



Center for Tropical Ecology
and Conservation

Tropical News

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2003

CTEC Holding Fall 2003 Symposium

CTEC will host a one-day symposium on Saturday, October 18, 2003. *Tropical Ecology and Conservation in the New England Classroom* will provide a forum where New England non-profits, teachers, and scientists who are interested in tropical education can share methods for teaching about the inherent links between New England and tropical ecology. Our goal is to create alliances between professionals with similar interests and enhance the abilities of regional educators to effectively teach about tropical ecology and conservation.

Approximately 100 educators from the New England region welcome to participate in the symposium. The event will take the form of a day-long conference utilizing a variety of methodologies. Interactive demonstrations, workshops, poster presentations, guest speakers, and round-table discussions will allow instructors first hand experi-

As the snow continues to fall in New England, I think back on my recent travels in the tropics. As this is my semester for a sabbatical, I took advantage of the situation to do some traveling for my research. In January of this year I had the good fortune of traveling to Madagascar for 2 weeks

ence with curricula and encourage them to implement similar projects in their own classrooms. Possible workshop topics include: citizen monitoring of bird, marine mammal and butterfly migration; world wide web tropical information sources, study abroad trips, and interactive art.

We believe that tropical ecology and conservation education will best be taught when scientists, non-profit professionals, and educators can work together. These presentations, demonstrations and workshops will incorporate a diversity of people from a variety of organizations throughout New England.

If you are interested in attending, making a presentation or would like more information, please contact Kelly Biedenweg, Symposium Coordinator at: kelly_biedenweg@antiochne.edu, 603-357-3122 x 348.

with friend and colleague Michelle Zjhra, Ph.D., a botanist and systematist who has worked in Madagascar for the last 10 years. Her passions include Bignones, caulifory, and endemism, as well as chocolate. We applied for and received a AAAS-WISC (American Academy of Science Women's

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CTEC'S MISSION:

CTEC supports and promotes education and research in tropical biology, conservation, and the sustainable use of tropical ecosystems. We help people find creative, long-term solutions to the rapid loss of biodiversity in the tropics. We are committed to helping create the next generation of world leaders who embrace the interdisciplinary nature of conservation through an ecological, social, political, and economic context.

International Science Collaboration) Travel Award, which carried us to the island of Madagascar and supported our travel in country.

We visited the remote field site of Andranobe on the Masoala Peninsula in eastern Madagascar, situated in a national park on a peninsula jutting into the Indian Ocean (reached by 2 in-country plane flights and a boat ride). We saw plenty of caulifory, as well as birds such as the Crested coua, the Red-tailed Vanga, and fruit eating red-ruffed lemurs. We visited the field site as a potential spot for a research project we are initiating to explore ecological processes (pollination biology and seed dispersal ecology) and endemism on the island - we recently submitted a grant to NSF to support this research. We visited university faculty in the capital city of Tana, professors in Botany and Zoology with whom we will collaborate on this project, as well as Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) staff. Michelle and I even met up with one of my graduate students, Alison Ormsby, who did her dissertation research in Madagascar and was doing a follow-up consultancy with WCS on the Masoala Peninsula.

After 2 weeks home in snow and cold after those 90+°F Malagasy days, I traveled to continental Africa in early February, back to Rwanda, where I have been working since 1990. I spent time with one of my graduate students, Nicole Gross-Camp, who is studying seed dispersal ecology in chimpanzees. She and Michel Masozera, my Rwan-

dan colleague and friend, picked me up at the airport and we traveled to Akagera National Park to witness what remains of this beautiful savanna park, which lost 2/3 of its surface area to cattle after the war. We saw zebra, impala and an elephant, not far from the grazing cattle. I spent time with Nicole in the Nyungwe Forest, a montane tropical forest, observing her neatly marked chimp dung piles and marveling at the seedlings coming up. I also worked with the long-term data sets we have been collecting since 1990 in the forest (phenology, mammal transects), and then Nicole and I traveled by bus and taxi to Uganda for a visit to the floristically similar Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Another one of my advisees, Jessica Ganas, is studying the mountain gorilla in this forest, with my colleague and friend Dr. Martha Robbins. Nicole and I got to spend a day with mountain gorillas and Martha, who has been studying these impressive apes since 1990 - Martha and I were in graduate school together and we both did our dissertation research in Rwanda, she at Karisoke and I at Nyungwe Forest. The main point of my visit to Bwindi was to meet with Ugandan researchers and make plans for some collaborative research on patterns of forest regeneration, species distributions, and the role of large mammals (elephants and such) in forest regeneration.

Back in Rwanda I saw Nicole off (after viewing a huge colony of fruit eating bats in the capital city

of Kigali together) and then worked on proposal writing with my colleague Michel. To further the collaborative research approach, I met with John Hart and several of the Congolese WCS research team members in Kigali, to plan out a 3 mountain top, Albertine Rift comparative research project (Bwindi, Kahuzi-Biega, and Nyungwe Forests).

Towards the end of my month long stay in Rwanda I spent four days at the National University of Rwanda in Butare, meeting with Biology faculty, speaking at a symposium on poverty alleviation and science, and discussing the interest in developing an interdisciplinary conservation biology course at the university.

The traveling part of my sabbatical is done, and I am home now writing proposals, analyzing data and preparing manuscripts as spring approaches. I am enjoying the time away from classes, reveling in the time I have to think creatively about research plans and collaborations, and dreaming about collecting data again in the tropical forests of east and central Africa. I miss the daily contact with students, but I do relish this down time, for I know I will be rejuvenated when I return to classes this summer.

Nicole Gross-Camp Returns from Field Season in Rwanda

Nico, Nico! Venez ici!

I moved toward the large *Parinari* tree where my field assistant, Abraham, stood. As I made my way through the dense understory, the woody remnants of *Mimulopsis* tugged at the loopholes on my shoelaces. The pungent scent of its flowers brushed my hair. Blooming only every seven to ten years, I delighted in this opportunity. I tried to imagine the pollen transformed into a flavorful honey coveted by Rwandans. As I approached where Abraham was standing a broad smile crept across his face. The flash of his white teeth in contrast to his dark skin was electrifying.

Nico, voila nos richesses!

Abraham's hand swept over a pile of freshly deposited chimpanzee dung full of beautiful *Olea capensis* seeds.

I recently returned from a six month field season in the Nyungwe Forest Reserve, Rwanda, where I began my graduate research. The Nyungwe Forest is a large reserve, 950 km², located in southwestern Rwanda. The Reserve connects with the Kibira National

Forest, Burundi, forming one of the largest remaining montane forests in Africa. The Nyungwe Forest is part of the Albertine Rift, the western branch of the Great Rift Valley, and contains an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna including numerous endemic species. Its undulating landscape is quite literally breathtaking and indicative of Rwanda's name, *Milles Collines*, thousand hills. Unlike the hot savannah, the mountainous landscape offers a cool and temperate climate and is home to 13 species of primate, including the elusive owl-faced guenon (*Cercopithecus hamlynii*) and black and white colobus (*Colobus angloensis ruwenzorii*), the latter of which live in huge 'supergroups' of 300+ individuals.

I went to the Nyungwe Forest to commence my own graduate research on the seed dispersal behavior of the chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*). The chimpanzee is the largest remaining frugivore, or fruit-eating, mammal remaining in the forest. The chimpanzee has a large home-range, may move up to several kilometers a day,

and a voracious appetite for fruit. Prior research involving the chimpanzee indicates the species tendency to swallow seeds whole, passing them unharmed in their feces. In addition, the chimpanzee has been documented to enter degraded or disturbed areas and may contribute to regeneration processes by depositing seeds in these areas.

My research involves an examination of the *fate* of large fruit seeds (≥ 5 mm) deposited by a chimpanzee: once deposited, are the seeds destroyed by predators or pathogens? Do they experience secondary dispersal by another animal or insect? Or, do they reach germination and successfully establish as seedlings? Answering these questions may help us to understand the ecological role of chimpanzees in important forest processes such as regeneration. Similarly, my research may give insight into chimpanzees' role in structuring plant communities and maintaining biological diversity.

The gift of good field assistants is priceless. Abraham

From the Director

Spring has brought several changes to the Center for Tropical Ecology & Conservation. We have hired Kelly Biedenweg, a Conservation Biology graduate student, as symposium coordinator for our 2nd tropical symposium in October 2003, which will focus on exploring our links in New England with the tropics. We also brought on Peter

Palmiotto, Ph.D., core faculty in the ES Department, as Symposium Director, a position we hope will eventually lead to Co-Director of the Center.

Kate McKenney will be taking leave of the Center in May after tirelessly taking on our projects and tasks, including the completion of

our new website; without her CTEC would not have come so far in the last few months. She will be dearly missed. Finally, Nicole Gross-Camp will return to the Center in late May, taking the newly created position of Managing Director. We are happy to have Nicole back with her energy and enthusiasm for the tropics and conservation biology.

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