



African Conservation Telegraph



Newsletter of the Africa Section of the
Society for Conservation Biology

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Africa Section Congratulates Wangari Maathai

By Delali Dovie

Standing for truth, peace and environmental justice in our time, one of Africa's daughters and a renowned Kenyan environmentalist, Wangari Maathai, won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize announced Friday, October 8, in Oslo by the Norwegian Nobel Committee. The citation stated, "for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace." It went on to say that "She has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights and women's rights in particular." Her approach to resolving environmental issues has widely been adopted and judged as next to none in Africa and beyond.

Born in 1940, the former university professor, a selfless politician and assistant minister in the Kenyan Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife, Professor Maathai rose to international fame for campaigns against



2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner
Dr. Wangari Maathai

(Continued on page 2)

In this issue:

<i>Congratulations for Wangari Maathai</i>	1
<i>From the editor</i>	1
<i>Reviewing Conservation Genetics</i>	2
<i>Science, Society and Development</i>	3
<i>Hot Topics</i>	4
<i>Meet a Conservationist</i>	7
<i>NEPAD Initiative and Biological Conservation</i>	8
<i>Rufford Award Making a Difference</i>	9
<i>Recently Published</i>	10
<i>Announcements</i>	12
<i>View from the Continent</i>	14

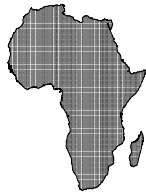
From the Editor

Erika Barthelmess

This, the second issue of ACT, is coursing with themes of community and conservation. We begin by congratulating Dr. Wangari Maathai, this year's recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on the environment and community development in Kenya and around the world. We introduce two new article formats: A Science, Society and Development piece by Patrick Adjewodah and Paul Beier, and a Hot Topics article compiled from news sources and information provided by Woody Cotterill. Further, the Meet a Conservationist section introduces Mwangi Githiru, Kenyan Conservation Biologist, who raises important questions about the role of the Africa Section in particular and conservationists in general in addressing issues of rural poverty that are so often tied to important issues in conservation. There is also a contributed article by Eric Harley on the role of conservation genetics. It is our hope that you'll read something here that strikes a cord with you and, perhaps, inspires you to contribute something of your own for the next issue. Submission guidelines can be found on the Africa Section website. Submissions for the Jan/Feb issue are due on January 10, 2005.



African Conservation Telegraph



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Wangari Maathai

(Continued from page 1)

government-backed forest clearances in Kenya in the late 1980s and 1990s. This was made possible through her respect for the people she worked with and her preparedness to learn new things. In the year 1977, she founded the Green Belt Movement, which has planted over 25 million trees around Africa in a campaign to sustain our forests, minimize soil erosion and to provide safe haven for our wildlife. This effort came out of passion for the environment and neither for personal gains nor her academic pursuits. The mother of nature conservation in Africa says "I love the trees, I love the colour. To me they represent life, and they represent hope. I think it is the green colour. I tell people I think heaven is green." Her earlier efforts at greening the environment were characterised by riot police clubbing, tear gassing, death-threatening calls, and jailing. She did this all in the name of sustaining our forests for both human use and as shelter for Africa's wildlife populations. Some of the greatest threats to Africa's wildlife population are deforestation, forest fragmentation and habitat loss; hence, Maathai has succeeded in using forest conservation to protect our threatened wildlife. The citation for the award further reads, "Maathai stands at the front of the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and in Africa." She has won several awards and received other accolades at special places and on special occasions. Professor Maathai serves on

(Continued on page 14)

Reviewing conservation genetics

Eric H. Harley, Ph.D., M.D.

Emeritus Professor, University of Cape Town, South Africa

New advances in molecular genetics are providing field workers in wildlife conservation management with a range of new DNA-based methods to assist in making decisions on matters relating to the health and welfare of the species under their control. Whereas in clinical genetics the emphasis is on the genetics of one species (*Homo sapiens*) and the problems caused by deleterious alleles, in conservation genetics the emphasis is on all species, especially those that are endangered, and the methods exploit the selectively neutral, or occasionally advantageous mutations which give rise to measurable genetic variation in the species of interest.

Conservation genetics consists of two major divisions, population genetics, which studies the variation within a species, and molecular systematics, which studies the variation between species. Population genetics provides information on a range of topics, including:

1. Genetic diversity – is there inbreeding in a population?
2. Population structure & phylogeography – how different are populations (a question relevant to translocation and reintroduction issues)?

(Continued on page 6)

Working with traditional authorities to conserve nature in West Africa

Patrick Adjewodah¹ and Paul Beier²

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In many villages in northern Ghana, the chief, his elders, and the earth priests constitute a governing body known as traditional authority. The chief makes rules and settle disputes. The earth priest or *tindana* holds the communal lands, rivers, and associated resources in trust, ensuring that the relationship between the land, the people, and their ancestors is harmonious. Following cultural and religious norms, the tindana ensures equitable distribution and use of resources. His interpretation of taboos and divinations governs how the community relates to the environment. The chiefly power and the tindana thus provide an institutional framework which supports an indigenous system of natural resource management. Until recently, progressive forces, including many conservationists, have underestimated – and often undermined – the potential for these institutions to conserve nature in Ghana.

During and after colonial times, Ghana shifted from traditional management to state-run systems, including the establishment of government controlled wildlife parks and forest reserves. The conventional wisdom was that under traditional authority, people indiscriminately used natural resources. However, there is no inherent conflict between traditional authority and conservation, and in retrospect it was a mistake to abandon rather than engage traditional authority. At a recent workshop in Ghana, state agencies, conservation NGOs, and traditional authorities recounted the conservation successes and failures of both traditional authority regimes and western approaches (D Millar, AA Apusigah, and A Berinyuu. 2004. The chief, the forester, and the fireman. Workshop proceedings, University of Development Studies, Bolgatanga, Ghana). The workshop participants – including representatives of Ghana's government – concluded that traditional authority offers the most promising vehicle to reverse resource decline in northern Ghana. Similarly, in 1994, Ghana adopted a Forestry and Wildlife Policy that calls for returning ownership of the nation's forest reserves to local traditional authorities, and development of collaborative institutions for managing them.

Since 1999, we have collaborated on the Wechiau Community Hippopotamus Sanctuary (WCHS) in northern Ghana. The Black Volta River near Wechiau harbors one of only two hippo populations remaining in Ghana. In the early 1990s, the Wildlife Division of Ghana proposed a national reserve to protect this population, but traditional authorities rejected this idea, fearing (with good reason) that a national reserve would alienate their people from the land. After a series of discussions with Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC – a Ghanaian conservation NGO) during 1998, the traditional authorities agreed to establish a sanctuary that would be owned and operated by the traditional authority in concert with a Sanctuary Management Board, with benefits flowing to the communities. NCRC would offer technical assistance, and the Ghana Tourist Board would help develop tourism, but the Sanctuary would in no sense be a government reserve. The tindana consulted the ancestors and received their approval. Recognition of the traditional authority was essential and built local trust for later steps.



Hippo in Black Volta River
(Photo by Artyon Avetisyan)

Consideration of local economic and social aspirations was also critical. People wanted better education

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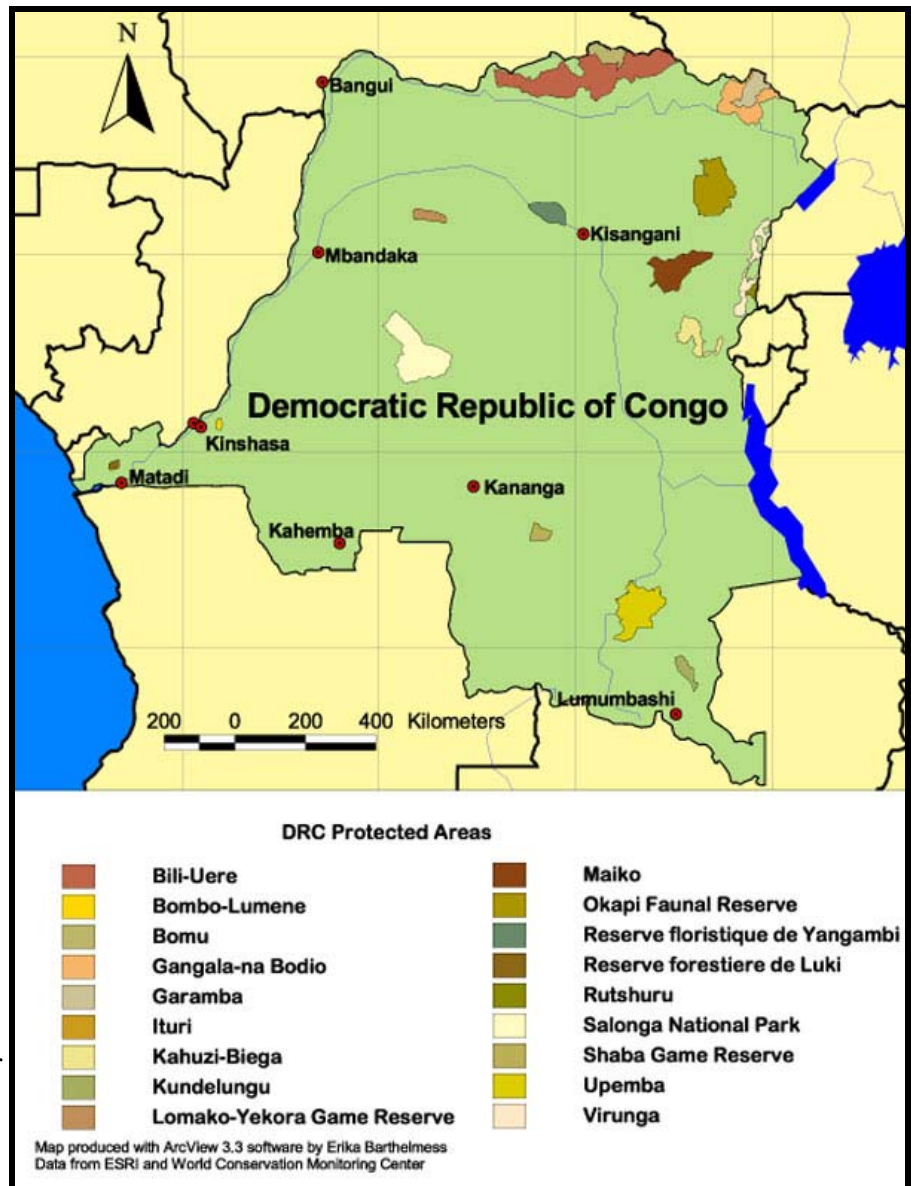
Hot Topics

Conservation is challenged in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Compiled by Erika Barthelmeß from sources at the end of the article

Conservation Biologists in Africa are oftentimes faced with a very difficult challenge—that of political instability in a region of conservation importance. A recent example is the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This area in central Africa is recognized world-wide for its biodiversity. Central Africa is home to some of the largest blocks of tropical rainforest in the world, many of which have still been little impacted by humans. These forests are important globally as sites of high biodiversity, in terms of both species diversity and levels of species endemism^{1,2}. However, political turmoil in the DRC over the last decade puts these areas, and the people who protect them, at great risk. For example, in late May, 2004, the Lusinga headquarters post of Upemba National Park in the DRC (map at right) was attacked by a group of rebels. Five park rangers as well as several women and children were killed. Others, including the park warden's family, were taken hostage, and the entire station was looted and burned, leaving nothing³. Parks further east in the country have also suffered. Tensions between Rwanda and the DRC have resulted in illegal settlers invading parks where they undertake clear-cutting of the forests and poaching of game^{4,5}. One such park is Virunga, a world heritage site internationally famous as home to Mountain Gorillas. Up to 10 percent of one area in the park, totaling 15 square kilometers, had been destroyed by June of this year⁴. On June 25th, a park office was looted and burned by 300 militias⁴. Garamba National Park, on the Sudanese border, has been invaded by Sudanese poachers who have killed several of the white rhinos protected there⁴. Since 1996, at least 100 Congolese park officers have been killed⁵. In spite of efforts by the international community, these attacks continue.

What, then, are conservationists to do? Donors from UNESCO have pledged \$ 40 million in aid to protect the DRC's natural heritage⁵. What else can be done? This is the first "hot topics" article to appear in our newsletter. Perhaps it will spark debate about how conservationists and the global community can and should respond to political crises such as that in the DRC. What is the appropriate role of the conservation



(Continued on page 12)



Naa Imoro Nandom Gomah II, the paramount chief of Wechiau Traditional area

(Continued from page 3)

for their children, improved roads, and economic benefits without giving up the right to continue farming and fishing. While promising to develop tourism and to seek government and international aid for these goals, NCRC emphasized that benefits would be modest and would take years to materialize. NCRC won local trust and cooperation by respecting local culture, ensuring that all stakeholders participated from the start, and committing to certain activities without promising a particular outcome. Another key element was the repeated emphasis that local institutions would be responsible for success or failure of the experiment. NCRC loudly proclaimed that it would not and could not be the paternalistic power behind WCHS – such an approach would fail as rapidly as a government-imposed reserve.

In 5 years, WCHS has become one of Ghana's premiere models for community conservation. The sanctuary conserves about 24 hippos, 237 bird species, and 210 plant species in a core area of about 40 km² along the Black Volta River. In the larger 150 km² development zone, 22 villages benefit from the project via sustainable use of natural resources and community-based ecotourism and cultural tourism. NCRC did succeed in obtaining

various grants that subsidized the initial years. But since late 2003, monthly tourist revenue has paid all operating costs (local manager, guards, guides, tourist lodge, visitor center). Since 2002, the project has facilitated the arrival of 6 new boreholes and 2 new schools in the development zone. Revenue from the project, along with donations of foreign visitors, is funding a new scholarship program for elementary and secondary education. Accordingly, in 2004, we ended two of the subsidies (a Peace Corps volunteer, and an EarthWatch project). Ongoing subsidies from Calgary Zoo and USAID are targeted at new infrastructure, local capacity-building, and strategic initiatives. We are especially pleased that Ghanaian tourists outnumber foreign visitors, indicating that the sanctuary provides conservation education as well as conservation.

The traditional authority is not democratic. From the outset, all parties realized that this could lead to problems, because most of the sanctuary's farmers and fishermen belonged to ethnic groups that are considered immigrants and not part of the traditional authority. After many hours of negotiations, the traditional authority agreed to vest decision-making and management in a new local institution – the Sanctuary Management Board (SMB). The SMB consists of chiefs, tindanas, opinion leaders and representatives from the twenty-two project communities, which are bound together by a common allegiance to the Paramount Chief of Wechiau. Thus, the traditional authority holds enormous power on the SMB, but all stakeholders – including women and all ethnic groups – participate in the SMB. This inclusive approach would not have been possible under the traditional system alone. The integration of old and new local institutions permeates the project. For instance, the bylaws are enforced by a traditional court presided over by the chief and his council, but fines are deposited in a sanctuary account to which all the communities are entitled.

Our approach won't work everywhere. In Ghana, many traditional authorities are plagued with internal conflicts, and some have lost the respect of their people. However, where traditional authority still commands respect, it can be a powerful ally of nature conservation. By voluntarily sharing its power with more democratic local institutions, traditional authorities can maintain their own relevance. A strong traditional authority can also serve cultural conservation, replacing erosion of traditional values and beliefs with locally controlled cultural evolution.

(Continued on page 6)

Science, Society, Development contd.

(Continued from page 5)

Over the centuries, various peoples around the globe have independently created institutions that solve the 'tragedy of the commons' to manage resources sustainably. Western social scientists have focused primarily on solutions involving either centralization or privatization; however, we believe that traditional authorities and new local institutions can offer enduring, resilient solutions that neither privatize nor impose central government control over common resources.



Naa Danyagire Walamani Seubah II, divisional chief of Tokali Traditional Area and Chair of the Sanctuary Management Board

Conservation Genetics continued

(Continued from page 2)

3. Assignment tests and hybrid identification – to what population does a particular problematic individual belong?
4. Forensic tests – paternity questions, species identification of a tissue sample, criminal identification etc.

Molecular systematics, on the other hand, constructs dendrograms showing the phylogenetic relationships of taxonomic groups and helps in defining and assessing the relative value of units of conservation.

One problem is that these new methods have only been developed, largely in the last decade, by laboratory scientists who use jargon and statistics which are hard for the field conservationist to understand or to assess their merits and relevance to problems in the field. Fortunately there have in the last year or so appeared an increasing number of books and articles which address this specific problem and there are also courses available which are specifically aimed at experienced conservationists and managers, as opposed to undergraduate students, to bring them up to speed with these new approaches. One such course is a 2-3 week module in conservation genetics included in a year-long masters course in Conservation Biology run by the Fitzpatrick Institute in the Dept. of Zoology at the University of Cape Town. Two to three weeks is a sufficient time to enable the attendees to master the terminology and concepts of molecular genetics and to be able to understand (and enjoy reading) research articles and reviews in scientific journals. The latter is necessary for a conservation biologist to fully appreciate the power and breadth of molecular genetics and to understand where and when genetics can provide valuable information in practical management situations.

Some useful books and articles:

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2. Frankham, R., J. D. Ballou, and D. A. Briscoe. 2002. Introduction to conservation genetics. Cambridge University Press, UK.
3. Gaston, K. J. and J. I. Spicer. 2004. Biodiversity: an introduction. 2nd Ed. Blackwell Science Ltd. USA.
4. Lowe, A., S. Harris, and P. Ashton. 2004. Ecological genetics: design, analysis, and application. Blackwell Science Ltd. USA.
5. Harley, E.H. 2003. Evolutionary and molecular taxonomy. In G. Contrafatto and A. Minelli, editors. Biological Science Fundamentals (Systematics). In Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), Developed under the auspices of UNESCO, EOLSS Publishers, Oxford, UK, [<http://www.eolss.net>].

Meet a conservationist

Interview by Erika Barthelme

Meet Mwangi Githiru, subject of this issue's "Meet a Conservationist." Mwangi is a Kenyan citizen whose interest in conservation was "originally borne of being brought up in the hitherto idyllic countryside of the Kenyan Rift Valley (severe forest destruction over the years has left many places looking pretty desolate today)." As a youngster, he "used to interact with nature while performing the most mundane tasks such as herding livestock in natural grasslands/glades in forests, working in the farms, collecting various foods (e.g., mushrooms) and medicinal plants from woodlands and forest" under his grandfather's "astute guidance." Currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, he earned an undergraduate degree in Wildlife Management at Moi University and an MSc in Animal Ecology at Kenyatta University in Kenya and his PhD in Zoology at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. For the last decade or so he has been conducting research in primarily forests but also grassland and wetland habitats in East Africa. He is currently working on "improving our understanding of various aspects of forest fragmentation and their impacts on biodiversity, focussing on birds in the Taita Hills forest fragments, SE Kenya." Mwangi is attempting to apply genetic techniques in the estimation of effective population sizes and dispersal of the critically endangered Taita thrush, *Turdus helleri*, and the White-starred robin, *Pogonocichla stellata*. He hopes findings from his research will help guide conservation efforts "such as discriminating between disparate priorities, e.g., whether to focus more on enhancing dispersal or increasing forest area to increase (sub)population sizes."

Mwangi, a member of both the SCB and the Africa section, attended his first SCB meeting this past July in New York City. For him, the meeting was an "eye-opener" in seeing so many people interested in all sorts of conservation-related aspects in sub-Saharan Africa. Highlights of the meeting were the "simple but powerful presentations given by people working directly in community conservation projects, with first-hand experience of the myriad problems and stumbling blocks, and those

involved in politics and decision-making." As for the Africa Section, Mwangi thinks the section should focus on "taking more advantage of its international position and status to advance the issues at the heart of conservation in Africa, and try, as much as is possible, to be the voice for the many individuals on the continent who are very interested in conservation but cannot (for various reasons) advance their sentiments at such an international level. It should focus on issues related to politics, poverty, education and high quality research, in that order. It might be difficult, and indeed frustrating, to do very much about politics, and to some extent poverty. Still, while musing about ways to contend with these two, we ought to be doing more about promoting environmental awareness and education, and coordinating good quality research."

When asked about his perceptions of significant challenges to conservation in Africa, he noted "I have noticed two underlying concerns common to most of the places I have been involved in detailed research in E. Africa: 1) rural poverty seemingly begetting unsustainable habitat loss and degradation (NB: It is noteworthy that although it might seem at first glance that the rural people's lifestyle and dependence on natural resources is the threat, in actual fact, I believe it is only a proximate one. Frequently, it is the previous mostly economic and large-scale destruction that left many habitats already in peril, such that even the minimal, previously sustainable, subsistence use becomes a major threat.) 2) Lack of awareness/education." He sees these as "complex and interlinked problems of enormous significance" and believes that "attempts to conserve natural resources in Africa are bound to fail if they do not address local people's [largely socio-economic] needs. We need to consider managing some forestlands and wetlands as a resource for the poor, sustainably providing a range of goods and services. Besides, management is bound to be more successful if it taps from the often-rich knowledge base of these local communities about their environment. This would generate beneficial interest and support, as well as foster participation of these

(Continued on page 10)

NEPAD initiative prioritizes "Biological Conservation"

by Delali Dovie



The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by the African Heads of State and Government, is an initiative based on a common vision and a shared conviction to eradicate poverty and

to place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path toward sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. NEPAD recognizes that the range of issues necessary to nurture the region's environmental base and sustainable use of natural resources is vast and complex, and that a systematic combination of initiatives is necessary in order to develop a coherent environmental programme. The action plan of the environment initiative of NEPAD, covering the first decade of the twenty-first century is a response to such challenges. Prepared through a consultative and participatory process under the leadership of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), the action plan recognizes that conditions in natural habitats and fragile ecosystems have been deteriorating, resulting in diminishing biodiversity. There are high rates of exploitation of resources such as freshwater and forests. Coastal and marine stocks continue to be used at unsustainable rates. Land degradation, natural as well as human-induced environmental disasters, and invasive alien species continue to be major problems in Africa. To address these myriad problems, the proposed NEPAD environment programme takes a long-term approach. It is about processes, projects and related activities that are aimed at enlarging Africa's economic prospects through sustained environmental management. Clear and ambitious statements have been made on the conservation of biological resources in the various areas of the environmental action plan. The statements are:

Programme Area 3: Preventing, Control and

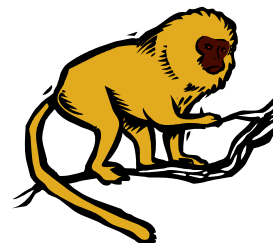
Management of Invasive Alien Species, recognizing the impacts of invasive alien species as a major public policy and political concern in many countries of Africa.

Programme Area 4: Conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal and freshwater resources. Thus, Africa's coastal ecosystems and marine biodiversity contribute significantly to the economies of many countries, mainly through fishing and tourism. They are a major source of livelihood for many thousands of households. Coastal and marine resources contribute considerably to revenue of countries across the region.

Programme Area 6: Cross-Border Conservation or Management of Natural Resources. It is acknowledged that Cross-border collaboration on sustainable use, conservation and management of natural resources can provide both economic and conservation benefits greater than would be achieved by countries working alone. Important among these are freshwater resources, biodiversity, biosafety and plant genetic resources, as well as forest resources.

NEPAD further identifies capacity building and collaboration as key elements of the environment initiative. This is where science and policy need to merge aspirations and work in harmony to achieve the much-needed sustainable development for the continent. This challenge is, however daunting. Hence, the Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology calls on the NEPAD dreamers to actively identify and involve scientists when coming up with and implementing policies.

(Adopted from UNEP Action Plan of the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, 2003)



Rufford Award making a difference: “Sustaining the Hidden Harvest of Woodlands” project

By Delali Dovie



One most important ideal that conservation workers can give to local people is “*hope* to sustain their resources.” This “*hope*” should comprise knowledge, skill, and a spirit of participation, ownership and perseverance. This “*hope*”, should instill in people the confidence to recognize and acknowledge that they possess long-term experience in accessing biological resources and hence can provide the intellectual raw material necessary to conserve biodiversity. Environmental stewardship and unity, rather than “empty promises” need to be part of this “*hope*.” This ideal is what a team of conservationists sought to achieve through the “Sustaining the Hidden Harvest of Woodlands” project in South Africa. The project was generously funded by the Whitley Laing Foundation through the Rufford Small Grants programme. The award, announced in February 2003, was implemented by Africans. The project helped in identifying the capabilities of local people for the long-term management of their local biological resources and involved the assessment of woody species and their role in sustaining livelihoods of the local people. The project also helped in building capacity by direct involvement of the local people in the planning and implementation of fieldwork. There were community workshops to discuss openly what could be done to sustain the resource base for future generations. Local knowledge was key to the discussions. Focus group discussions, based on age and gender, allowed people to analyze their linkages with biodiversity utilization and conservation. It was clear that the older generation of males was most knowledgeable about the resources available and their usefulness and conservation status. The extent of the gap in knowledge between generations was so wide that it left several questions on the minds of the local people about how to find solutions. A follow-up visit to one of the project sites in a highly inaccessible area of the Eastern Cape Province was met with a “surprise gift.” The youth there have initiated a community-based environmental organization, called the “Kat Valley Environmental Resuscitation Group,” to embark on various community projects along the 80 km stretch of the Kat River Valley. The group, however needs to be supported in diverse ways. If you have any contribution to make, please contact us through the SCB Africa Section, attn: Delali Dovie (africa@conbio.org).



Older women take their turn to evaluate diversity and local availability of useful woody plants.



Local people have the right to know about the existence and dangers of alien species.

Meet a conservationist contd.

(Continued from page 7)

communities in formulating and implementing development and conservation projects. It is clear that without an effective environmental management strategy, productivity and growth [i.e. development] on natural places can ultimately accelerate environmental degradation even as it enhances living standards and reduces poverty on the short-term.

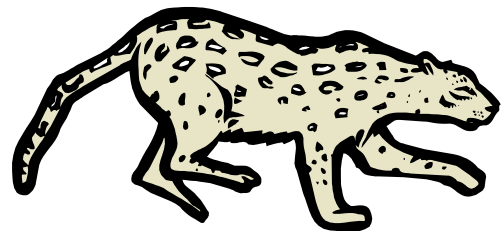
Though the needs of the communities living around protected [natural] areas are often seen to be in conflict with conservation efforts, their direct dependence on the environment makes it obvious that good management and sustainable use of natural resources is also vital for their best existence. Clearly, conservation is a mutual goal, for instance, regarding water regulation. Therefore, while the proximate nature of problems facing different habitats might differ, in general, they are essentially similar matters pertaining to enhancing the quality of life of the human populations without adversely affecting the natural resources in the environment. Often the insidious intrusion of politics into most other issues in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., poverty, security etc) makes finding solutions the more difficult. This is often a near-desperate situation, especially due to the reluctance of conservation biologists to engage politicians and other decision makers in advocating for conservation of nature and natural resources. We are persistently punished and our calls for environmental protection are habitually ignored, if not overtly countered as anti-development or antagonising the poor.” In spite of these challenges to conservation, Mwangi noted that “the hope and strength environmental champions possess are truly admirable and may be what see us through in the end.” If you would like to learn more about Mwangi or his work, feel free to e-mail him at mwangi.githiru@ua.ac.be.



Left to right: Mwangi Githiru, Matilda, Maxwell Chovu (research assistant), Gift.

Often the insidious intrusion of politics into most other issues in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., poverty, security etc) makes finding solutions the more difficult. This is often a near-desperate situation, especially due to the reluctance of conservation biologists to engage politicians and other decision makers in advocating for conservation of nature and natural resources. We are persistently punished and our calls for environmental protection are habitually ignored, if not overtly countered as anti-development or antagonising the poor.” In spite of these challenges to conservation, Mwangi noted that “the hope and strength environmental champions possess are truly admirable and may be what see us through in the end.” If you would like to learn more about Mwangi or his work, feel free to e-mail him at mwangi.githiru@ua.ac.be.

“Science may have found a cure for most evils, but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all - the apathy of human beings.”--Helen Keller (1880-1968).



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(Continued on page 11)

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(Continued from page 10)

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Announcements

1. Efforts are underway to develop an exchange or clearing-house site for information concerning institutions that are conducting ongoing conservation biology research in Africa, as well as grants available to Africans wishing to conduct conservation biology research. This information will be posted in the "Institutions" section of the Africa Section SCB website (www.conbio.org/AFRICA). Please e-mail Alison Ormsby (ormsbyaa@eckerd.edu) with appropriate information, including institution name, contact person, address, email, research topic and/or grant amount (if funding source). You can also reach Alison by regular mail at Alison Ormsby, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, Eckerd College, 4200 54th Ave. S., St. Petersburg, Florida, 33711 USA. Stay tuned to the website for more information.
2. 16 - 21 April 2005. GSDI-8 CONFERENCE: 8th International Conference on the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI-8), From Pharaohs to Geoinformatics: The Role of Spatial Data and Spatial Data Infrastructures in an Information Society, Semiramis Intercontinental Hotel, Cairo Egypt. For general information and the Call for Papers, visit <http://www.gsdi.org/newslist/posts/082204.htm>. Deadlines for abstracts: 20 November 2004. The authors will be informed about acceptance before 20 December 2004. Deadline for full papers: 31 January 2005.
3. 9 - 23 July 2005. Africa Chapter of International Association of Landscape Ecology (Africa-IALE), 1st Regional Bi-annual Conference, Elmina, Ghana, 19 - 23 July 2005: Changing Landscapes of Africa: A common approach to diverse challenges. For more information, visit <http://www.landscape-ecology.org/>.
4. 29 Aug—2 Sept 2005. Africa GIS'05: Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa. For the first announcement, information on submitting papers, exhibition possibilities and deadlines please visit http://www/eis-africa.org/events_africaGIS.htm.
5. The newsletter editor is seeking volunteers to compile information on recent publications and useful websites for each issue of ACT. If you are interested, please contact Erika Barthelmess at barthelmess@stlawu.edu or Biology Department, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617 USA.
6. The Africa section is starting an awards committee, and we are currently developing a protocol to award African students presenting their work at conferences and symposia held in Africa. This will involve our section working closely with organizations and societies that hold meetings in Africa. We are looking for people interested in joining this committee, to help us develop the award protocols, to identify meetings in Africa, and to select African students for an award from our section that would honor their work. Please contact Beth Kaplin bkaplin@antiochne.edu if you are interested in joining this committee.

Hot topics contd.

(Continued from page 4)

community? The United Nations? Individual governments? Individual citizens? How do we best balance conservation priorities with the needs of refugees? These difficult questions call for our attention. In the meantime, there are specific ways to lend help. The following (from <http://www.nouvellesapproches.org/newpages/attackmaimai.htm>) puts forth a plea to support the staff at Upemba National Park. It runs first in English and then in French. Contact information is provided in case you are able to help in any way.

Upemba National Park attacked by the Mai-Mai

This one million hectares National Park, in the southeastern leg of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is one of the oldest in Africa. Its rich biodiversity is well known, already more than 1800 species have been discovered in its limits, some as recently as 2003.

On Friday, the 28th of May, 2004 at 6.30 AM, the Lusinga headquarters post of Upemba National Park was attacked by a group of renegade Mai-Mai. Five guards (park rangers), several women and children were killed. Other women and children, including the chief warden's wife and children, were captured and taken away as hostages by the aggressors. The park management in Kinshasa (ICCN) has referred this situation to the political and military authorities. Before leaving, the attackers looted the entire station and burnt the buildings, destroying everything they could not carry, including furniture and archive records. The station has lost everything. For the moment, the chief warden and the guards have sought refuge in the village of Mitwaba, 30 km from the station. Despite their desire to return to work, without appropriate equipment and infrastructure, they are stuck there. For the moment, the Director General, ICCN-Kinshasa is trying to arrange

(Continued on page 13)

Hot Topics contd.

(Continued from page 12)

a mission to lead a delegation to the field. The purpose of this mission is to talk with the regional authorities, with the aim to secure help from the army in personnel and supplies. Some international organizations, like WCS and WWF, have already offered financial support to ICCN in support of this mission. For its part, Nouvelles Approches, in collaboration with the Lukuru Wildlife Research Project (Lukuru), is raising funds to equip the guards and to recondition and rehabilitate the Lusinga station with materials. Uniforms for the guards (produced by the Lukuru), that were to be distributed later during an official ceremony, have been urgently dispatched to the Director General of ICCN in Kinshasa for distribution during this mission as an immediate gesture to boost morale of the guards in the field.

Funds are urgently needed! By launching this appeal, it is our hope that donors will support this emergency effort to restore the Lusinga station, which is a major and irreplaceable research and conservation work center. For US residents, we ask that donations be posted to Lukuru with the following communication "SOS Lusinga." The funds given through the Lukuru are tax deductible. As hope has just begun to return to this nation, the destruction of the Lusinga station is a hard blow to conservation in the region. Do not let this terrible event ruin the future for conservation: Help us save Upemba!

Le Parc National de l'Upemba attaqué par les Maï-Maï

Ce parc d'un million d'hectares est un des plus anciens d'Afrique. La richesse de sa biodiversité est bien connue et plus de 1800 espèces animales y ont déjà été découvertes. Les dernières en date pas plus tard qu'en 2003. Ce vendredi 28 mai 2004 à 6h30 du matin, la station de Lusinga au Parc National de l'Upemba a été attaquée par un groupe de Maï-Maï. Des gardes ainsi que des femmes et des enfants ont été tués. Plusieurs femmes, dont l'épouse du Conservateur, ainsi que des enfants ont été emmenés en otages par les agresseurs. Avant de se retirer les assaillants ont entièrement pillé la station et ont ensuite mis le feu à tous les bâtiments détruisant tout le mobilier et les archives qu'ils ne pouvaient emporter. Le conservateur et les gardes survivants se sont réfugiés à 30 km de la station à Mitwaba. Sans équipement adéquat et malgré leur désir de reprendre le travail à la station, ils sont dans l'impossibilité de rejoindre le parc. La direction générale de l'ICCN a saisi les autorités politiques et militaires du dossier. Actuellement elle tente de mettre sur pied une mission qui devrait conduire une délégation sur les lieux. Le but de cette mission est d'obtenir l'appui de l'armée en hommes et en matériel, préalable indispensable à la reprise du travail par les gardes du parc. Plusieurs organisations internationales telles que le WCS ou le WWF ont déjà offert une contribution financière pour soutenir l'ICCN dans l'organisation de cette mission. De son côté, Nouvelles Approches en collaboration avec le Lukuru Wildlife Research Project organise une collecte de fonds destinés à soutenir les efforts de l'ICCN dans la reconquête et la réhabilitation de la station de Lusinga. Les uniformes des gardes, que nous avons prévu de distribuer plus tard lors de cérémonies officielles, ont été mis d'urgence à la disposition de la direction générale de l'ICCN à Kinshasa afin de les acheminer sur le terrain pour équiper les gardes au plus vite. Des moyens importants sont indispensables d'urgence.

C'est pourquoi, nous faisons appel à la générosité de tous pour nous soutenir dans notre volonté de participer au rééquipement des gardes qui ont tout perdu et à la réhabilitation de l'outil de travail irremplaçable que représente la station de Lusinga. Afin que votre don soit spécialement affecté à cette reconstruction, merci de le verser sur notre compte IBAN BE55 3101 4528 2444 auprès de la Banque ING : 411 chaussée d'Alsemberg B-1180 Bruxelles avec comme communication : « SOS Lusinga ». A l'heure où l'espoir renaissait au Congo, la perte de la station est un coup très dur pour la conservation de la nature au Katanga. Ne laissons pas un dramatique événement hypothéquer l'avenir. Aidez-nous à sauver l'Upemba.

¹Minnenmeyer, S. 2002. An analysis of access into central Africa's rainforests. World Resources

(Continued on page 14)

Maathai contd.

(Continued from page 2)

the boards of several prestigious organizations including the UN Secretary Generals Advisory Board on Disarmament, The Jane Goodall Institute, Women and Environment Development Organization (WEDO), World Learning for International Development, Green Cross International, Environment Liaison Center International, the World Wide Network of Women in Environmental Work and National Council of Women of Kenya. On these merits, the Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology congratulates Professor Wangari Maathai, peaceful mother of all conservation and sustainable development issues in Africa, for her exceptional achievement and wishes her all the best — now and years to come. Maathai “Hongera sana.”

Hot Topics contd.

(Continued from page 13)

Institute.

²Broadley, D. G. and F.P.D. Cotterill. 2004. The reptiles of southeast Katanga, and overlooked “hot spot.” *African Journal of Herpetology* 53(1): 35 - 61.

³<http://www.nouvellesapproches.org/newpages/attackmimai.htm>. Accessed 25 October 2004.

⁴http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/07/0712_040712_mountaingorilla.html#main. Accessed 25 October 2004.

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View from the continent

Guest Lodge in the Wechiau Community Hippopotamus Sanctuary, northern Ghana

(Photo by Paul Beier)

Have a picture to share? You are welcome to submit digital photographs or other artwork with the theme of “View from the continent” to fill this space in the future.

