



Fort Portal Science Center Opens

New Nature Foundation was thrilled to open the fifth Kibale Science Center, in Fort Portal, Uganda, on June 11th 2016.

Formally known as the Wooden Bar, NNF staff transformed the site into what many have described as an extremely unique and much needed educational facility for the town. Thanks to support from private and institutional donors, natural history specimens (from a full chimpanzee skeleton replica to a chicken embryo to the life cycle of a frog) are showcased alongside a collection of books and posters that further explain the never before seen displays. As with the other Science Centers, the artifacts serve to enhance the attitudes people have toward

nature. In Uganda, sometimes the animals and national parks are seen as something to be enjoyed by tourists, not the local community. These museums allow Ugandans to see they have something to be proud of and appreciate. The skeletons and books also act as a draw to build excitement about NNF's fuel efficiency campaigns.

The original Kibale Science Center, opened in 2006, was the first museum of its kind in Uganda - designed for local citizens living near the national park with free admission. This fifth Center is located at the intersection of two major roads in the heart of Fort Portal, the largest town near Kibale. A local *(continued on next page)*

artist has painted a striking chimpanzee outside to attract as many visitors as possible. The reactions have been inspiring! People cannot believe what they are seeing and keep asking how we could have come up with an idea like this, and how it could possibly be free!

After an inaugural party attended by ~30 local governmental and Wildlife Authority officials, opening weekend saw more than 250 visitors. As word spread, staff welcomed more than 470 more guests during the remainder of the initial week. Maybe we didn't need that radio spot after all? But it was fun! VOT FM, the Voice of Tooro Radio, applauded the opening of the new Center with a 30-minute interview/call in show featuring NNF Manager Margaret Kemigisa and co-founder Michael Stern.

Musabe Bashir, who you read about in the last UPDATE, has been promoted and is overseeing the new facility. Bashir is skilled in the inquiry method of education, and is already training a new intern, David (pictured in yellow), to assist. While the two of them spend the majority of their time highlighting Uganda's outstanding biodiversity, a major aim of this new Center was to create a sales point for NNF's eco-friendly biomass briquettes. The briquettes (more details later in this UPDATE) are sold at an attractive price, and efficient stoves are also available. We hope that once visitors learn to love Kibale's exceptional wildlife, they will be inspired to take action to protect the park.

Already, so many visitors have expressed thanks and joy. People met during opening week include: two secondary school students who spent the entire first day reading book after book and asking questions like "do bats menstruate?"; the mother of twins who was so excited to return with the rest of the family; the nurse who stopped in with her child and was thrilled to have resources about nursing and health. Everyone at NNF is excited to see how the new Center continues to grow. We are all very thankful to the donors who have made this possible.



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Thank you for your support!



Visitor Spotlight

Present at the Science Center for the opening party, and every day so far thereafter, was Hamilton Kalyegiria, Public Relations Officer for VOT FM (and head of his own local environmental NGO). We took a few minutes to find out why he finds the place so inviting:

What do you like so much here at the new Kibale Science Center?

The nature sights! The first sight seen upon walking through the door is the green environment and animal structures. Nature is a big thing - it is impressive, both the plant and animal kingdoms.

Why do you like nature so much?

Because if we don't have it, no human being can survive. If we had no plants, there would be no air! And no medicines,

etc. The green environment is life itself. While growing up and schooling, I first realized the importance of biology. I was a cattle grazer as a young man, and very much enjoyed the shade and fruit provided by trees. I realized that birds were planting these trees, since they weren't in a cultivated area. All of us need nature, and all of us are a part of nature.

How do you think the people of Fort Portal will react to the new Science Center?

The young people of Fort Portal will learn more thanks to the Science Center. In class, they don't have these samples of natural science. Adults will learn about the briquettes and all other science learning. It will motivate people to care for animals and the environment. In the future, I hope there will be lectures about the natural environment so more people can be learning, go back home, and make use of the knowledge.

Anything else you'd like to tell the readers?

There are two unique things here. First, the team is so approachable - encouraging, guiding, hospitable. This will motivate people to learn more. Also, networking and collaborating is good. It gives me the opportunity, when speaking on the radio about these things, to reference the Science Center. People in town don't know nature. Now, when they have the opportunity, they can drop in and learn. I am an activist, an environmental promoter. We can work together.



Brief Notes

✓Margaret Kemigisa, Project Manager of New Nature Foundation's Ugandan programs since inception in 2006, has just been elected as the first female mayor of Kiko Township! In a landslide victory (Kemigisa 1,930 votes, Baguma 559, Kandole 180), the community rallied around her, writing songs, putting up posters, making donations, and cheering for her whenever she drove past. Congratulations, Margaret! (Pictured campaigning, below.) This expanded platform will surely help create new bridges between environmental, social and political action in Western Uganda. While Margaret will continue as NNF's Project Manager, her new position has also opened the door to expanded responsibilities for other members of the staff, as they step up to take some things off her plate. For all of you who have had the pleasure of meeting Margaret, you know what a special person she is - with this step, she is certainly continuing to inspire us all!



✓Since January, the staff has been hard at work hosting 23 workshops attended by over 450 people. Many of these promote efficient cooking and train people on the easily replicable methodologies that NNF has been disseminating for more than 10 years: home-made efficient stoves coupled with home-grown firewood and eco-briquettes. Some of the workshops deal with a far more complex topic, one that NNF started including only last year:



family planning. Human population growth is at the root of Uganda's ecological crises, as the country has the third fastest growing population in the world. The various workshops reach diverse audiences, for example, "career planning" workshops (for teens), health screenings (for women) and "elder's discussion sessions" (led by respected elders and attended by all ages). One-on-one interactions at these workshops are fostering behavioral changes that help the forest and people alike.



✓Each month, staff submit reports. Here are some memorable excerpts:

"There was a demonstration about tectonic plates and also a teaching about the rift valley formation that was joined by many people including the students. This continuous teaching has helped people to understand. I have also understood much due to continuous teaching." - Pakaracio

"During this month I have been teaching about swimming birds, like the way how they feed and the way how they get food, by showing practically using basins filled with water and some snails in the water. People were enjoying!" - Moses

"The Life Cycle of a Butterfly- We made a drama whereby each actor could perform like any of the stages picked at random from a cup. Some could act as eggs, larva, chrysalis, and adults. This made the kids happy and each one enjoyed the study and they must have caught the lesson within their brains because of self-involvement in the action." - Acleo

Briquette Update

Production of briquettes continues to grow and evolve! Currently, two types are being produced: the “kuchumbrick” (Rutooro for “cook-brick”), which burns like wood, and “eco-char”, a carbonized version which burns like charcoal. Local families continue to barter for the kuchumbricks, bringing banana peels, peanut shells, avocado pits and other farm waste - 10 kilos of waste buys 40 briquettes, about what a typical family uses in a day to prepare food. The plan had always been to make this portion of the program sustainable, paying employee salaries through sales of surplus briquettes. Along the way to this goal many hurdles have been cleared, from speeding waste processing with electric machines to increasing drying space under three huge tents. One major hitch in the plan, however, was that those who currently buy cooking fuel (charcoal for the vast majority of the population in town) do not want a product that burns like wood (with a flame and some smoke). Over the course of three years, a recipe for carbonized briquettes was fine-tuned, eventually perfecting a product that tested *better* than real charcoal (boiled water faster *and* lasted longer). Unfortunately, that briquette was not very hard, and did not travel well to the urban centers where charcoal is sold. Back to the drawing board, and after many more trials and errors, a new recipe was perfected, this

one using a tiny percentage of cassava flour in the mix to provide the needed hardness. Bingo! The briquette works well, but the next issue was that the people who are buying fuel (in town) do not often travel to the village, where the production facility is housed. This was a big factor in deciding to open the new Science Center in Fort Portal, and to include a briquette sale display. This way, after visitors learn about Kibale’s wildlife and how charcoal production endangers the forest, they can take action to address that very issue. Prior to opening the new museum, some “early adopters” in town started buying eco-char in small quantities. Their comments have led us to redesign again, with the realization that even those who are willing to try something new can be hesitant once they realize the product (though it compares well with charcoal in tests) looks and feels different from the real thing. Since saving Kibale may depend on this answer, we remain committed.



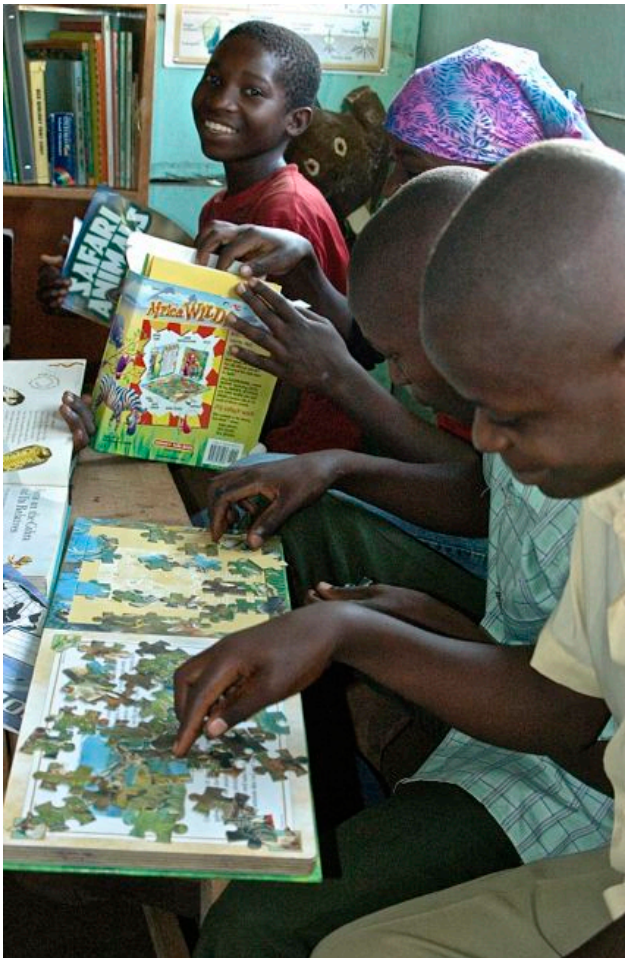
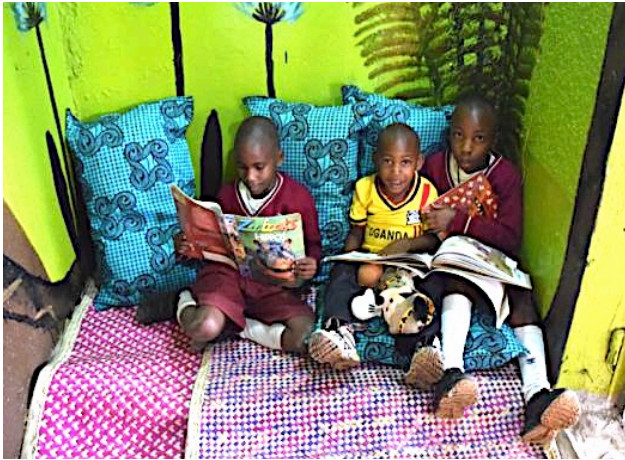
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NewNatureFoundation.org

The website also has a link for our Amazon Wish List - you can buy things for the Science Centers and we'll bring them over for you.

Interested in visiting or volunteering? Please send an email to us at **info@newnaturefoundation.org** to start a conversation.

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