



A ROCHA KENYA'S NEWSLETTER

Nature conserved, people transformed

ISSUE 07 — DECEMBER 2015

RE-AWAKENING THE COMMUNITY FOREST ASSOCIATIONS



Community honey producers sell their produce at the community market

One of the critical aspects about empowering a community is exposure which will actually convince them that what you are trying to teach them is actually applicable and practical as seen in certain communities in other parts of the country. However, this does not necessarily mean taking a community group for the usual luxurious field excursion. It is supposed to be about experiential learning and more so about sharing of various experiences the different community groups have undergone (in this context) their pursuit and quest for conservation.

Factoring the reality above, A Rocha Kenya has been organizing these forums aiming to empower Community Forest Associations around Arabuko Sokoke Forest and Dakatcha Woodland in Kilifi County and Ngong Hills Forest in Kajiado County. Earlier in the year, the Ngong Metro CFA visited Kilifi County CFA'S and the major highlight was the visit to the elephant hole at Arabuko Sokoke swamp and a boat ride through the Mida creek that exposed the group to the potential of exploring ecotourism opportunities.

The Kilifi County CFAs also visited and shared with their counterparts of Ngong Metro CFA in Ngong Forest in November. The major highlight of the experience sharing forum was when the group was taken to Kerarapon forest, still part of the extensive Ngong Hills Forests which acts as the source of River Sabaki also known as Athi and Galana. The forest, typical of any water tower had a resemblance of a rainforest characterized by chirping birds, tall, broad-leaved and gigantic trees, with small springs at the bottom, supplying water to a river dependent upon by most parts of the coastal areas before it pours its waters into the Indian Ocean. These eventful experiences exposed the CFA'S to a whole new world of conservation.

It has been such an influential and participatory journey since we embarked on a journey to re-awaken the CFA'S back in 2014. Below are what they have achieved so far;

1. Improvement in internal management of the CFAs such as, regular meetings, record keeping and better understanding of the organizational structure
2. Conducted successful numerous advocacy initiatives such as; Combating fraudulent hard-core extraction from Ooloolua Forest Block- Ngong Metro CFA, Controlling alien species, *Lantana camara* at Ooloolua Forest, Stopping oil and gas exploration in Arabuko Sokoke Forest-Gede/Jilore and Sokoke CFAs, Raising awareness regarding the Forest Act (2005) and Wildlife Act (2013) around Arabuko Sokoke Forest adjacent community through advocacy campaigns resulting to increased incidences of reporting illegal activities in the forest.
3. Engagement of the Kilifi and Kajiado County Governments with the former purchasing tree seedlings, providing brick making machines, galla goats and to Gede, Sokoke, Jilore and Dakatcha CFAs
4. Adoption of alternative sources of livelihood such as Farming God's Way- Ngong Metro CFA



A user group of Ngong Metro CFA practising FGW

CORAL REEFS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

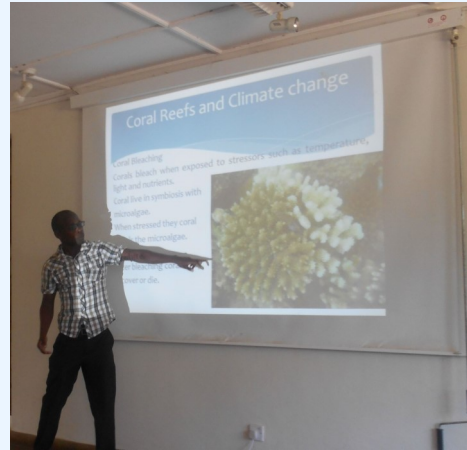
The impacts of climate change are well known and it's not something to smile about. Among the habitats where climate change has had the most impact is the ocean ecosystem especially the near-shore habitats which have direct benefit to millions of people. Release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases through burning of fossil fuels are causing global warming. Global warming results to increased sea surface temperature that causes coral bleaching in tropical areas where coral reefs occur. Corals thrive near their upper temperature tolerance and therefore any slight increase in temperature breaks down the symbiotic relationship between corals and microalgae and hence bleaching.



Coral bleaching affect not only the corals but if it persists and corals die all the biodiversity depending on them for survival will perish. The Ocean plays a role in reducing the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere but this also comes at a cost further threatening these systems. The ocean absorbs the CO₂ from the atmosphere but the increased amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere means more is or has to be absorbed than the ocean can take causing ocean acidification.

In a small town in the North coast of Kenya, Watamu, we are working in a small marine protected area to try to understand and build the resilience of the coral reefs and the communities here. Watamu Marine National Park is one of the oldest marine park in the world and was seriously impacted by the 1998

El Nino event that caused up to 80% coral loss, and has experienced slow rates of recovery ever since. There was a minor bleaching event in 2013 which we recorded relatively good recovery. Some coral reefs have been reported to develop tolerance to thermal stress. The good recovery in 2013 could be argued that the corals are adapting to thermal stress but a more weighted argument could be that the thermal stress was not as intense as the one in 1998. Whichever scenario is correct, we are working to have a better understanding on this at a local level.



Scientific predictions are pointing at a stronger El Nino event, that might cause bleaching early next year, we are preparing to monitor the bleaching event within the protected area and surrounding areas. With marked quadrats and corals that we used in 2013, we will be going

back to the same spots and checking the response of the corals in the event of bleaching. This will give us an understanding of whether these corals are adapting to thermal stress and which sites are more resilient and hence need more protection.

We are also working with local reef users and the government agencies to raise awareness on coral reefs and climate change and influence reduction of local stressors. Our overall goal is to ensure everybody understands these threats and come up with appropriate management strategies for continued structural and functional existence of the coral reefs.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE ASSETS PROGRAM

ASSETS is a community programme that we initiated. The overall goal of Arabuko-Sokoke Schools and Eco-tourism Scheme (ASSETS) is to conserve biodiversity and to increase benefits the local community receives from sustainable eco-tourism activities in Mida Creek and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest.

The programme supports local needy secondary school students living within a three kilometre radius of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest or Mida Creek, with bursaries. Since its launch in the year 2001 to date – 2015, ASSETS has supported a total of **533** students, with 114 currently in school, with funds from eco-tourism and donations from various supporters all over the world.



FUNDRAISING DINNER

A Rocha Kenya cordially invites everyone to a dinner that will raise money for our ASSETS program that helps us sponsor high school students. (ASSETS) Arabuko Sokoke Schools and Eco-tourism Scheme is a community programme we initiated back in 2001 to conserve biodiversity and to increase benefits of the local community.



Date: 12th Dec 2015
Time: 6:00 pm
Venue: Mwamba Field Study Centre (Watamu)
Amount: ksh800/=

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ASSETS-Arabuko-Sokoke Schools and Eco-tourism Scheme Bursaries and Gede Ruins Tree Platform Fundraiser

We need your help to raise funds for local needy secondary school students of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek, to educate the children and spread the conservation message. And for much needed Gede Ruins Tree Platform repairs which supports the Project.



ASSETS bursary Scheme - ASSETS is a community programme initiated by A Rocha Kenya with the overall goal being to conserve biodiversity and to increase benefits of the local community from sustainable eco-tourism activities in Mida Creek and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest.



Environmental Education and awareness - Environmental Education and awareness events for the beneficiary students and parents are held regularly.



Eco-tourism Projects - We have a hanging walk - way situated at Mida creek and a Tree Platform built on a Baobab tree in Gede Ruins monument. These facilities have played a big role in raising funds for the scheme over the years.



We are trying to raise funds for next year's school fees together with the tree platform repairs.

TO DONATE, use our **M-PESA** number- **6659590** or email us on kentya@arocha.org for more information

THE FATE OF OUR IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS...

Arabuko Sokoke forest is the only remaining strip of what used to be health and continuous Coastal dry forest in mainland Africa stretching from Northern Mozambique to Southern Somalia. With an area of only 420km square remaining, the forest still remains to be very important for conservation to both the local and international level. Being a unique forest of its own nature, it's very rich in biodiversity (biodiversity hotspot) sheltering a number of globally threatened wildlife including the indigenous African plants, butterflies, mammals and birds. In fact, the forest is a home to six globally threatened bird species such as Sokoke Scops Owl, Sokoke Pipit, East Coast Akalat, Spotted Ground Thrush, Amani Sunbird and Clarkes Weaver. Human pressure on forest resources and products for various uses are accelerating each new day putting Arabuko sokoke forest and adjacent twin forested section of Gede Ruins National Monument at a situation that is alarming for conservation. For the last three months, we have



destroyed over 100 snares and recorded over 120 stumps of cut stems in Gede Ruins. It's a



shame even to see snares in a twenty year old regenerated forest within the ruins. This year, over 400 snares have been destroyed and 500 fresh cut stems found and mapped.

However, all is not lost as communities around the forests have ganged up to conserve or protect if need be after a series of capacity building workshops with them. With about fifty two villages surrounding Arabuko sokoke forest and three surrounding Gede Ruins, we can be sure of saving the remaining special habitats as homes for endangered wildlife. Unless everyone stands up for the same course, then we shall not realize a better tomorrow.

ELIMINATING THE VILLAIN-*Lantana camara*

Originating from Mexico, *Lantana camara* of the Verbanacea family was introduced to Kenya in 1930. Since its introduction as an ornamental shrub, the invasive *Lantana Camara* has spread to most parts of the Kenyan ecosystems including rangelands, wetlands, natural and planted forests, agricultural lands, urban areas, among others. Research has shown that *Lantana Camara* is an insidious invasive shrub of global significance in the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.

In Kenya, evidence has it that several species of antelopes are being lost and this is traced to *Lantana Camara* taking over their habitats. "A Rocha Kenya's principle on *Lantana Camara* is that it should be eliminated at all costs. We have really fought it in Karara Forest and continue to fight it in Dakatcha Woodlands, Ngong hills Forest, and wherever it is. It is alien and one of the most stubborn and invasive weeds in Kenya." said Dr. Raphael Magambo, National Director. In Ngong, many people would prefer burning the lantana as a means of controlling it but now most of them are beginning to use its leaves to make liquid fertilizers for their farms since they are high in Nitrogen. This has helped curb the risk of forest fires. By doing this, it is slowly being wiped out. Despite its uses, we are discouraging people from introducing it in their localities and where it has already invaded, let us uproot and use it wisely.



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In pictures



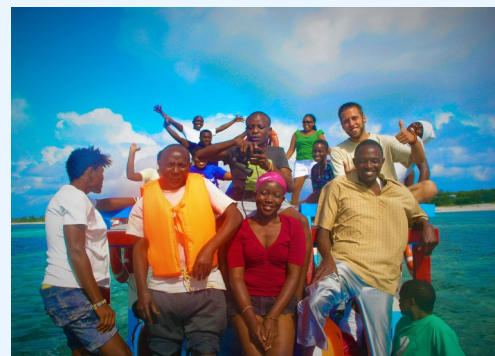
Pwani University bird-walk that ended after spotting 40 cool species of birds.



Our community conservation officer demonstrating the use of farming God's way in the Nairobi International Trade fair show.



Marine workshop that hosted our different stakeholders to present the research work they have been conducting around Watamu Marine National Park for the last five years.



ARK staff team building event (blue safari) that left everyone be like....'we should have this more often.'



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Mwamba Field Study Centre

Mwamba Field Study Centre provides simple, pleasant and relaxed full board accommodation for all interested visitors, researchers and conservationists and offers opportunities for volunteers to get involved. It also offers conference facilities for workshops and seminars. Be sure to enjoy the dazzling white sands of Watamu's renowned beach and Watamu Marine National Park when you visit Mwamba. The accommodation is pocket friendly with a laid back atmosphere, terrific meals and to complete this picture there is a brand new hot *sport* - Kite surfing. The kite surfing school is a walking distance from Mwamba and better yet, the best spot for it is right at our back yard.



SUPPORT US!

DONATE

Support A Rocha Kenya Programs on:

www.arocha.org

Support our ASSETS Scholarships Program by making a donation on:

https://my.give.net/arochakenya_assets

HOLIDAY

stay at Mwamba Field Study Centre, Book with us on:

mwamba@arocha.org

FUN-TIME

Visit our Eco-facilities:-

Karara Nature Trails

Mida Creek Board-walk

Gede Ruins Tree Platform

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer with us, apply at mwamba@arocha.org

FRIENDS of ARK

Become a Friend of ARK, Registration fee—Ksh 500

Our Blogs assets.wildlifedirect.org/ <http://arochakenya.wildlifedirect.org/>

Face book : A Rocha Kenya

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