

Project Update: August 2014

1. We've seen an increase in the activities and events hosted at City Park by groups from around Nairobi. These activities draw people to City Park, often for the first time, and allow the *Friends* to give the story of the park, call for its conservation, and provides an opportunity to create awareness about its biodiversity and the importance of nature in the city. The *Friends* advocacy activities and the better communication enabled by the project have brought greater visibility and attention on City Park.

Some of these diverse activities include: monthly nature walks, school visits, corporate treasure hunts, Nai ni Who (neighbourhood friendship) Festival in 2013 and July 2014, Workshop day for Building the City: Planning, Participation, and Practice in East Africa by the British Institute in Eastern Africa, in March 2014, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change – Kenya World Environment Day Cleanup and tree planting in June 2014, and the Urban Swaras group run in July 2014.


2. The garden areas planted in 2013 continue to mature. The butterfly house while still unable to sustain a breeding population of butterflies has played a leading educational role in the activities mentioned above. Butterflies are collected from the park, or requested from a partner butterfly house at the coast, and children and other visitors have an opportunity to interact with the butterflies and learn about their lifecycle.
3. The activities, the engagement, website, education are all contributing to a much more robust discussion about City Park, its use and its future, and building the community of people concerned for the park and nature in the City.

Also, 5000 copies of a support brochure have been produced, anticipated to go a long way in promoting the park and seeking greater support, in donations, subscriptions or in kind.

4. The new *Friends* website made possible through this project, together with social media initiatives are generating referrals and sign-ups. We've had about 5,354 page views from about 1000 users in the last 14 months, with 43% of these being returning users. Almost 90% of these are being referred from our Facebook activity, where our following (2,167 Likes) and reach (of between 400-6000 on different posts) has increased - we've had more posts, promotion, and feedback. This is very exciting as we've never before been able to gather this kind of feedback, commentary, and understanding on City Park.
5. A considerable time and effort has been spent on ensuring that City Park remains public green space. This has had some success, and we are celebrating the National Land Commission's (NLC) determination (of 1st July 2014) that 14 properties made up of City Park land, are to be revoked. The NLC is a relatively new government body that should protect public land. The activities,

awareness, and logistical support of transport and communication that this project has provided has made it easier to present the management and land issues to the NLC and others, bringing attention to the value of City Park and calling for its protection.

6. 'Creating a Pollinator Garden' is an article that appears in the 2014 August issue of the *Kenya Birding* magazine and on the Friends blog, providing some insight to others who might wish to learn from this initiative. It focuses on planting a pollinator garden: choosing a site, site preparation, planting and mulching, and tips on which flowers were planted.



Acacia butterfly. Photo by Dino Martins.

Creating a Pollinator Garden

Your action can greatly help to keep nature near at hand, protect the diversity of local pollinators, and offer you hours of pleasure from visiting birds, bees, butterflies and other plant visitors.

Catherine Ngarachu

Located within ten minutes' drive of Nairobi's downtown area, is City Park. Its 60+ hectares of green space consists of botanic gardens, historical landmarks, and an area of indigenous evergreen forest. Most of the gardens of City Park however are planted with exotic flowering plants.

It was time to create a pollinator garden to:

- contribute to the biological well being of the park,
- reintroduce people to local flowering plants, and
- provide visitors, the opportunity to learn about pollinators.


Here are the steps we took that can help you to create your own pollinator garden.

The site: You don't need a large area—a pot or small flowerbed will do, it depends on what you want to plant to attract pollinators. Our site at City Park was chosen, largely due to the protection it offered from numerous Sykes monkeys and its proximity to water.


Site preparation: Check to see the type of

soil you have—is it well drained, does it need loosening up, or weeding? At City Park there wasn't much soil at the site, being mostly gravel we decided to bring in fresh soil and manure.

Planting: Plants Galore (plantsgalore.co.ke) donated a diversity of local plants and spent time helping to plant them. We set them far enough apart to allow for growth, and planted each with a scoop of compost. You'll want to do the same.

Mulching: Don't leave soil bare to dry out or as space for weeds to grow. Park staff were very helpful, bringing in and spreading leaf debris between the plants that they had swept up. 

This garden project includes a small butterfly house and was undertaken with the kind permission of Nairobi City County. Many thanks also to Friends of City Park, Nature Kenya Youth committee, County staff, Plants Galore, and Rufford Foundation—we are very grateful to all for their support.



inside butterfly house. Photo by Vincent Otieno.

Some of the flowers planted were Plumbago—profuse blue flowers, Crossandra or firecracker flower—grows low with apricot petals, Heliotropium—quick-growing, scented, purple flower clusters, Whitfieldia—herbaceous, sprays of white flowers, Ocimum—aromatic shrub, purple sprays, Carissa edulis—scented small shrub or tree.

Some pollinators observed visiting: Amegilla bees, Carpenter bees, Honey bees, *Belenois aurota*, Butterflies: African Emigrant, African Wood White, Citrus Swallowtail, Hoverflies, Bronze Sunbirds (by Vincent Otieno)