



The Society for Conservation Biology - Africa Section prepares for a regional conference in Ghana

For the first time in its history, the Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology will come together for a regional conference. Slated for late January 2009, in the beautiful country of Ghana, the conference theme is "From Conservation Science to Policy in Africa."

There has never been a better time to convene a conference with this particular theme. Even a quick glance at this newsletter shows that policy is on everyone's mind. The Conservation Commentary by Stephen Awoyemi focuses on policy, both "Meet the Conservationist" features cite policy as an important issue in conservation today, and the Africa Section Survey reveals broad support for

policy as a theme for a conference. What do you think?

We hope you'll join us at the SCB-Africa Section Regional Conference - January 28-30, 2009. For details, see page 2 and visit the web site (www2.ug.edu.gh/ecolabconference).

And while we plan for the Regional Meeting, don't forget the international meeting....

Society for Conservation Biology 2009 - Call for proposals extended to October 31 2008

The 23rd annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology, "Conservation: Harmony for Nature and Society", will be held 11-16 July in Beijing, China. Contributions from all fields of conservation research and practice are welcome, including natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

All proposals must be submitted by 31 October 2008. Decisions will be made by mid-December. Complete instructions for submitting proposals are available at the meeting Web site, www.conbio.org/2009/proposals or from 2009@conbio.org.



Lilac-breasted Roller (*Coracias caudata*), Kruger National Park. (Photo: W. Foster)

ACT is back in action!

Welcome to the reincarnation of the *African Conservation Telegraph*, also known as *ACT*. *ACT* is the official newsletter for the Society for Conservation Biology's Africa Section. Although it has been dormant in the last few years, we hope you will welcome *ACT*'s re-birth and choose to contribute to future issues.

ACT serves as one of several sources of information exchange between SCB-Africa Section members (or anyone interested in African conservation).

The SCB-Africa Section web site has a wealth of information focused on African conservation news and we also have the SCB-Africa Section's list serve, AfricaList, for announcements and educational and career opportunities. The SCB main web site is full of terrific resources and has a very extensive and constantly changing job listing service.

ACT is not meant to replace any of those, but to supplement them with longer news articles, features written specifically for *ACT*, and other information that serves to inform the African conservationist.

I hope to produce four issues per year, but this largely depends on you. Take a look around and see if you like the new design. Let me hear from you - and give me your ideas for future content. You can contact me at: SCB.ACT@gmail.com.

Janette Wallis, *ACT* Editor-in-Chief

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Society for Conservation Biology - Africa Section

Regional Conference

January 28-30, 2009

University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, GHANA

Theme: "From Conservation Science to Policy in Africa"



Goals

1. To provide an atmosphere for conservation scientists, practitioners and managers working on African conservation issues to share research, management and policy experiences.
2. To provide a forum for discussing relevant continental common policy challenges such as the NEPAD environment initiative, and the Millennium Development Goals in relation to conservation frameworks such as Ramsar Convention, CMS, CITES, Agenda 21 and UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and recent topical issues such as climate change, biofuels and food insecurity.
3. To provide an enabling environment for collaboration and networking.
4. To foster regional integration of Africa's conservation challenges within the mission of the Society for Conservation Biology - and thus promote the membership of the Society.

Call for Scientific and Policy Papers

Abstracts are now being accepted for the paper and poster presentations, workshops and symposia. Please check the conference web site for updates on the meeting: www2.ug.edu.gh/ecolabconference. You may also reach us through email: scafrica2009@conbio.org

Sponsors & Exhibitors

Do you or your organization want to contribute to Biodiversity Conservation, MDG 7, and Growth and Development of Africa by sponsoring this meeting? Kindly make submissions to the Local Organizing Committee. Sponsor a Plenary Speakers and Get Gold recognition!

Prof Patrick Ofori-Danson
Local Organizing Committee [LOC]
SCB Africa Regional Meeting
The Ecological Laboratory Unit [ECOLAB]
University of Ghana, PO Box LG71, Legon, Accra, GHANA
Email: scafrica2009@conbio.org

Delali B. Dovie, PhD
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IDRC Developmental Universities Project
University of Ghana, c/o PO Box LG59
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More information on SCB Africa Section:
<http://www.conbio.org/Sections/Africa/>

Abstract deadline: NOVEMBER 4th, 2008



Society for Conservation Biology



CONSERVATION COMMENTARY

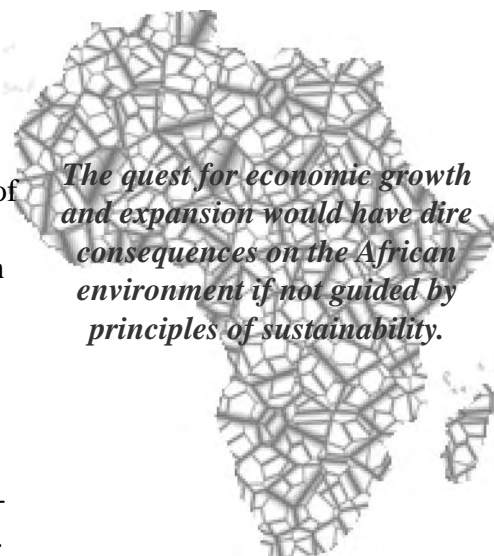
SCB Growth in the Policy Arena: The African Perspective

The Society for Conservation Biology ventures into the hitherto unexplored arena of policy based on a united voice, diversity and collective action of the world's largest cohesion of conservation scientists. Modern communication technologies have opened opportunities for this endeavor. We now have the benefit of unity of voice in the drive towards a sustainable world through supporting advocacy with conservation science.

SCB's engagement in policy has come just in time as Africa faces a rapidly changing world with respect to global energy and environmental issues. Everywhere in Africa, we are faced with poverty, inadequate infrastructure for energy needs, corruption, education demands, health challenges, and food insecurity.

Yet, daily, new situations unfold that could undermine efforts to address these challenges, such as the conflicts and struggle for equitable resource use and development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Despite these challenges, from finance to telecommunications, determined Africans are beating the odds and breaking new frontiers.

This juncture in history positions Africa, I believe, as one region with great potential for wisely directed growth and development. However, these avenues for growth draw economic actors from different parts



of the world who are keen on seizing every opportunity for mega profits in the continent's largely untapped consumer and producer markets. The quest for economic growth and expansion would have dire consequences on the African environment if not guided by principles of sustainability.

In this light, the SCB Africa Section can contribute to the leadership necessary to develop the strategic approach to sustainability in Africa. Thus, we as scientists can apply our professionalism as conservation biologists to the opportunities time and history has put in our grasp. In a global sense, SCB must develop effective mechanisms, therefore, to link science with policy in the African continent. For instance the key players, local policy makers and their institutions in the different African countries, are still largely out of our reach. Many of these entities

may not be aware of the SCB and its potential role in conservation policy.

So, first, as we make our voice heard. At the same time, we need to establish contact with the grassroots in Africa and reach those who are in dire need of the information that we have. This is critical. Otherwise our policy efforts would be ultimately ineffective. When we establish a strong network of local actors in the policy arena, we can monitor and evaluate our efforts as an organization.

Second, the SCB may eventually need a regional secretariat in Africa to establish a presence on the continent. Our organization should not just be felt virtually but in a real and powerful manner. An on the ground presence would reinforce our voice and strongly influence policy initiatives in the Africa region.

Stephen M. Awoyemi
Africa Representative
SCB Policy Committee,
Chair, Conservation, Policy,
Education and Science
Committee (COPESCO)
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**If you wish to
contribute an article
for the Conservation
Commentary page of
ACT, contact us at:**

SCB-ACT@gmail.com

Meet a Conservationist: Wendy Foden

Interview by Phoebe Barnard,
South African National
Biodiversity Institute



Wendy Foden, South African conservation biologist, hugging (actually, measuring!) a mature quiver tree, *Aloe dichotoma*, in Southern Africa's Succulent Karoo. (Photo: G. Ellis)

In this issue of the newsletter, meet Wendy Foden, an African conservationist brimming with energy and ideas for tackling the conservation challenges we all face. Wendy has been driven from the start. She finished school and her BSc, honours and masters degrees from Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town, all with first-class distinctions. Her masters thesis showing evidence of serious climate change impacts on an arid-zone African flagship tree, *Aloe dichotoma*, has been reported around the world. But Wendy is no academic wall-flower. She is active in the field, a passionate initiator of threatened species conservation science projects and inputs to policy, and an ardent contributor to IUCN and other processes in southern Africa. Below, she talks to our roving reporter about her work and her values.

Phoebe: How would you describe your main role in conservation - what is your job, and what kinds of activities do you handle in it?

Wendy: I've just taken an exciting job as programme officer, working on climate change for

the IUCN in Cambridge, UK. There's some really groundbreaking work going on in integrating climate change into the Red List process. Before that, I managed South Africa's Threatened Species Programme (TSP), based at the South African National Biodiversity Institute. The programme focused on closing the gaps in Red Listing and Atlasing in the country, and partnership programmes tackling plants, reptiles, butterflies, arachnids, birds and frogs are in progress. As well as dealing with policy, conservation planning and research, the TSP has a strong capacity building component and supports a significant number of scholarships, internships and community outreach programmes.

I believe that species conservation forms the essential skeleton of conservation. The cuteness, cuddliness, scariness, sadness, vulnerability, beauty or ugliness of our cohabiting creatures is something we're all able to

relate to, and so species play an important role in building a firm consciousness of biodiversity conservation in our nations.

Phoebe: What would you say are the most pressing issues facing African conservation today? Facing South African conservation today?

Wendy:

- Political instability and poverty – Conservation clearly takes a very low priority when people are poor, hungry and/or at war. Good national governance promotes sound long-term planning, policymaking, education and law enforcement for conservation and breeds a culture of respect and care for the environment.
- Corruption – corruption undermines all the hard work, good policy making and morale of conservation in Africa. I find it despicable, unforgivable and utterly depressing. Corrupt environment damagers should be

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given the same fate they cause, e.g., a dose of the chainsaw, ploughing, or rifle treatment!

- Climate change – young conservationists face the unprecedented challenge of abandoning many of our existing concepts of conservation and learning to play a new role as the innovators who try to minimise extinctions and maximise the adaptive capacity of the landscape to deal with climate change.

*Phoebe: Can you identify a time in your life when you just decided you **had** to be a conservation biologist?*

Wendy: When I'd completed my university biology studies, I went to the UK to earn money to pay back my student loan and to "see the world". During

the next three years, I worked as a computer programmer in London, traveled extensively through Asia and Africa, and tried to work out what life direction to choose.

In 2000, I joined a student expedition to Tanzania to help determine remaining stocks of commercially exploited *Dalbergia melanoxylon*. Some hasty planning sent our small jumble-bag of students, kit and

faulty vehicles off down the cratered sandy road to remote and sparsely populated southern Tanzania for 6 weeks. As we entered the region's extensive miombo woodlands, I was awed by each giant tree in a realm of the most wild, noble, beautiful tree-beings

I've ever encountered. Everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong on that trip. But I happily spent any spare time with local villagers and their elders, finding out about the medicinal, cultural and magical uses of these trees and how they coexist with them.

In Tanzania it became clear to me that my life would be worthwhile if I spent my energy and time in a way that could help to protect such a place and such coexistence. I used a jumpy connection in a seedy Dar es Salaam internet café to apply for the Conservation Biology MSc programme at the University of Cape Town and I haven't looked back since.

Phoebe: Who would you say are your 'conservation heroes' - in Africa or elsewhere?

Wendy:

- Prof William Bond, ecologist, University of Cape Town. He showed me that science should be creative and fun and forced me to think innovatively and originally. He has contributed massively to South African conservation by drawing so many young minds into ecology, inspiring us and sending us out into the world equipped and passionate for conservation.

- Kristal Maze, director, biodiversity planning & policy at SANBI (also a student of William's). Kristal is my inspiration for making conservation happen. As a young woman in a traditionally male dominated field, she ignores the stereotypes and uses her own "no-mess-no-fuss" approach to get things done strategically and well. Kristal has already made great strides in getting South Africa's biodiversity conservation into top shape. I look forward to seeing the results of the rest of her career. (Author's note – Kristal has since been awarded the 2nd Young Women Conservation Biologists' Award of the SCB Africa Section in 2008).



Conservationist and guide, Terry Umseb, explains to Wendy the location of quiver trees in the Brandberg Mountains, Namibia. (Photo: G. Ellis)

If you would like to suggest someone as a future "Meet a Conservationist" subject, contact: SCB.ACT@gmail.com.

Meet a Conservationist: Mao Angua Amis

Interview by Phoebe Barnard,
South African National Biodiversity Institute

Mao Angua Amis is a Ugandan freshwater biologist and conservation planner currently living in South Africa, and writing up his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Some of his after-work passions include running and climbing (see photo).

He spoke to Phoebe Barnard

about his experiences and reflections on African conservation.

Phoebe: Mao, how would

you describe your main role in conservation - what is your job, and what kinds of activities do you handle in it?

Mao: I'm a conservation biologist with expertise in freshwater conservation planning, but I'm currently writing up my Ph.D. thesis at the Freshwater Research Unit, UCT. Before this, I obtained an MSc in Conservation Biology from the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, UCT, and a BSc from Moi University, Kenya.

My PhD project is developing tools and criteria for effective conservation planning. One of the key issues I'm trying to address is how effectively to integrate freshwater and terrestrial perspectives in conservation planning. This is important,

because conservation planning exercises are often biased towards terrestrial ecosystems, without adequately addressing concerns specific to freshwater ecosystems.

I'm also interested in global change and its impact on fresh-

water ecosystems, and how these challenges can be addressed in conservation planning. For example, it's well known that

some species ranges are bound to shift in response to climate change, and the challenge for conservation planners is how to plan for these shifting biodiversity priorities.

Apart from the Ph.D., I'm involved in a number of conservation projects run by various organizations in South Africa including WWF-South Africa (Integrated catchment management), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) (developing tools for assessing freshwater management effectiveness), and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) (identifying national freshwater biodiversity priorities). These projects all involve novel conservation science approaches, and hopefully will result in effective conservation



Mao scalin the top of Table Mountain in Cape Town. (Photo: V. Napier.)

of freshwater ecosystems. I feel privileged to be making a contribution.

Phoebe: What would you say are the most pressing issues facing African conservation today? Facing Ugandan conservation today?

Mao: In my opinion the most pressing issue facing African conservation is how to bridge the gap between science and policy. Cutting-edge science is being carried out in many African institutions and globally, but there is just not enough impetus to propel these findings into a mainstream decision-making processes. For example, it's well known that forests are important for carbon sequestration, but the rate of forest deforestation in Africa is alarming. A recent case in point is that where the government of Uganda wanted to lease out a natural forest to investors to grow sugarcane. This is very embarrassing to us conservation biologists, because if policymak-

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ers don't see the significance of forests, then it means we have not been doing our job.

Corruption and government bureaucracy poses major challenges to African conservation. Most African governments haven't devised effective mechanisms to combat corruption. As a result, the limited conservation resources end up lining the pockets of individuals. However, corruption is intricately linked to poverty which perhaps poses the greatest challenge to conservation. There is thus a need to link biodiversity conservation with poverty alleviation. Only then can we achieve our goals of conserving the dwindling natural resources of the mother land.

*Phoebe: Can you identify a time in your life when you just decided you **had** to be a conservation biologist?*

Mao: I was born in a small town called Yumbe in northern Uganda close to the border with Sudan, and I spent most of my early childhood in rural areas. It's this rural setting and being brought up as a "free range child," always exploring the outdoors, which made me appreciate the value of nature. A story is told that during my childhood I had a phobia for clothing and I dissected my first frog when I was barely four, thus I was destined to be

a biologist. But I didn't know that my career call would be to protect the very frogs whose blood I had shed.

I had planned to carve out a career for

...if policymakers don't see the significance of forests, then it means we have not been doing our job.



Mao at the Bourke's Luck Potholes. (Photo: K. Vickers)

myself as a schoolteacher, having trained as a biology and chemistry teacher. However, my career path changed once I was admitted for a field course in tropical ecology. During the field course I met outstanding conservationists like Dr. Rosie Trevelyan, Prof. Francis Halle

There is thus a need to link biodiversity conservation with poverty alleviation, only then can we achieve our goals of conserving the dwindling natural resources of the mother land.

and many enthusiastic young people from across the globe. Prof.

Halle's captivating stories on canopy research and tree architecture left a permanent mark on me, and - if I may use this phrase - the rest is history.

Phoebe: Who would you say are your 'conservation heroes' - in Africa or elsewhere?

Mao: I'm yet to find out if there

are any budding conservationists from the Eastern and Western Africa region who did not pass through the able hands of

Dr. Rosie Trevelyan's Tropical Biology Association. Rosie believed in my strengths from day one, seconded me for a postgraduate scholarship, and ultimately made me who I am.

My other conservation heroes are the multitude of faceless Game Rangers all over Africa, without whom many endangered species in protected areas would have

been extinct. Illegal wildlife trade syndicates and squatters in many protected areas in Africa are putting the lives of both Game Rangers and wildlife in the direct line of fire. This deadly concoction of civil wars, poverty and organised syndicates has made the business of biodiversity conservation more like going to war. Thanks to the gallant Game Rangers, we are still holding out.

If you have a suggestion for a future "Meet a Conservationist" article, contact:
SCB.ACT@gmail.com.

2008 SCB Africa Section Survey – Summary of Results

Prepared by Alison Ormsby, Africa Section Education and Science Officer

In January and February 2008, members of the Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology, as well as subscribers to AfricaList, were emailed a survey about desired priorities for future directions for the Africa Section. 119 people responded. The results are summarized below. 95% of respondents were members of SCB and 71% of respondents were subscribed to AfricaList.

How long have you been a member of SCB's Africa Section?

1 year	40.2%
2 years	12.5%
3 years	20.5%
4 years	9.8%
5 years or more	17.0%

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

Respondents were asked to share details of any conservation biology programs in Africa of which they are aware. Each country mentioned and the number of research programs per country are noted below.

Botswana (3); Burkina Faso (1); Cameroon (7); DRC (3); Ethiopia (6); Gabon (2); Gambia (1); Ghana (9); Guinea (5); Kenya (34); Liberia (1); Malawi (1); Mauritius (1); Madagascar (5); Morocco (1); Mozambique (3); Namibia (2); Nigeria (9); Rwanda (1); Sierra Leone (2); South Africa (28); Sudan (1); Tanzania (26); Uganda (17); Zambia (1); Zimbabwe (7); NGOs (23)

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY TEXTS

Respondents were asked, "What conservation biology texts do you use?" Responses are organized by text author name, frequency of response, and title of text(s). (Note: only texts mentioned by more than one respondent are included here.)

Groom, Meffe and Carroll (16): *Principles of Conservation Biology*

Sutherland, William J. (13): *The Conservation Handbook, Conservation Science and Action, Ecological Census Techniques*

Primack (11): *Primer of Conservation Biology, Essentials of Conservation Biology*

Hunter and Gibbs (and Sterling) (7) – *Fundamentals of Conservation Biology, Problem Solving in Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management*

Soule, M.E. (and Wilcox, B.) (5): *Conservation Biology, Viable Populations for Conservation*

Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo (2): *Conservation*
Caughley, G. & Gunn, A. (2): *Conservation Biology in Theory and Practice*

Macdonald and Service (2): *Key Topics in Conservation Biology*

Morris and Doak (2): *Quantitative Conservation Biology*

Journal Articles from various sources (19)

REGIONAL MEETING

Respondents were asked: If the Africa Section were to hold a regional meeting, how would you feel about it being organised around "conservation science and policy"? Do you have any suggested themes or topics?

- 89 people responded to this question and 30 people skipped the question.
- 67 people (75%) expressed positive support for this topic. Some of the responses included: "A good idea. But would need to attract the policy folks... it would mostly be about the gap between what we know (through science) and what we do (through policy). The challenge would be to bring in the policy folks whether or not they think that science matters." "As long as it aims to address the issues faced by rural communities." "This is very critical because effort in conservation that is not linked to policy will not achieve much." "Very suitable but you should try and ensure that you have some policy wonks and politicians involved." "This is a very topical theme as without the strong policies to back up the science, the science is useless."
- 10 respondents (11%) were neutral about the proposed regional meeting topic. A few respondents stressed the need to focus on implementation, eg: The theme is "quite encouraging, but emphasis on implementation of the conservation policy." "Might be better to explicitly include conservation implementation in the theme thus "Conservation science, policy and implementation."
- A couple of respondents made alternative topic suggestions: "This is ok, although I would prefer to see a Regional meeting focused on field methods to engage communities in conservation practice." "The most immediate need is capacity building of national scientists across the continent. Once sufficient capacity is in place then we can fine tune their impact by focusing on how these graduates can feed conservation science into policy at the micro-scale."
- 10 respondents (11%) expressed negative sentiments about the proposed meeting topic. Many said the topic was too general, such as "Covers everything, I think (and therefore not very informative)." "Needs to be more specific, I am not sure what this really means, could be relevant to a number of different fields etc. I would prefer the topic to be more specific." "I think that this would be ineffective. Often in Africa the issue is not science and policy, but rather policy and enforcement."

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AFRICA SECTION ACTIVITIES - PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to rank (on a 5-point scale) several activities that the Africa Section could undertake or facilitate, with number 1 being the highest ranked. Results are summarized below.

1. Develop and maintain an updated database of conservation education programs in the Africa region, posted on the SCB website. Interestingly, 25.5% put this as highest priority and 29.8% put it as lowest priority.
2. Develop and maintain an updated list of conservation-relevant course and workshop offerings across the Africa region on the SCB website. 30.5% of respondents ranked this as a 4 (low priority).
3. Facilitate technical support to those interested in developing needs assessments and new curricula for conservation biology education in the Africa region. This question received the highest scores: 27.6% ranked it highest priority (1), 20.4% as 2 and 29.6% as 3.
4. Develop and offer short topical courses in conservation biology. 23.2% ranked this as 1 and 24.2% ranked it as 2.
5. Develop and offer short courses on improving teaching in conservation biology, and provide a forum for the exchange of resources and ideas on teaching conservation biology for faculty members in the Africa region. This question received a wide range of responses, with 25.2% listing it as priority 2 versus 26.2% listing this as lowest priority (5).

SHORT COURSES

Respondents were asked an open-ended question: If you are interested in short courses, please list the course topics you would find useful. A wide variety of topics were suggested for possible future short courses. The suggested topics are highlighted below and ranked by frequency of response.

Conservation and People (Human Ecology, Social Science) (29)
 Conservation Tools (27)
 Conservation of Species/Resources (21)
 Ecology and Biodiversity (16)
 Geographic Information Systems, GIS (15)
 Conservation Policies and Economics (9)
 Conservation Education (8)
 Conservation Management (7)
 Women's Studies/Participation (4)
 Conservation Science (4)
 Climate Change (3)
 Bushmeat (3)
 Restoration (3)

In future issues of the *African Conservation Telegraph*, we will include additional surveys, news items, and information from the SCB-Africa Section Board of Directors. Let us know if you have any questions or requests!!
 SCB.ACT@gmail.com



The SCB-Africa Section Board of Directors

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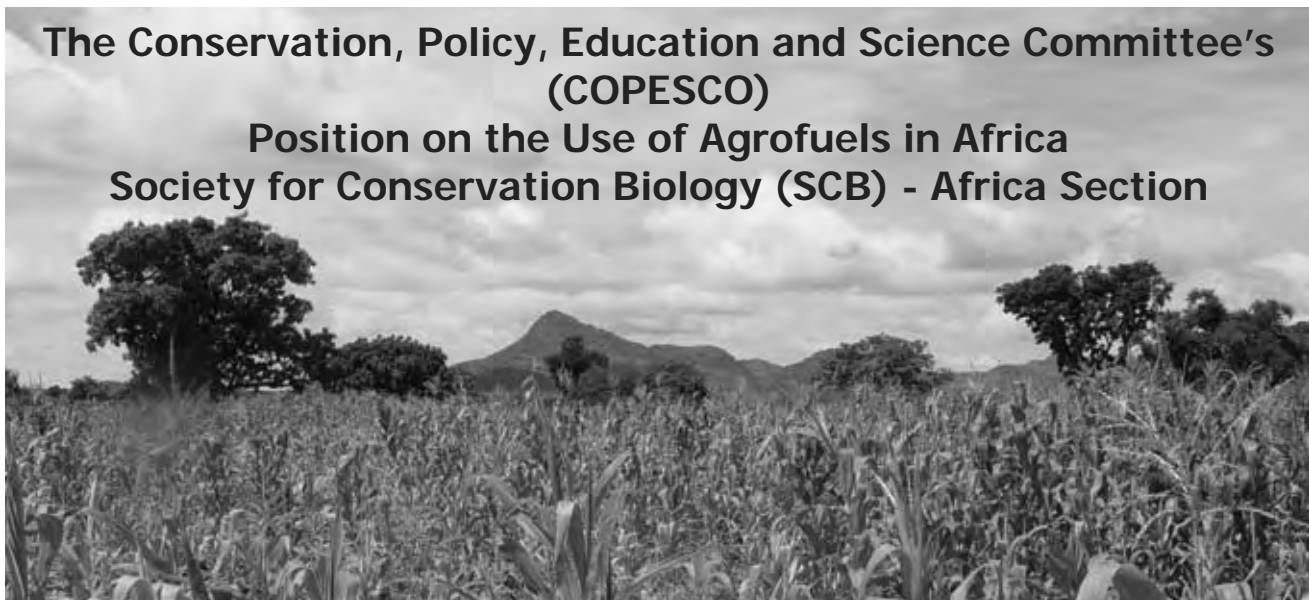
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Board Member; ACT Editor-in-Chief
 (2008 - 2010) American University of Nigeria, Nigeria

Read more about the Society for Conservation Biology - Africa Section at:
www.conbio.org/sections/africa



**The Conservation, Policy, Education and Science Committee's
(COPESCO)
Position on the Use of Agrofuels in Africa
Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) - Africa Section**

(Edited from the original publication for the *African Conservation Telegraph*.)

In its full published content (see <http://tinyurl.com/6x9dtk>), this position paper exposes the current issues in Africa where biodiversity conservation, food security and human livelihoods are threatened as a result of the space that may be garnered for agrofuel production. Africa will undeniably need adequate energy to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Inevitably, the MDGs must be placed in

The Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology expresses deep concern about the potential conversion of land to agrofuel production and its effects on the price of basic foodstuffs and the loss of biodiversity.

the context of environmental sustainability so that development in itself is not undermined in the long run.

The Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology expresses deep concern about the scope, scale and pace of corporate and government movements throughout Africa and the globe towards the potential for diversion of food

crops to agrofuel production and the potential conversion of land (perhaps even undeveloped areas) to agrofuel production and its effects on the price of basic foodstuffs and the loss of biodiversity.

Agrofuels are derived from agricultural products such as sugar cane, corn, oil palm, soy bean, and cassava, which contribute directly to human livelihoods and often represent major staples in Africa. Consequently, agrofuel crops are highly relevant to Africans for both food security and cultural reasons.

It is presently a challenge to feed the human populations in Africa, so there is already a struggle to balance modern food production, traditional agriculture and natural habitat for wildlife (and the growing ecotourism trade). Ecosystem risk will increase in the face of a conflict for space between agrofuel production and food security. The Africa Section

identifies as a leading threat to this balance the designation of millions of hectares as tracts for production of agrofuels for trade around Africa or export away from Africa.

Action to be Taken

The time is ripe for action on these matters. The following set of principles must be used to guide action by NGOs and governments. Based on our understanding of conservation biology in Africa, the Africa Section of SCB concludes that:

1. African governments and policy makers need to ensure that any new energy-related development reflects a balance between local human population needs and natural resource conservation, even if a moratorium on new agrofuel contracts is needed to allow time to gain a greater understanding of the impacts of agrofuel production on biodiversity, food security and environmental sustainability.
2. Current trends indicate that the scale of agrofuel produc-

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tion is already affecting food security globally, but this trend should not be misused to justify adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems.

3. Further to the global imperatives, government should explore innovative land-use practices that enforce control over, and give alternatives to, large scale global marketing of Africa's critical resources of space and biodiversity. Accordingly, an appropriate new direction as a corollary to global, corporate programs, can be developed through eco-agriculture such as that described by Milder et al. (2008) in the *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*. Milder and his colleagues analyze diverse approaches of biofuel production systems and conclude that biofuel development has the greatest potential when biomass production is an interstitial activity and when processing occurs at the local level. We of the Africa Section of the SCB advocate for small holder biofuel production for local use where "biofuel feedstocks are produced on small farms and processed in on-site or nearby small-scale facilities to generate electricity, biogas for cooking or liquid biofuels for running machinery or vehicles". And in cases where an African country's current domestic energy demand could be met through cultivation of a modest land area of the country (e.g., 0.3%) in biofuel crops, biofuel feedstocks are grown on small farms or community run plantations and then

marketed to produce electricity or liquid fuels for national markets (see Milder et al. 2008).

The purpose of this position as originally published has been to heighten awareness to the challenge of sustaining both humans and wildlife while producing agrofuels as an alternative energy source in sub-Saharan Africa. Production of agrofuels must be approached in a manner that prevents further biodiversity loss, livelihood loss and food scarcity on the continent. In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to adopt land-use regulation that resolves fairly the competing requirements of livestock, humans and native wildlife predicated by research and analysis. The methods for such land-use regulation are well-proven in developed nations, so the first challenges are not "Why?" or "How?" to do this, but rather establishing the political will to ask "When?" The answer to that is now, as parties interested in biofuels are already started and government policies are being established.

Contributors:

Edited by Ron Abrams, written originally by Stephen Awoyemi, Toni Lyn Morelli, Martin Nganje, Dhaval Vyas, Africa Section Board (Shedrack Mashauri, Delali Dovie, Ron Abrams, Alison Ormsby, Ademola Ajagbe, and Daniel Nuhu). The references from which information was taken for this work are available from the ACT Editor's office. Contact SCB.ACT@gmail.com. (Photos: J. Wallis)

Reference:

Milder, J.C., J.A. McNeely, S. Shames, and Scherr. 2008. Biofuels and ecoagriculture: can bioenergy production enhance landscape-scale ecosystem conservation and rural livelihoods? *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 6: 1-6.



Conservation in **ACTION**

Young environmental leaders in the Comoros

by Claire Forbes and Daniella Blake

Exploring coral reefs, snorkelling over seagrass beds, an introduction to the intricacies of marine ecosystems and dressing up as dugongs and turtles were some of the activities that the students on the Comoros Islands' first ever environmental camp participated in. The camp was implemented by Community Centred Conservation (C3), a British organization that has been working in collaboration with local partners in the Comoros since 2005.

C3 is based on Grande Comore from where it conducts scientific research, awareness-raising, and capacity-building projects with local associations and students on all three islands of the Comoros: Grande Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan. C3 held an adventure camp between the 20th and 25th August in Mitsamiouli, in the far north of Grande Comore, designed to train and educate secondary school students to become young environmental leaders.

The adventure camp participants included five students selected through an essay competition: Ikbal Anisse, Ben Kassim, Ansaou Abdou (Alexi), Mohamed Ahmed and Oubeid Soufouane. Al'yas'aa Ben Ahmed (Paradise) and Claire Forbes of

"I saw lots of things that I had never even imagined, and learned many things that I never knew."

C3 conducted the training, ably assisted by the Junior Ecoguards: Dega Hamada and Kadria Mhoma (the Junior Ecoguards are a group of young people from the village of Niomachoua on Mohéli, who have worked with C3 since 2006 and were recipients of the Volvo-UNEP Adventure Award 2008).

Over five days the students were introduced to ecological concepts, focussing on the interdependence of natural systems. Workshops covered mangrove, seagrass and coral reef habitats; pollution issues; endangered species and biodiversity.

"I saw lots of things that I had never even imagined, and learned many things that I never knew," said Kadria.

The students were able to link what they learned in class to the surrounding environment; for most of them it was the first time they had been given a chance to snorkel and see underwater.

"I was really impressed to have been shown a picture of a lionfish in a book, and then,



Kadria and Alexi give a presentation about endangered sea turtles of the Comoros.

when I was snorkelling I actually saw one!" Oubeid exclaimed.

Leadership skills were encouraged through small group presentations on different endangered species of the Comoros. The group concluded the camp with a final presentation on an environmental topic of choice. They wrote a range of poems, songs and sketches, which displayed just how much they had learnt.

It is hoped that the participants of the camp will use their new-found knowledge of the environment to raise awareness within their communities. The camp was very much appreciated by the participants who have since formed their own small association, Association pour le Maintien Environnemental (AME), that will continue to work with C3 on future projects.

We are grateful to the Captain Planet Foundation and a Volvo-UNEP Adventure Award for providing funding for the Young Environmental Leaders Summer Camp.

Claire Forbes and Daniella Blake,
C3-Comores, BP8310, Moroni,
Grande Comore, Union of the
Comoros, info@c-3.org.uk;
www.c-3.org.uk.



The Adventure Camp participants proudly display their certificates.

Opportunities in Conservation Biology

Remember: the Society for Conservation Biology web site offers an excellent database of available job opportunities in Conservation Biology. At any given time, there are hundreds of advertisements on the jobs page. Visit the web site at: www.conbio.org/jobs/

Education

The Percy FitzPatrick Institute at the University of Cape Town currently has openings for **postdoctoral researchers** in ecology and conservation. Contact Prof. Phil Hockey (phil.hockey@uct.ac.za) for further details. More information about the Percy FitzPatrick Institute can be found at <http://www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/>.

Postgraduate Studentships 2009: Miriam Rothschild Studentships in Conservation Biology. The Arcadia Fund has kindly provided funding for research studentships in Conservation Biology, to be based in the Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, UK. We expect to fund two students from less developed countries to start in autumn 2009, with a third student to start a year later. We will also fund one EU student to start in either 2009 or 2010. Further information can be found at: <http://www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/zooone/pggradbk/int.html>.

The Christensen Fund Graduate Fellowship Program in Plant Conservation. The Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis is offering **fully funded fellowships** to students from tropical America, Africa, Madagascar, Asia, Malesia and the Pacific Islands. This fellowship is available to individuals with applied plant conservation experience and strong academic credentials for studies leading to a M.S. or Ph.D. degree. To learn more about The Christensen Fund Graduate Fellowship Program in Plant Conservation visit: <http://hwec.umsl.edu/scholarships/plantconservation.html> or write to: Exec. Director, Whitney R. Harris (osbornepl@umsl.edu). Deadline: January 15, 2009. Application forms: <http://hwec.umsl.edu/about/application.html>.

Training

Envirovet Summer Institute is 7-week immersion-style summer course for veterinarians and veterinary students from around the world aimed at educating, informing, engaging and inspiring animal health professionals of all backgrounds and nationalities to become integral members of teams protecting animal, human and ecosystem health. The course is led by Dr. Val Beasley, DVM, PhD (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) in close collaboration with the University of California, Davis Wildlife Health Center; key partners include White Oak Plantation and Conservation Center, St. Catherines Island Foundation, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, and this year, Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania) and Tanzania National Parks. Those interested in enrolling in the 2009 course or in partnering with the organization are encouraged to contact Dr. Val Beasley (val@illinois.edu) or Dr. Kirsten (Gilardi kvgilardi@ucdavis.edu). To learn more about the program, please visit Envirovet's website: <http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/envirovet/index.html>.

Southern African Wildlife College offers "**Infrastructure Management**" (Oct. 27 - Nov.14): Learn to construct and maintain infrastructure usually associated with conserved areas; and "**Resource Economics**" (Oct. 19 - 31): Gain an understanding of basic economic principles and how they relate to wildlife and communities in their different conservation areas. Certain courses offered by the college comprise unit standards of South Africa's National Qualifications in Conservation as registered on the NQF. See <http://www.wildlifecollege.org.za/>, or contact Terry Harnwell tharnwell@sawc.org.za.

In this issue of ACT, we list only a few educational and training opportunities. For more information on other opportunities, subscribe to AFRICALIST, the general list serve for the Africa Section of SCB. To subscribe, go to <http://list.conbio.org/mailman/listinfo/AfricaList/>



New journal seeks submissions

Transboundary and Emerging Diseases brings together the latest research on infectious animal diseases considered to represent the greatest threats to animals worldwide. The journal provides a venue for global research on diagnosis, prevention and management, and for papers on veterinary public health, pathogenesis, epidemiology, statistical modeling, diagnostics, biosecurity issues, genomics, vaccine development and rapid communication of new outbreaks. This international journal will be of vital interest to scientists and practitioners working in the field of infectious diseases, including veterinarians, animal scientists, agricultural scientists, policy makers, wildlife workers, the public health community, and conservationists. For more information and online submission options, please see <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=1865-1674&site=1>.

Recent publications about African Conservation

Compiled for ACT by Walt Foster

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(Continued on page 15.)

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ANNOUNCING

Young Women Conservation Biologists Award for Professional African Women:

For the advancement of

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This non-monetary award is on a nomination basis and is aimed at recognizing the contributions of early to mid-career African women in conservation.

The nominee should have demonstrated:

- Evidence of leadership, creativity, self-motivation and enthusiasm.
- Evidence of service (educational, managerial, research, etc.) to conservation.
- Ability to work with others across gender, social class, and ethnicity.

For more information and to obtain a nomination form, please contact: Folaranmi Babalola (folababs2000@yahoo.com) or Patience Mayaki (patiencemayaki@yahoo.com) of the Young Women Conservation Biologists' Group.

Visit the Young Women Conservation Biologists' Group web site at:
<http://www.conbio.org/sections/africa/ywcb/>



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Stephen Awoyemi

Ron Abrams

Claire Forbes and Daniella Blake

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What is the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund?



The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund is a significant philanthropic endowment established to do the following:

- Provide targeted grants to individual species conservation initiatives
- Recognize leaders in the field of species conservation; and
- Elevate the importance of species in the broader conservation debate.

The fund's reach is truly global, and its species interest is non-discriminatory. It will be open to applications for funding support from conservationists based in all parts of the world, and will potentially support projects focused on any and all kinds of plant and animal species, subject to the approval of an independent evaluation committee.

In addition, the fund will recognize leaders in the field of species conservation and scientific research to ensure their important work is given the attention it deserves and to elevate the importance of species in global conservation discourse.

The fund will have an initial endowment of €25,000,000 (Twenty Five Million Euros).

It is envisaged that the fund's establishment will act as a catalyst to attract additional donations from third party sources to ensure the Fund's annual contribution to direct species conservation initiatives increases over time.

<http://www.mbzspeciesconservation.org/>