coucal, Lesser Stripped Swallows, which seem to nest below the small bridge and saw a huge flock of Senegal Plovers/Lapwing (we counted 27 birds) on one of the fairways. The pond itself was hosting an African Darter, a Purple Heron and to all our amazement a Giant Kingfisher, which has become a regular visitor to this particular pond as per our guide Fred. A beautiful adult Palm-nut Vulture landed on the opposite shore just when we decided to

proceed and look for some more species. By the time the sun was nearing the Western horizon, so time for us to wind up this most exciting birding afternoon, which resulted in 46 species on our list of birds recorded. No. 47 – a Red-capped Robin Chat called from the bushes just as we had said good-byes and were about to board our cars.

We thank Duncan Mirchell for facilitating access and naturalist Fred Okoko for a most rewarding birding expedition at Vipingo Ridge!! We spent a great afternoon indeed!!! (Doris Schaule)

### Saturday, 27<sup>nd</sup> July Visit to Shimoni and Wasini Island

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After a brisk ferry crossing were at Shimoni Jetty on time to meet with our host Dr. Patrick Abungu, the Senior Curator, Shimoni Slavery Museum and Heritage site. A short boat ride took us to Wasini; an idyllic island where time seems to have stopped. We went on the board walk that starts at the village and meanders 1.5km through the Coral Gardens and the mangroves. This is a project of the Wasini Women Group. Sadly the board walk has weathered considerably but it was good to see that repair work was on going.

We walked through the village and saw the ruins of an old mosque and graveyard. The trifoliate headstones are unusual and suggest Persian influence. The economic mainstay of the island is tourism and fishing. As there is no piped water r the residents rely on harvest rainwater. Almost all the buildings have some form of water collection system. Power supply is solar panels and generators.

On our return to Shimoni we toured the Slavery Museum, formally the Colonial DC's house. The ground floor is undergoing renovation work. The repairs are being done sensitively using the traditional



materials and techniques. The ground floor will provide additional display area and a restaurant. We also visited the old Colonial prison and old market, both presently in a highly dilapidated state, but salvageable. Plans are to rehabilitate the building to make a crafts centre where visitors will see the craftsmen at work and buy local artefacts.



After a hearty lunch, prepared by the local women's group, a few of us ventured to the Shimoni Slavery Caves where slaves captured from the hinterland were held before shipment abroad.



**From Top: the boardwalk; boats at Wasini and outside the Colonial Prison. Photos: Taibali Hamzali**

A very interesting and enjoyable outing. Our thanks to Patrick for the meticulous organisation.

Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> July

### Talk: Green Water management by Sarah den Haring

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Our talk on Tuesday was about a 'Drizzle Kit', a rain capture and harvesting kit presented by Sarah den Haring. It in itself is an ingenious piece of equipment that is easily transportable anywhere that it's needed. Sarah's presentation showed us how once the land is prepared, by providing a sloping 'rain catcher', not unlike a mini dam structure, which then funnels the rainwater into an airtight 'pillow' reservoir. Once stored nothing is lost through evaporation and people can have easy access to water all year round for all their needs.

Sarah and her team have already installed 3 of these kits in the arid Turkana area with much reservation from the local community. Fortunately the rains appeared soon after completion at one site and within a few days there was enough water in the 'pillow' to start distribution. Now the community are converted to the workings of this form of rain harvesting and are not only using it for domestic use but manually pumping the water to a moveable raised irrigation tank enabling them to drip feed their crops and be self-sustainable. It has proved to be a great success. (Debbie Wanje)

### FUTURE PROGRAMMES

Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> August

### Bird Walk: South Quarry, Haller Park, Bamburi

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This month's walk is at South Quarry, Haller Park. If you are coming in your own car meet at the main entrance at 3.00pm sharp. Those coming by public transport meet at the barrier at 2.50pm.

For more information see our Facebook page or Email: [dorischaule@gmail.com](mailto:dorischaule@gmail.com) or via SMS, Tel: 0722 277752.

Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> August  
**Visit to Kaya Kauma, Kilifi**

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This is a follow up to the excellent talk we had from Dr Jolly Rajat of Pwani University on her research into the useful plants in Kayas Kauma and Tsolokero. Our access is a special concession kindly arranged by Dr. Rajat and Lawrence Chiro, Kaya Curator. The sacred areas in the kaya are usually barred to outsiders. We hope members will take advantage of this very 'privileged' visit.

We will visit the Kaya Kauma village situated at the center of the forest. The Kaya elders will take us around and we will be able to observe any on-going ritualistic practices which should be very interesting. Dr. Jolly will shed light on the botanical aspects. After the Kaya tour we will visit some farms and homesteads nearby where you will be able to buy fresh farm produce and locally made handicrafts - so please come with your *kikapu*.

If you are coming in your own cars the meeting point is along the Msa-Mld highway, at Mavueni Junction at the turn off to the new Kilifi-Kaloleni Road at 9.30am. We will travel in a convoy to the Kaya which is a scenic 30 minute drive through lush vegetation and eye catching scenery. If lucky we may spot an antelope en-route.

Please carry a picnic lunch. Note: you will be required to remove shoes before entry to the sacred area. Dress code is modest

If you wish to join please register with Kalim, (Email: [kalimhassanali@gmail.com](mailto:kalimhassanali@gmail.com) or SMS 0735 209 814), **latest by 20<sup>th</sup> August**, as we need to know the numbers attending. Please note access to the Kaya is by payment of *Kajama* which will be 500/= pp. We will arrange shared transport at 1,200/= pp. All payments to be made in advance to Doris by mpesa (0715 565 619).

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> August, at 7.15pm at Fort  
**Poetry Evening: 'My Dream'**

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It has been a long time since we hosted a poetry evening. Martin Nelson and Magdalene Kamau have kindly agreed to bring together a group of upcoming poets, including those from the talented Swahilipot Hub who were enthralling and kept the audience spell bound at the last poetry evening.

The theme is 'My Dream'. If any member is interested in presenting poems please contact Martin ([martinnelsonwritings.com](http://martinnelsonwritings.com) or [man1932@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:man1932@hotmail.co.uk) Tel: +254 (0)724-538954 before 16<sup>th</sup> August.

**DIARY FOR AUGUST**

Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> August:  
**Bird Walk: Haller Park**

Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> August  
**Visit to Kaya Kauma, Kilifi**

Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 7.15pm at Fort  
**Poetry evening: 'My Dream'**

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