



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Earthwatch's African Fellowship Programme provides practical training placements, on ongoing field research projects, to African conservation professionals.

Issue 7 2003

<http://www.earthwatch.org/europe/fellowships/africa.html>

Dear Fellow,

Welcome to the seventh Newsletter!

In this edition we report on a major landmark - our 600th African Fellow and a very enjoyable Alumni reunion held in Kenya to celebrate the occasion! We feature a new Earthwatch invertebrates project in South Africa which was supported by an African Fellows team in January 2003. We also report on a Fellow's experience on the Madagascar Lemur's project in December 2002.

Since our last newsletter we have been busy fielding Fellows on the following projects:

- Rare Plants of Kenya
- South African Wildlife
- Tanzanian Forest Birds
- Madagascar Lemurs
- South Africa's Hidden Species
- Wildlife Conservation in West Africa
- Saving Cameroon's Rock Fowl

Fellows came from 14 different countries in west, central, east and southern Africa and Madagascar. Brief updates on the whereabouts and current activities of a number of past Fellows are provided.

We are delighted to announce the successful award in December 2002 of a new European Union grant. This is to fund a four-year project, in partnership with the Tropical Biology Association (TBA), entitled 'Institutional and individual capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa'. With additional co-funding it will allow Earthwatch to fund 96 African Fellowships (24 per year) and support the development of eight new African-led Earthwatch projects.

We also provide details of a new Earthwatch publication 'African Forest Biodiversity: a field survey manual for vertebrates'.

As always, please keep us updated on your activities and I wish you a happy and successful year to come.

Robert Llewellyn-Smith
African Programme Manager



Photo © Robynne Reeve-Johnson

Leonard Zulu in the field, 600th African Fellow

600th African Fellow!

Celebration of the
600th African Fellowship
Award

An Alumni reunion was held in Kenya on 17th June 2002, bringing together past Nairobi-based Fellows, several Nairobi-based partner institutions and ten Fellows who had just completed the 'Rare Plants of Kenya' project.

Over a buffet reception at the Silver Springs Hotel, the African Programme Manager provided an overview of the Programme, followed by Geoffrey Mwachala (Principal Investigator,

Rare Plants of Kenya) who talked about his project's achievements.

The climax to the evening was the announcement of who was to be Earthwatch's 600th African Fellow. As the 600th Fellow fell on Geoffrey's team, the ten names were put into a hat and the selection made by Geoffrey Mungai, co-principal investigator.

The 600th Fellowship was awarded to Mr Leonard Zulu who works as an ecologist for KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife in South Africa and is currently studying for a Diploma at the Southern African Wildlife College. The 600th Fellowship is a significant landmark, representing a considerable contribution to the training and development of young African conservationists and capacity building within their institutions.

It was a very enjoyable evening and a valuable networking opportunity for all involved (see page 3 for a list of participants).

Tell me something and I'll forget it;
Show me something and I'll remember it;
Let me do something and I'll understand it.



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South African Hidden Species Project

In 2002, Earthwatch supported a new project entitled the 'South African Hidden Species', surveying the distribution and abundance of diverse invertebrates to improve biodiversity conservation. A team of African Fellows joined the project from 16th - 26th January, 2003.

By Dr Michelle Hamer, Inland Invertebrate Initiative, University of Natal, South Africa



Mounting insects

Background

About 95% of all species are invertebrates. They are critically important to the effective functioning of ecosystems, on which other components of biodiversity, including humans, depend. Invertebrates also form a major part of most food chains, and they are essential as pollinators of many plants and of crops. Most conservation programmes and initiatives, however, exclude or marginalise invertebrates. There are several reasons for this. Invertebrates are assumed to be too abundant to require conservation. It's commonly believed that conserving areas that are important for birds or mammals will also cover important invertebrate areas, and protecting the mammals in an area will also protect invertebrates. There is little evidence to support any of these assumptions.

Research aims

During this project, some of the assumptions related to invertebrates and conservation will be tested. Specific aims include:

- investigation of overlap or congruency between patterns of diversity, distribution and conservation value for different components of biodiversity,
- to highlight areas of significance for invertebrates,
- to highlight invertebrates of special conservation or cultural or other value in the reserve,

- to investigate the impact of habitat change by elephants on invertebrate diversity,
- to investigate the extent of invertebrate species turnover between years and seasons,
- to test the efficiency and effectiveness of different sampling and survey strategies.

Earthwatch assistance

In the summer of 2002 / 2003 we were assisted with sampling 16 sites each for two days by four Earthwatch teams, including a team of six African Fellows. These teams also helped process the samples which means that we have a head start when we get back to the laboratory. The support of Earthwatch has meant that we have been able to have the financial and human resources necessary to carry out a research project of the magnitude seldom undertaken anywhere in the world.

The research for this project is being carried out at sites of significance for plant and mammal diversity, but where little is known about invertebrate diversity. The first site is Mkhuze Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Already the first season of the project has produced results that have amazed the Principal Investigators. For example, only two species of millipede were known from Mkhuze but through our sampling with four Earthwatch teams, this has increased to 26 species.

We have undoubtedly collected many undescribed or new species, and species, genera and even orders never recorded from the area were also collected. This contributes not only to answering our research questions, but also to the collection of biodiversity data on South Africa's hidden species.



Dragonfly

Experiences from the team

In January 2003, Earthwatch funded a team of six Fellows from five countries to receive training in invertebrate collection and analysis. Some of their impressions are given below:

Sami Saeed Mohamed, a teaching assistant in the Department of Zoology, University of Khartoum, Sudan wrote that 'I am now well equipped with practical skills and experience, and with refreshed and upgraded knowledge. I want to apply my experience to support conservation efforts in Sudan, and to raise the awareness about invertebrates in Sudan.'

Ondiaka Sopher, an MSc student in the Department of Zoology, University of Nairobi states that 'techniques acquired in collection, sampling, preparation and presentation are quite vital in my MSc Entomology course work at the University of Nairobi. It was a privilege and fun for me to meet people from almost five different backgrounds, unite and work in harmony as a team.'



Millipede

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New project for 2003 'Saving Cameroon's Rock Fowl'

with the first team (1-15th May) comprising 6 African Fellows

by Dr Guillaume Dzikouk Taku Awa II



© Robynne Reeve-Johnson

Invertebrate sampling

The Grey-necked Picathartes (*Picathartes oreas*), or rock fowl, is a rare and elusive bird known to occur only in southern Cameroon, south-eastern Nigeria, north-western Congo, north-western Equatorial Guinea and Bioko Island. It is classified as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.

Populations are highly fragmented and threatened by loss of habitat, hunting, stress due to disturbance and natural predation as well as the lack of suitable breeding sites. The

rockfowl has specific habitat requirements. It constructs its nest with mud on rockfaces, cliffs and in caves surrounded by dense vegetation.

The Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS), formally Cameroon Ornithology Club, located 9 breeding sites in the Yaounde area of southern Cameroon during the Important Bird Areas survey in November 2000. It started sensitisation works in the area and encouraged the people who have now organised themselves in a Community Based Organisation, working under the framework of the Yaounde Massif Forest Project.

The Earthwatch project with fellows and volunteers coming from all over the world is an additional boost to the local community as it helps them realise the international significance attached to their natural heritage.

The overall objective of project is to assess the population status and to determine the ecological requirements of Grey-necked Picathartes in the Mbam-minkom mountain forest, 35 km north-east of Yaounde.

The first Earthwatch team from 1-15th May 2003 was an African fellows team. Apart from acquiring knowledge on field research methodologies in ornithology, entomology and vegetation surveys, the fellows also contributed in shaping some aspects of the research. The fellows were committed and worked enthusiastically with guidance from the research staff. In actual fact no price can be put for their input.

Back home, the presence of this international team in these local villages left behind an imprint that could not be attained otherwise and from every evidence, things will never be the same again. Our gratitude goes to the European Union for funding four of the six African fellows for the first expedition.

(African fellows comprised: Abiodun Abidemi (Department of Wildlife Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria), Mensah Frank (National High Forest Inventory, Ghana), Ogutu Booker (Department of Environmental Science, Kenyatta University, Kenya); Silayo Dossantos (Department of Forest Engineering, Sokoine University, Tanzania), Raoilson Mamisola (Department of Animal Biology, Antananarivo University, Madagascar), Likhotio Leonard (Nature Kenya).

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Alumni participants:

Earthwatch staff:

Robert Llewellyn-Smith, Robynne Reeve-Johnson.

Staff from Earthwatch Partner Institutions:

Charles Mwangi (Kenya Wildlife Service); Geoffrey Mwachala, Mr and Mrs Geoffrey

Mungai, Agnes Lusweti, Saado Abdillahi, Joyce Mnyazi Jefwa (all of National Museums of Kenya, East African Herbarium); Paul Matiku, (Nature Kenya); Anthony Kuria, Daniel Kathurima and Dr Rosie Trevelyan (Tropical Biology Association).

Past Kenyan Fellows:

Jane Kuniyhe (Ghana Hippo Project - June 2000), Mark Otieno (Ghana Hippo Project - Feb 2002), Emily Wabuyele (Cameroon Rainforests - Nov 2001), Nickson Otieno (Tanzania Forest Birds - Sept 2001), Paul Muoria (South African Wildlife - Sept 2002), Benson Okita (Ghana Hippo Project - Feb 2002).

Incoming Earthwatch team on 'Rare Plants of Kenya Project':

Ngolan Rita Lemnhan (Kilum-Ijim Forest Project, Cameroon) Thomas Ramabulana (Kruger National Park, South Africa), Edwin Kathumba (National Herbarium and Botanic Garden, Malawi), Alice Djotsa (University of Yaounde, Cameroon), Charity Kumwenda (Southern African Wildlife College), Leonard Zulu (Southern African Wildlife College), Teshome Mulesa (Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research, Ethiopia), Mekou Bele (University of Buea, Cameroon), Ashenafi Assefa (Kissama Africa University College, Ethiopia), Churchill Nokrach (Makerere University, Uganda).

Feedback on the event

'The Alumni reunion was excellent. We have made new contacts, exchanged ideas through discussions. I had the opportunity to discuss and learn about the Tropical Biology Association' (Ngolan Rita Lemngan)

'A good event, enjoyable and purposeful. Networking stands out prominently' (Agnes Lusweti)

'It was a really great occasion to meet past Alumni. The function could rotate in different countries. Past Fellows should be given time to discuss what they have achieved' (Churchill Nokrach)

Latent Energy in Earthwatch's African Fellowship Programme

By Stephen Awoyemi, African Coordinator of the Tropical Conservancy Ontario, Canada, c/o Department of Zoology University of Ibadan, Nigeria.



African Fellows Team

It was my second time travelling out of Nigeria, the first time was to Tanzania (East Usambara Mountains) under the auspices of the Tropical Biology Association. This was going to be another career propelling experience.

Earthwatch sent me to Madagascar along with seven other African fellows; from east, west, south and central Africa, to join in the long-term study of the lemur Milne - Edwards

Sifaka (*Propithecus diadema edwardsi*), an endangered species with high priority conservation status, in Ranomafana National Park, southeastern Madagascar.

We didn't wait long at the airport in Antananarivo before we found the ICTE (Institute for the Conservation of Tropical Environments)/ Earthwatch staff who took us to the Aina Hotel in the metropolis, where Nat Spring, science officer at Earthwatch later

joined us and subsequently the remaining African fellows. On the morning of our third day in Antananarivo, we set out on an 8 hour drive to Fianarantsoa, where we met the project staff, and Co-principal Investigator Summer Arrigo-Nelson.

One of the world's renowned primatologist, Dr. Patricia C. Wright was our principal investigator (what a privilege!). And through

the 'let me do something and I'll understand it' principle we learnt about the behaviour, ecology and demography of the lemur. In those 14 days we were given a true picture of what an on-the-ground experience in research is really like. Most interestingly what was learnt was not restricted to lemur studies alone. We were also exposed to other research taking place in the Park. Here is a summary of what took place:

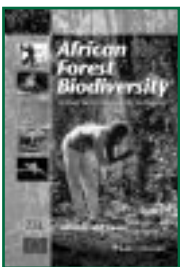
- behavioural data collection,
- animal capture technique (using tranquilliser darts),
- herbarium preparation,
- reforestation exercise,
- field work techniques,
- general appreciation of Madagascar's biodiversity (day and night walks),
- exchange of research experiences of fellows in their home countries.

The entire project was a success. The PI and Co-PI made a solid impact in my life and I am ever grateful to them. I am happy with the friends I made in Madagascar; the natives, researchers and fellow Earthwatchers. The food was good and accommodation was just the reality of field work!

The Earthwatch Fellowship Programme is not to be underestimated, neither taken casually, because it has a strong potential to shoot up your horizons beyond your imaginations. However you have to be well positioned, being sure of what you really want to do in this life. My sincere gratitude goes to the Earthwatch Institute and Dr. Rosie Trevelyan of the TBA for making this a reality.

ALUMNI UPDATE:

- Available to all Alumni members - 'African Forest Biodiversity: a field survey manual for vertebrates'



During 2001/02 Earthwatch published 'African Forest Biodiversity: a field survey manual for vertebrates'. As stocks are now exhausted, we are now making it available as a PDF file. We hope that it will continue to be a valuable reference to those involved in forest biodiversity conservation.

The PDF can be found at: www.earthwatch.org/europe/fellowships/africa.html

- Our recent European Union Grant allows us support the development of eight new African-led Earthwatch projects over the next four years. If you are at post-doctoral level and would like information about Earthwatch research grants for your own project, please contact us at network@earthwatch.org.uk

Also in Africa



In April 2003, Earthwatch received news of a prestigious Darwin Initiative Grant of £175,000 to support our Lakes of the Rift Valley Project in Kenya. This project entitled 'Flamingo Conservation and Ramsar Site Management at Lake Bogoria, Kenya' is a partnership between Earthwatch, the University of Leicester and various Kenyan partners including Lake Bogoria National Reserve, Museums of Kenya, University of Nairobi and the Kenya Wildlife Service.

Darwin Initiative funding will ensure that data collected by Earthwatch volunteers is integrated into a wider flamingo conservation programme. The African Programme is responsible for managing this grant.



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