



# ERuDeF

Conserving wildlife and protecting fragile environments

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Editorial

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## Women and the Environment

Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption, production patterns and approaches to natural resource management. Awareness of natural resource depletion and degradation has increased markedly. These worsening conditions are destroying fragile ecosystems and displacing communities, especially women, from productive activities. They are increasing threats to a safe and healthy environment. Poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated as the latter results in certain kinds of environmental stress. It is for this reason that, an environmentally friendly organisation, ERuDeF has strategically remained committed in eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. This is in a bid to reduce the disparities in standards of living and improve on the living conditions of the poor. The deterioration of natural resources displaces communities, especially women, from income-generating activities. Environmental degradation results in negative effects on the health, well-being and quality of life of the population at large, especially girls and women of all ages. At-

tention and recognition are however being given by ERuDeF to the role and special situation of women living in rural areas. Access training, and other related structures are at the disposal of those working in the agricultural sector to help them increase their participation in sustainable development. In managing and using natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. As consumers, producers, caretakers of their families and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. These critical roles played by women have not gone unnoticed as the organisation is now heavily involved in targeting women's projects. This has been demonstrated through its women's empowerment program. This programme strives to acquire grants which are given to these women's groups to help them overcome their plight and improve on the status of the Cameroonian woman. If one were to measure women's contributions to ecological linkages and fragile ecosystem man-

in many communities provide the main labour force for subsistence production; hence, their role is crucial to the provision of food, nutrition, the enhancement of the subsistence and the preservation of the environment. They are generally the most stable members of the community, as men often pursue work in distant locations, leaving women behind to safeguard the natural environment.

By Asong Gladys

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## Armed Conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa

Fifteen years of armed conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa, accompanied by illegal exploitation of minerals to finance militias, led to a sharp increase in demand for bushmeat. In addition, rapidly growing urban populations accelerated deforestation through charcoal production. Consequently, gorillas and elephants have been poached in large numbers.

A dramatic decline in the diversity of vegetation can be observed in parts of the Kahuzi-Biega National Park in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. As gorillas declined and elephants vanished from the montane area, the forest's flora changed into denser, less diverse vegetation. Weed-like plants, which were formerly held in check by elephants and gorillas, have become much more dominant and are suffocating trees, thereby accelerating deforestation. Myrianthus fruit trees, whose seeds had formerly been dispersed especially by large mammals, are being killed by the *Sericostachys scandens* vines and if this continues may become increasingly rare.

By building nests, gorillas break off branches and create gaps in the forest



canopy that allow light through to the forest floor enabling smaller plants to grow.

The survival of forests requires the protection of the animals in them as well as the trees. In the long term, deforestation is as much a consequence of over-hunting as of cutting trees for charcoal or timber.

Insights gained from encounters with senior government officials, ex-militia, park wardens, conservationists, poachers, loggers and farmers highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to conserve rain forests and gorillas in the Congo Basin.

Supporting existing national action plans to halt deforestation of gorilla habitat is one of the major objectives of the CMS Agreement on the Conser-

vation of Gorilla and their Habitat during the Year of the Gorilla campaign.

*From 'Reuters'*

## Gorilla warfare: The battle to save one of Africa's rarest animals

Half of the world's remaining mountain gorillas live in Eastern Congo's Virunga National Park. Now a battle is being fought between the park rangers who protect these extraordinary animals and the criminal gangs who are burning down their habitat.

Report by Daniel Howden

The sound of the first crack stops the patrol dead. Halfway up the 3,407 metres of the Nyiragongo volcano, the rangers fan out in the direction of the chopping noise, leaving the path of shattered lava for the dense forest, assault rifles at the ready.

For a few minutes, the silence is broken only by the sharp reports of blade on wood. Then a confusion of voices, followed quickly by the sound of bodies crashing



through the undergrowth towards us. The one ranger remaining on the path has no rifle so instead draws a machete. There is no way to know who or what is coming.

The footfalls veer away from us and down, then the first of the rangers emerges with a prisoner on the path above. Lying on his back on the sharp black rock is a barefoot young man; his two friends have escaped but his arms are being bound with his own belt.

He is one of what are known as "carbonisateurs", the footsoldiers of a huge and lucrative illegal trade in charcoal that is threatening the survival of Africa's oldest

national park. It's a criminal network that thrives on the extraordinary misery stretched out among the valleys of Eastern Congo below, where "choppers" like this youngster are joined by "cooks", who feed the old-growth trees of Virunga National Park into earthen ovens, and the human "mules" who transport the 80lb sacks of charcoal on their own backs. The trade generates an estimated £20 million a year, money that goes to the corrupt officials who turn a blind eye to it and the renegade government soldiers and rebel armies who sell their protection.

*Culled from Reuters*

## Developing Better Strategies to Achieve Increased Conservation Awareness.

Awareness remains an indefinite and concise tool in achieving a goal despite all the inconsistencies that may come its way. Conservationists in order to achieve their goals in the field need to rely and depend very much on the level of awareness of the locals in the area where the activity is taking place. From experience, communities adjacent conservation areas find it difficult or relatively impossible to compliment their forest activities with those of conservation, for the sole reason that they depend very much on several natural re-

sources harboured in these forests. This aspect needs to be reviewed on several occasions given that communities adjacent to the forest need to understand the intricacies of unsustainable management of natural resources. The issue has to be addressed as a matter of urgency as resources are rapidly depleting. The already existing strategies that may have succeeded in other conservation areas and which seem to be ideal may not necessarily fit to facilitate conservation practice in other areas. This is seen as

communities adjacent to the forests usually practice cultures that could greatly affect or influence the sustainability of natural resources in some of the world's biodiversity hot-spots. Furthermore adequate and innovative community education initiatives need to be introduced as they could be used as tools to achieve some of the conservation goals.

*By Efuat Taleih Atem*

## Human - Wildlife Conflict in the Bechati-Lebialem Gorilla Conservation project

Human-Wildlife conflicts are bound to occur in most conservation projects. In view of the Bechati-Lebialem Gorilla Conservation project, minor human wildlife conflicts remain inevitable. The questions they keep asking is prove of this. They include: "what happens to our farmlands adjacent the gorilla habitat? "What happens to the hunters who rely on bush meat for survival and what economic benefits or compensation do these farmers and hunters stand to gain out of the project"?

With the case of the Bechati-Lebialem Gorilla Conservation Project, one of the biggest problems that sets off conflicts is the loss of wildlife habitat and the changing land use practices in the form of habitat encroachment and deforestation (illegal selective



Crop destruction by Gorillas in Fossimondi

logging) for farming due to the rapid population boom in these communities adjacent forests. As a consequence , the amount of land where wildlife can live in peace shrinks and clashes between humans and wildlife are inevitable. Other wildlife species and gorillas in particular are also responsible for causing conflict with humans.

Gorillas are a major problem for farmers growing crops in the area. A pack of gorillas can reduce a farmer's entire years' crop to rubbish in a single night causing major financial hardship. In a bid to reduce human wildlife conflicts in these communities, ERuDeF constantly visits these communities to update their knowledge on the conservation of these species. This is to avoid further habitat encroachment and hunting of these species which are the potential causes to the human/wildlife conflicts in this project area.

*By Alongamoh Edwin*

## Changing Lives through Agro forestry



### *Trees For The Future demonstration sites*

About a third of the Cameroonian population is involved in agriculture either directly or indirectly as a major income generating activity. Yet as a result of poor soils or poor biodiversity management practices this activity has become very unsustainable.

As a solution to this problem, agroforestry practices were recommended to farmers. This year, Trees for the Future through her Cameroon program decided to promote the alley cropping method with *Acacia sp*, *Calliandra sp* and *Leuceana sp* as priority species. This method though new to the farmers, was adopted by most of them in the Northwest, South West and West-

ern Regions.

Presently, the program is geared towards changing the lives of more than 2000 farmers belonging to 112 farming groups. From our October field visit in the three regions, a total of about 1.800.000 trees have been transplanted. Most of the trees have reached a height of about 1m and above. These multipurpose and fast growing trees will be pruned and the biomass will decompose to provide the nitrogen and other essential nutrients required for soil fertility. We also noticed that, farmers in an attempt to maximize the improved fertility of their soils are practicing fruit tree cultivation. It was very interesting to find a Plum

tree fruiting after 3 years of planting. This is thanks to a vegetative propagation technique called marcotting. This farmer in Bafut like many others in Wum, is already benefiting from this technique as he now harvests plum fruits from his three year old plum tree. Other vegetative propagation methods practiced include grafting and rooting of cuttings.

Therefore with improved soil fertility within a very short period, farmers will be able to produce the much desired food and fruits for the ever growing population. They should therefore be encouraged to integrate fruit tree cultivation. Through this vegetative propagation technique and crop production yield will be improved.

*By Nebe Kingsly*

## The Role of Agro-forestry in the Sustainable Development of Lebialem Highlands Region



*Alley cropping system with Leucaena sp trees in food crop farm – Lebialem division*

Lebialem division is located in the South West region of Cameroon and constitutes part of the Western Highland Region of Cameroon. This region is enclave given its topographical nature.

Lebialem suffers from a lot of landslides, soil erosion, low water volumes and low crop yield due to degraded watersheds and unsustainable farming practices. This has led to extreme high levels of poverty with a farmer not able to earn up to 1USD a day. With

the growing need to enlighten farmers on the importance of agro-forestry, TFTF Cameroon for the past two years is supporting farmers in this region with multi-purpose fast growing agro forestry seeds. These seeds are planted in their farms following the alley cropping system for soil improvement and increased flow of water during the dry seasons.

This we hope will improve soil fertility and the living conditions of

the local population.

By Achah Robin  
TFTF Program Assistant  
TFTF CAMeroon

## Bird survey for priority setting in the Lebialem highlands/ part of the Mount Bamboustous caldera

Bird survey in the Lebialem highlands, part of the mount Bamboustous region were carried out from July 15 to August 5 and from September 19 to October 2, by a team of researchers from The Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERuDeF). The surveys were aimed at compiling a comprehensive check list of the birds in the region. Objectives of the surveys were as follows; 1-To come up with a comprehensive checklist of birds in the region. 2- To train the local guides on bird identification and survey techniques. 3-To create awareness to the local Communities on the importance of bird conservation 4-To identify potential sites for conservation (Important Birds Area, IBA) 5- To check the distribution patterns among endemic birds in all the sites and to protect the montane birds habitats and their ecosystem.

A combination of methods were used, the mist netting and the standard bird count. These were done along existing trails and logged roads to obtain relevant ecological data. Counts were carried out at all the sites visited both in the mornings and in the

evenings, between 6;30am-10;00am and 4;00pm-6;30pm. Once point counts were completed in the morning, the rest of the day was spent following tracks within each site. Observed species encountered were noted and the GPS Coordinate points of important species were taken.

Mist netting was employed irregularly and only at some of the sites. The data for the mist netting were not intended to be quantitative, and were only used as a means of detecting shy species, that is species that could not be recorded by sight or sound. Mist nets were set up, opened and closed every one hour and trapped birds were identified and released immediately. At the end of the surveys, 328 bird species were recorded. Ten of these were identified to be threatened bird species, 20 restricted range species, 35 Afromontane (montane endemic birds species), 3 bird species of the savannah and the Guineo-Congolian forest species with a large number of 188.

Below is a list of some important birds species in the region.

Communities that were targeted during the surveys

were 20 and they included; Fomenji, Magha, Fotang, Fonenge, Awoh, Mbarenka, Nkomgle, Agong, Fossimondi, Ndumbi, Nkandu, Abang, Lewoh, Ebensuk, L e c h o - taw, Nyitebong, Mbindia, Quibeko and Attulleh. Future surveys have been programmed to survey the other section and also to re-survey the areas already surveyed, in order to come up with a good checklist of the region.

The presence of the endangered species, restricted range species and of a vast array of Biome-Restricted species of the region can qualify the region as an IBA. Hence there is a need for the conservation of the area.

*By Egbe Confidence*

### Statistics on Bird Species in the Mount Bamboutos/Lebialem Region

#### Threatened birds species

| IUCN Status | English Name               | Scientific Name               |
|-------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| VU          | Bannerman's weaver         | <u>Ploceus bannermani</u>     |
| NT          | Cameroon montane greenbul  | <u>Andropadus Montanus</u>    |
| NT          | Crossley's Ground Thrush   | <u>Zoothera princei</u>       |
| NT          | Bangwa Forest Warbler      | <u>Bradypterus bangwacris</u> |
| VU          | Green breasted bush shrike | <u>Malacontus cruentus</u>    |

Continuation from page 8

## Restricted-range / endemic species

|    |                               |                                |
|----|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Cameroon Montane greenbul     | <u>Andropadus montanus</u>     |
| 2  | Grey throated greenbul        | <u>Andropadus tehrolaemus</u>  |
| 3  | Cameroon olive greenbul       | <u>Phyllastrephus poem's</u>   |
| 4  | Mountain Robin chat           | <u>Cossypha isabellae</u>      |
| 5  | Bangwa forest warbler         | <u>Bradypterus bangwaensis</u> |
| 6  | Brown backed cisticola        | <u>Cisticola discolor</u>      |
| 7  | Green long tail               | <u>Urolais epichora</u>        |
| 8  | White trail warbler           | <u>Poliolois lopezi</u>        |
| 9  | Black-capped woodland warbler | <u>Phylloscopus herberti</u>   |
| 10 | Cameroon blue headed sunbird  | <u>Cyanomitra oritis</u>       |
| 11 | Yellow breasted bonbon        | <u>Lamanus atroflavus</u>      |
| 12 | Bannerman's weaver            | <u>Ploceus bannermani</u>      |
| 13 | Banded wattle-eye             | <u>Platysteira laticincta</u>  |

## Monitoring and Communicating Biodiversity

*Darwin Scholars 2009.*

A short scholarship programme led by the Field Studies Council (FSC) UK was organized this August as part of Darwin's 200<sup>th</sup> birth celebration and 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES (his first book) in 1859. The theme for this year scholarship program was "Monitoring and Communicating Biodiversity". One of ERuDeF's staff participated in this course.

The aim of organizing the course is to develop "better naturalists" in the spirit of Darwin's love of nature and observing the natural world.

On a global scale, there are a number of key needs related to science education. Firstly, there is

a global shortage of taxonomists and experts with observation and identification skills, there is need to record biodiversity in a more coherent and robust way both nationally and internationally and finally, there is a huge need for scientists to communicate more effectively based on their target groups and audiences. The course focused on three key areas: skills of observation and identification, skills of recording biodiversity and skills of communicating biodiversity to different target groups.

The two week course which was attended by 13 participants under 30 years, from 10 different countries and various fields of biodiversity has as part of its

activities; training workshops, lectures, excursions, meetings with lead ecological organizations and leading scientists in the UK and sharing experiences among participants through presentations. Two aspects of biodiversity were touched during the course; Botany and Zoology.

By the end of the course, participants were greatly enriched and knew; the basic techniques of biodiversity monitoring and identification, the creation and management of national database and recording networks, fundamental approaches to communicating biodiversity to a range of audiences, how to lead and manage school and community based biodiversity monitoring projects and how to develop biodiversity education materials for different groups based on FSC expertise.

*By  
Robin Achah  
Darwin Scholar 2009  
ERuDeF, Cameroon*

## Press release

PRESS RELEASE - Carbon finance is key to better protection of gorillas and elephants to maintain health of African rainforests says UN Ambassador Washington/Bonn, 13 October 2009 - - The United Nations Ambassador for the Year of the Gorilla, Ian Redmond, has called for the inclusion of gorillas and elephants, as important components in African rainforests, in the upcoming climate negotiations in Copenhagen.

Large mammals, such as elephants and gorillas, are keystone species in their relevant ecosystems. Gorillas act as 'gardeners' in the rainforests of the Congo Basin, and protecting them helps prevent loss of flora that are ecologically dependent on them.

Gorillas are second only to elephants in the number of seeds they disperse each day in the forests of Africa. When eating fruit and seeds, the seeds pass through their system and are in this way prepared for germination.

UN Ambassador, Ian Redmond, who has just returned from a [fact-finding mission across eight African gorilla range states](#) said: "The gorillas and elephants of Africa are doing the world a service. UNEP has just succeeded in its Seven Billion Tree campaign, but I would estimate that the apes and elephants of Africa disperse some seven billion seeds every day! The full extent of the role they play in maintaining the health of their forest habitat - a central component of the Earth's climate regulation - is still poorly understood."

### International workshop on Gorilla 2010

#### Oklahoma city zoo

The Gorilla Workshop was created to promote and improve husbandry, management and conservation of gorillas. It is necessary to collaborate with colleagues to better provide for and understand gorillas in our care. The 2010 Gorilla Workshop will include a number of topics with an emphasis on multi-male and bachelor groups, as well as innovative and best practices in gorilla husbandry. The deadline for abstracts is 10 February 2010.

Our keynote speakers who are confirmed are Dave Morgan and Charlene Jendry. We are in final confirmation stage to get Dr. Ilana Kutinsky here as our third keynote speaker.

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