

Hope for NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK

Friends of Nairobi National Park (FoNNaP) is a membership driven, not for profit organisation dedicated to protecting Kenya's oldest national park and supporting the Kenya Wildlife Service's important work. Members thrive on enjoying the park, photographing wildlife and birds, and several times a year, enjoy free entrance in exchange for game counts or trash collection.



BRYONY ANDERSON is a former chairperson of FoNNaP. She managed the design and construction of the AFEW Giraffe Centre and is happiest in the bush and sharing the experience.

This past year, FoNNaP went beyond picking up trash to installing a recycling station at the main entrance to the park. FoNNaP also purchased recycled plastics for new park posts and signage, and is making the public aware to 'take out what you bring in'. The day of opening, 6,451 school children passed by on their way to the orphanage! So, many have learned where rubbish should go and how it can be reused. Another station will be installed at the East Gate.

A serious ongoing threat is toxins leeching into the water system from Nairobi and Ongata Rongai. Plastics clog rivers that wildlife, livestock and humans depend on all the way to the Indian Ocean. Cement dust clouds, as well as emissions from our highways,

are absorbed by the green space of the park.

So many Kenyans do not know about wildlife areas accessible only to those who have cars. FoNNaP is very aware that given the opportunity to visit the park, another world is discovered and a desire for wildlife and wild places to remain becomes important. FoNNaP has, through the help of organisations like African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW Giraffe Centre), Wildlife Clubs of Kenya and KWS organised transport and driver guides into the park for students.

The southern boundary of the park, of great importance to migratory wildlife, is also home to domestic livestock and people that depend on them. Human/wildlife conflict is a constant issue.

Rhinos in Nairobi National Park with a view of Nairobi in the background.

PHOTO BY: DELTA WILLIS



FoNNaP remains committed to wildlife and people. Last year, FoNNaP funded the installation of 18 LED flashing, solar powered lights around livestock bomas. The result is NO night predation.

FoNNaP has made inroads into the future training of scout teams from the area to work with KWS to track predators, stray buffalo and general wildlife conflict.

In 2015, 53 acres of the park were usurped by highway construction. In 2019, Kenya Railways intends to build a 4.153 km access road linking the southern bypass to the Inland Container Depot (ICD). FoNNaP is ready to fight to hold the park's boundaries and to avoid further incursions.

Despite a stop order, when SGR construction crews invaded the park, loud explosions went on day and night to plant pillars for the train tracks. KWS are monitoring sound effects on wildlife and will continue to do so as trains pass overhead. But construction work was completed faster than scheduled, and the negatives not as high as anticipated. While it is an eyesore that we will become used to, it did not split the park in half as was feared.

By being elevated high above the ground, rather than on embankments, (like at other SGR tracks in Tsavo and the Rift Valley,) here animals can pass freely. In fact, the animals enjoy its shade, it's cover while hunting and no doubt passengers will be overjoyed by their ride across the park. I believe we need to thank the KWS board and Richard Leakey as chair for this concept. According to Leakey, the total loss of land amounts to just over one half of one acre. (See related *Swara* article by Akshay Vishwanath entitled *The Standard Gauge Railway: Are We Doing it Right?* [Swara Oct-Dec 2017].

FoNNaP has also been involved in the mitigation of such development when bulldozers and other equipment import bad weeds. Invasive plant species like *Parthenium hysterophorus*

Giraffe stands near the elevated railway in Nairobi National Park.

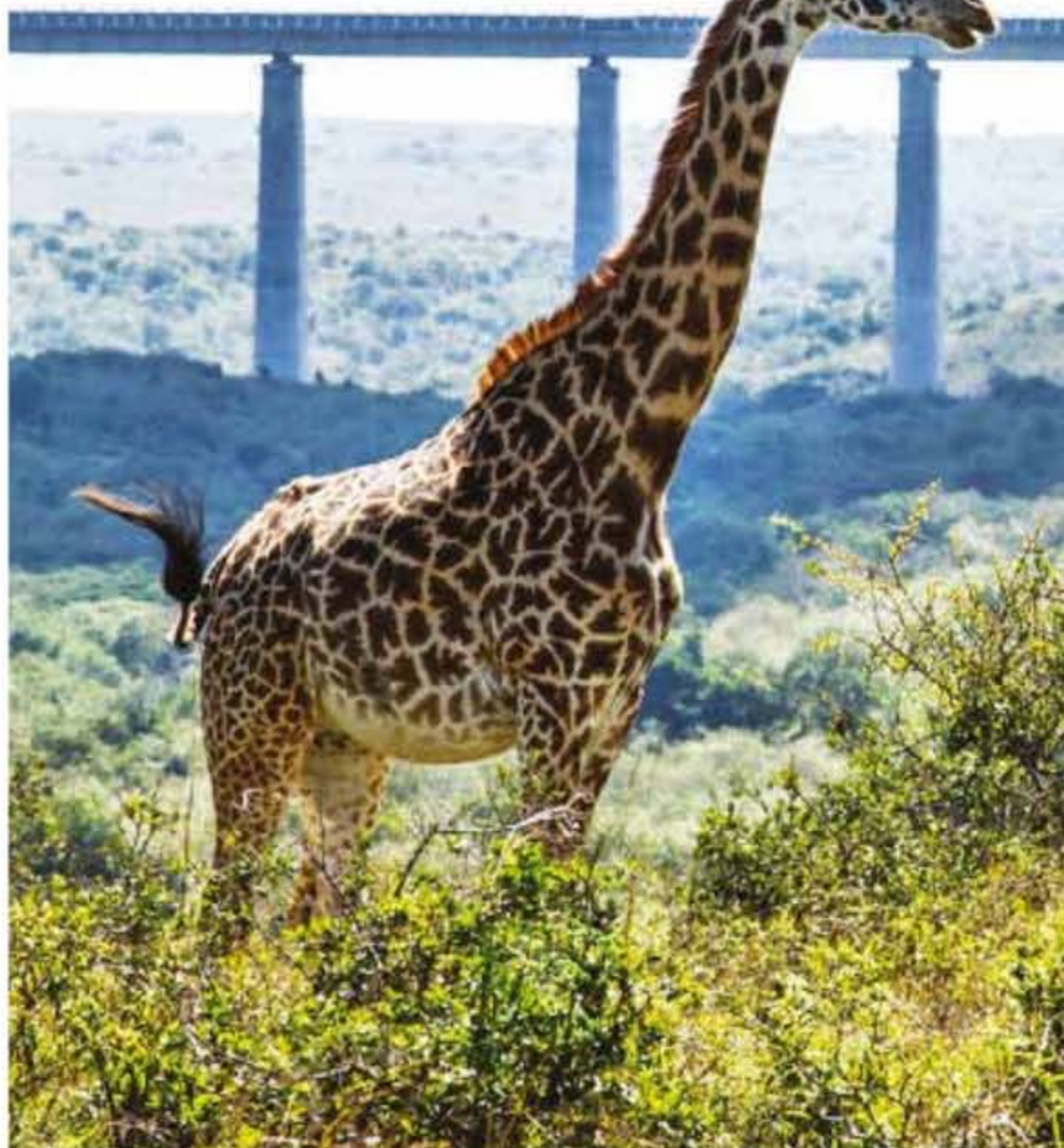


PHOTO BY: HARRY BRAINCH

have the potential to take over more of the grasslands with each rain. FoNNaP provides member volunteers to eradicate the noxious weed.

For the last two years, FoNNaP has produced a fund-raising benefit in partnership with Ole Sereni Hotel. In 2017, Maia Von Leckow sang the blues while the sun went down over the park; tasty bitings were served, and raffles won, including a free flight for two on British Airways. In 2018, world-renowned Big Cat Tales TV stars Jonathan and Angela Scott showed film clips, magnificent photos and

gave a talk, the first time in Kenya for 15 years. Raffle prizes ranged from Kenya Airways tickets to safari lodges. Photographers, whose muse is the wildlife of Nairobi National Park, had the opportunity to show their talent. These gatherings not only raised funds but were a celebration by members and their guests to their love of Nairobi National Park.

On 23rd February FoNNaP had its AGM at the Education Centre at KWS headquarters. A new Board was elected, with Marco Pruiksmas as Chair. For only 2,000 Kenya shillings (\$20)[less for students] you can join Friends of Nairobi National Park and help this park remain the gem it is to Kenya and Kenyan's future. ●

IN 2015, 53 ACRES OF THE PARK WERE USURPED BY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.