

**FRIENDS OF KARURA FOREST  
COMMUNITY FOREST ASSOCIATION  
2015 REPORT**



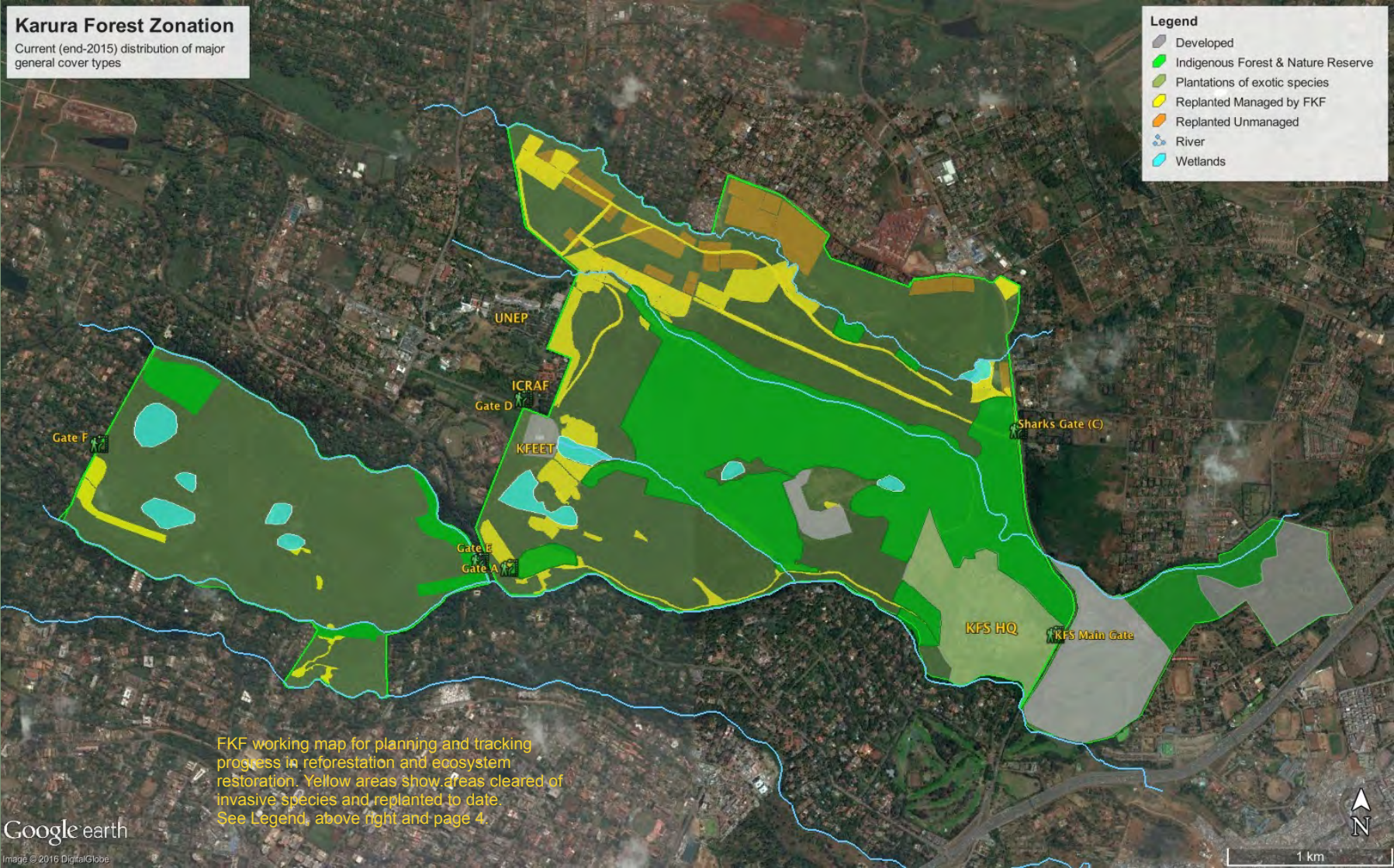


# Karura Forest Zonation

Current (end-2015) distribution of major general cover types

**Legend**

- Developed
- Indigenous Forest & Nature Reserve
- Plantations of exotic species
- Replanted Managed by FKF
- Replanted Unmanaged
- River
- Wetlands



FKF working map for planning and tracking progress in reforestation and ecosystem restoration. Yellow areas show areas cleared of invasive species and replanted to date. See Legend, above right and page 4.

# FRIENDS OF KARURA FOREST COMMUNITY FOREST ASSOCIATION 2015 REPORT A Year in Review

Kenya's new 2005 Forests Act made visionary provision for the establishment of Community Forest Associations (CFA) for each forest in the republic. In 2009, inspired by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai's campaign to rescue Karura and indeed all the nation's forests from greed-driven development, a group of the Karura Forest neighbouring stakeholders joined forces to establish and launch the Friends of Karura Forest (FKF) CFA. Since then, with unprecedented support from local corporations and communities and under the aegis of Kenya Forest Service (KFS) 5-year Strategic Plan, FKF and KFS have worked together within the terms of a carefully negotiated Joint Management Plan for Karura. The results speak for themselves: in only half a decade, Karura has revived from a place to be avoided to one of *the* places in Nairobi to be visited. This report highlights the last year's progress.

## **FKF Mission**

To manage and sustain a world-class, well-conserved,  
safe and secure Karura Forest Reserve  
in partnership with the Kenya Forest Service and  
Nairobi neighbourhood stakeholders in order to  
provide ecosystem services and a  
place of tranquility for all Kenyans.





# INFRASTRUCTURE



Keeping over 50 km of tracks and trails clear of *Lantana* and broken trees, collecting litter and emptying some 30 bins (including newly designed monkey-proof ones), repairing infrastructure, keeping the electric fence clear of weeds, patrolling to ensure the safety of visitors — those are just some of the routine tasks that our staff carry out 365 days of the year. Forty-four people are permanently employed to keep the forest in good shape for visitors.

Infrastructure is constantly under improvement as funds become available thanks to sound income management. Two new durable solid metal bridges over the Karura River have replaced the old wooden ones at junction 12A and the Huruma corner. New flushing washrooms, a secure clerk house and a car park for 70 vehicles have been built at the newly-opened 'Sharks Gate' (Gate C on the map) following its opening to the public after the closure of the Old Kiambu Road by the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) due to security concerns.

A beautiful new picnic site has been cleared at the Ruaka swamp with six table-and-bench combos and a large grass playing field. A lookout platform was built in a big *Albizia* tree overlooking the swamp.



## RESULTS

- ✓ A well-maintained, secure forest
- ✓ Two strong bridges
- ✓ New flush washroom, clerk house and parking lot
- ✓ A new picnic site with lookout platform

# INFRASTRUCTURE

An all-out effort to improve forest access via the main Limuru Road Gate (Gate-A) has been carried out led by H. Young and Co (EA) Ltd. that generously provided its prodigious road-building expertise and plant, and met half the costs of materials apart from the Cabro paving, whilst Bamburi Cement donated 10% of the blocks. The road to the gate, the car park and the rest of the way to the top of the hill can now be easily and safely negotiated regardless of weather.

Following a most generous donation in cash and kind by the Sukuma Twende Oshwal Community group, the Amani picnic site was greatly improved with the addition of a paved and lit wheelchair friendly access, flushing toilets with disabled access and 25 tables and benches spread out under shade trees. The donation also included the creation of the very attractive new Amani event venue with the restoration of part of the old farmhouse, installation of utilities, a murram access road and parking lot for 80 cars.

The old farm borehole was refurbished with the help of Davis & Shirliff and is used to water the whole Amani complex.

Yet another pleasant venue was created for small events in the new Karura Gardens site across the Kiambu Road from Tara Road. Development of the site helps establish ownership of a part of the forest threatened with land grabbing.



## RESULTS

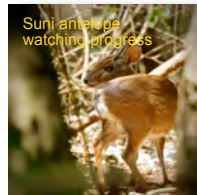
- ✓ Easier, all-weather access to the forest
- ✓ Improved income-generating picnic site
- ✓ Two new and attractive income-generating event venues
- ✓ Refurbished borehole



# PROJECTS

## Reforestation and Ecosystem Enrichment

Nearly 10% of the joint FKF-KFS joint management plan goal to return Karura to its natural state has been achieved with some 75 ha (185 acres) having been restored, including 17 ha in the last financial year (see inside front cover for map). The aim is to reduce the dominance of exotic plantation species to return the forest to a natural state. Experience has shown that forest restoration does not necessarily require every new tree to be planted by hand. Under the tangles of invasive *Lantana* shrubs and Mauritius Thorn creeper are a myriad of indigenous tree seedlings just awaiting physical release and sunlight so they can shoot skyward like their parent trees that seeded them perhaps half a century ago. All the clearing, planting and tree-care work has been supported by gate fees and membership subscriptions, as well as by the many generous private and corporate donors who have 'adopted' patches of forest and replanted thousands of trees. The physical work was carried out by women's groups from Huruma informal settlement on Karura's northern boundary.



### RESULTS

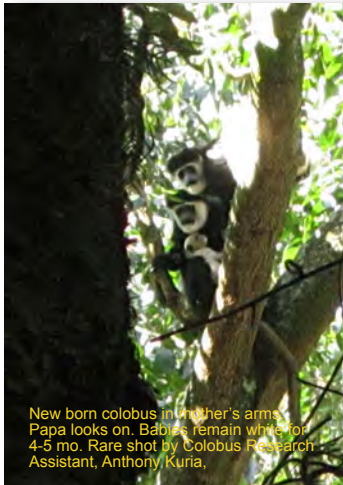
- ✓ 17 hectares cleared, bringing total to 75
- ✓ One-third of forest now indigenous, up from one-quarter in 2010 (see inside front cover)
- ✓ 6,000 indigenous trees planted
- ✓ 31 contracts issued to community groups



# PROJECTS

## Colobus Monkey Translocation & Reintroduction

The highly successful Colobus Monkey re-introduction project has settled 113 individuals in eighteen family groups in the main forest and 29 in four groups on the Sigiria side. The monkeys were rescued from alienated habitats adjacent to the Aberdares National Park by the Institute for Primate Research working with FKF, KFS and the Kenya Wildlife Service. Although the monkeys are strictly indigenous canopy leaf-eaters, they enjoy the high level security afforded by some of Karura's large remaining plantation species, such as the Eucalyptus along the Gitathuru River (photo right) where some monkeys relax when not feeding. The last permitted translocation in March 2016 brought this phase of the project to a happy close.

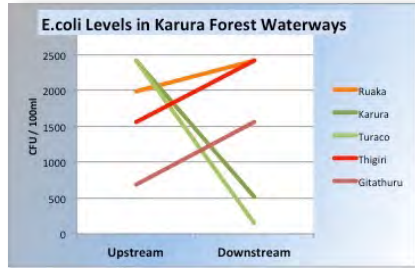


### RESULTS

- ✓ 142 monkeys now in residence
- ✓ 94% overall success rate
- ✓ 7 births conceived in the forest
- ✓ One of world's most successful large-scale arboreal primate translocations
- ✓ Hallmark ecosystem restoration



# RESEARCH



Karura water quality analysis was carried out in the forest by the Pathologists Lancet Laboratories Kenya. Lancet vets, assisted by FKF staff, collected samples where the streams enter and leave the forest. Conclusion: the five watercourses that flow through the forest are highly polluted with biological contaminants. The good news is that the forest has a significant purifying effect, but only on the two watercourses (see chart) that flow entirely through the forest thereby avoiding contamination from surrounding neighbourhoods.

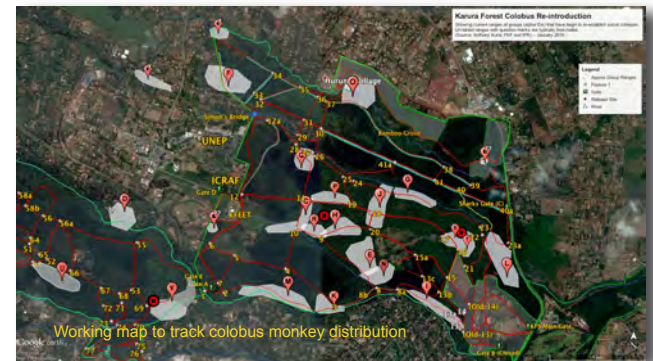


The 'KaruraKams', — two still and one video camera traps donated to FKF — have revealed a fascinating array of Karura's larger mammals. Twenty species have so far been identified. But we are seeing more than just ID mug shots. Apart from the recent discovery of 'growing' (browsing antelopes feeding on canopy leaves fallen onto the forest floor) the ratio of carnivores to herbivores 'captured' is evidence of a healthy and recovering ecosystem.

The second phase of the Colobus project involves a multifaceted behavioural and biological study of the newly established Colobus colony in the forest. This is a unique opportunity to study a population from an entirely known baseline. The lead scientist is dedicating his PhD to this subject with the help of a number of masters students conducting support research.

## RESULTS

- ✓ Demonstration of significant river cleansing action by the forest
- ✓ Initial mammal and bird species inventories
- ✓ Improved knowledge of Colobus behaviour and biology in the forest
- ✓ New focused research opportunities for students and researchers





# EDUCATION

Karura Forest has become a favourite destination for school parties from both public and private schools. Children of all ages visit the forest almost every day for environmental and natural science studies. A large number of school parties visited the forest last year led by the KFEET (Karura Forest Environment Education Trust) Education Officer, thereby contributing to one of the most important elements of the FKF mission: environmental awareness.

Karura is also fast becoming a focus of affordable forest oriented scientific studies due to its ease of access. Five post-graduate students chose to carry out studies in Karura last year.

The EDCLUB computer lab in Huruma Village informal settlement bordering the forest is a great success. Village teenagers each week 'meet', interact and learn via Skype from mentors in a dozen schools in UK. The mentors pose questions and challenges, and work with the village kids to explore the Internet and so self-educate through the 'SOLE' (Self-Organised Learning Environment) method that encourages kids to explore subjects in which they are most interested. The children have an insatiable passion for learning, and their teenager mentors are constantly exchanging ideas and inspiration over the Facebook mentor group (see <http://www.edclubmovement.org>).



School kids on parade on KFEET grounds.



Education Officer Lucy Njoka lectures students in KFEET auditorium.



Trainee guides training about forest guides.



EdClub kids working with a mentor online.  
Photo: EdClub

## RESULTS

- ✓ Increased number of school children visiting the forest
- ✓ Dedicated KFEET Education Officer
- ✓ Enhanced awareness of the role of forests
- ✓ 108 Huruma kids connected to 36 UK student mentors via the Internet on 18 computers

# COMMUNITIES



Huruma Village women's group clearing invasive plants



Karura Forest Scouts, mainly drawn from surrounding communities, on parade with FKS D/JL Sergeant

Casual and contract work in the forest is done by people from Huruma Village informal settlement, mostly women's groups. They are free to organise their work according to family obligations, as long as the work is done satisfactorily. Clearing contracts amounting to KES 2.5 million were awarded in 2015. Every day there are up to 60 people working in the forest apart from FKF's 47 permanent employees, most of whom are also recruited locally. Karura has become a major source of income for the surrounding communities.

A recently-completed UNDP/GEF Small Grants Project, *Engaging Communities in Environmental Stewardship*, aimed to improve the livelihood of surrounding communities through nature-based enterprises and capacity building for peoples' participation in forest governance and management. 98 community members from five community groups were trained in bee keeping (including the introduction of stingless bees, honey processing and marketing), forest tourism guiding, and participatory forest management (PFM) practices aligned to the provisions of the Forests Act (2005). The project afforded trainees hands-on learning opportunities, for example, a study visit to Kakamega Forest to interact with the local community forest association and PFM user groups.

## RESULTS

- ✓ Steady employment for local communities
- ✓ 31 work contracts given out to community women's groups
- ✓ Improved livelihood opportunities through income-generating activities
- ✓ New skills for 38 community members
- ✓ Forest honey for sale at main gate



Community honey production

Photo: Njoroge



EdClub (see p. 6) kids from Huruma Village taking a break

Photo: EdClub



# SUSTAINABILITY

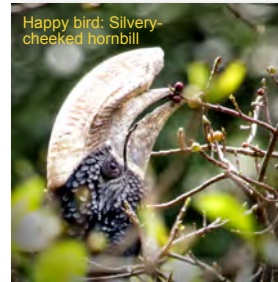
The internationally recognised success of Karura mandates a responsibility for FKF and KFS to continue protecting and enhancing the forest for the enjoyment of the public. This responsibility in turn implies a need for FKF to be financially self-sufficient and sustainable in the pursuit of its mission. Thus, in support of proper planning, budgeting and implementation of FKF activities in the forest, FKF has negotiated and put in place steady and predictable revenue streams for the CFA, namely:

- Membership fees
- Map sales
- Bicycle rental business
- Café
- Donations

The bulk of the income generated by Karura is managed by the KFS-FKF Joint Management Committee and derives from:

- Entrance fees including annual passes, guiding fees and groups
- Parking fees
- Events
- Picnic fees

An electronic entrance fee collection system and security cameras have been installed at the gates to streamline and secure revenue collection.



## RESULTS

- ✓ Well-designed joint management system
- ✓ Clear example of cooperation between public and private stakeholders
- ✓ Secure revenue streams
- ✓ A future for Karura that was unimaginable before 2009
- ✓ A peoples' forest matching the vision of Prof. Wangari Maathai (see quotation, back cover)

# EVENTS



Thirty-four large events were held in the forest. Events range from gatherings of a handful of school kids to plant trees, to corporate team-building, to the annual Summer BizBaz attracting hundreds of shoppers, to a number of lavish weddings.

A quiet and meditative note was struck in September 2015 when interdenominational prayers were offered up for the victims of the 2014 Westgate terrorist attack. Family members and friends watered the 67 trees at Amani Garden and prayed 'never again'.

The Kenya Forest Service Board of Directors paid a visit to Amani Garden during a break in a busy December 2015 board meeting, escorted by KFS Director, Emilo Mugo, KFS Head of Nairobi Conservancy, Charity Munyasia, Ecosystem Conservator Nairobi County, Stephen Kahunyo, and FKF Chair and Vice-Chair, Karanja Njoroge and Cristina Boelcke-Croze. Whilst enjoying a snack at the newly opened River Café, Director Mugo reiterated KFS satisfaction with the highly successful 'Karura pilot' by which a dynamic Community Forest Association has been able to achieve so much in just under six years in terms of security, forest restoration and conservation, and provision of eco-friendly amenities for Kenyans.



# LOOKING AHEAD

The financial year 2015 ended with Karura accounts in a much better state than when it started (see next page): the financial situation is healthy; visitors are many and by all accounts satisfied; and the forest is in great shape. FKF is determined to continue to soldier on, fulfilling its mandate, while remaining vigilant of present and potential threats.

Key players in the management of KFS and FKF took part in a two day retreat at the end of January 2016 to finalise the draft 2016-2020 Karura Strategic Management Plan and the new Human Resources Policy for FKF and KFS joint management of Karura. The splendid environment of Lake Elementaita contributed to ensure a quality draft plan for KFS and a sound human resources policy for FKF. Both parties got to know each other better and worked together in a most congenial and collegiate spirit.

The new Karura Strategic Management Plan builds on successful implementation of the first strategic plan that was concluded with all the objectives fully met and frequently exceeded. Whereas the focus of the forest plan was security and infrastructure, the second plan shall emphasise education and research, with forest regeneration remaining the backbone of both plans.

In March 2016 the NTV network held its Wild Talk show in Karura focusing on the alleged commercial development in the forest. The distinguished guests — Hon. Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Karanja Njoroge, FKF Chair, and Wanjira Mathai, Green Belt Movement Director — all emphasised the sanctity and integrity of the forest. The CS declared that no building would be authorised in the forest under her watch. This popular show put Karura in the limelight of prime time television and went a long way to help fight land grabbing in the forest. In the same month, a gala dinner held at UNEP by the Greenbelt Movement in honour of FKF Patron Wangari Maathai confirmed the high-level local and international support for Karura Forest.



FKF and KFS senior staff planning together at Lake Elementaita



Cabinet Secretary Wakhungu reassures Kenyans about Karura sanctity

Photo: NTV



First Lady Margaret Kenyatta greets FKF Chair Karanja Njoroge at Wangari Maathai dinner

Photo: GBM

# NUMBERS & FACTS

## FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015	2014
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Non-current Assets</b>		
Property & Equipment <b>Total</b>	8,674,131	7,651,557
<b>Current assets</b>		
Inventory	193,300	304,700
Receivables and prepayments	2,936,399	3,405,184
Cash and cash equivalent	19,899,220	17,519,118
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,028,919</b>	<b>21,229,002</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Payables <b>Total</b>	4,069,505	4,093,607
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>18,959,414</b>	<b>17,135,395</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>27,633,545</b>	<b>24,786,953</b>
<i>REPRESENTED BY:</i>		
<b>FUND BALANCES</b>		
<b>Restricted Fund</b>	11,904,534	7,769,067
<b>General Fund</b>	15,729,011	17,017,886
<b>TOTAL FUND BALANCES</b>	<b>27,633,545</b>	<b>24,786,953</b>

### FRIENDS OF KARURA FOREST

- ✓ Registered October 2009
- ✓ 947 members
- ✓ 510 annual passes issued
- ✓ 34 large events held
- ✓ More than 5,000 bikes rented

### KARURA FOREST RESERVE

- ✓ 200,000 annual visitors
- ✓ 70% of visitors Kenya citizens
- ✓ TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2014, 2015
- ✓ No. 4 of 100 places to visit in Kenya (according to TripAdvisor)
- ✓ A rapidly recovering ecosystem (according to 21 mammal species)



Support the work of the Friends of Karura Forest by renewing your membership or becoming a new member. Your membership helps to protect the forest and restore it to its natural state, for all of us to enjoy and for the benefit of future generations.

Membership starts at just KES 1,500 a year. As a member, you are also eligible to apply for the Annual Pass, an exclusive benefit of membership that entitles you to free entrance to the forest for one whole year.

Get more details on our website, [www.friendsofkarura.org](http://www.friendsofkarura.org).

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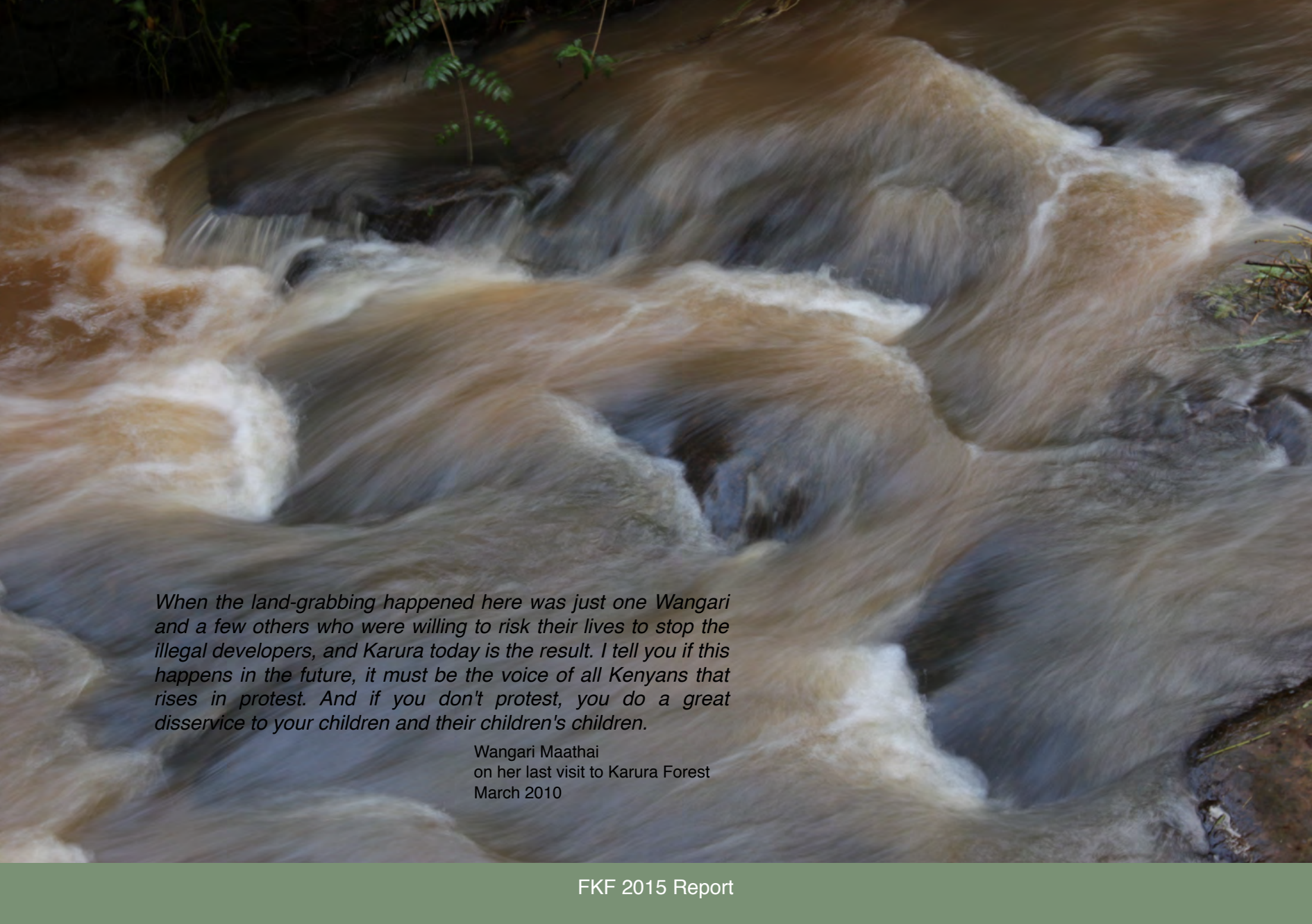
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Friends of Karura Forest, Nairobi, April 2016

*Back Cover: Natural water  
purification by Karura River  
above the falls during the  
rains*



*When the land-grabbing happened here was just one Wangari and a few others who were willing to risk their lives to stop the illegal developers, and Karura today is the result. I tell you if this happens in the future, it must be the voice of all Kenyans that rises in protest. And if you don't protest, you do a great disservice to your children and their children's children.*

Wangari Maathai  
on her last visit to Karura Forest  
March 2010