



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

The Tropical Biology Association is developing capacity and building links for biodiversity research and conservation in the Africa region. Through its training courses and follow-up support, the TBA is creating an informed, motivated community of tropical biologists with the potential to have a significant impact.

Issue No. 12 July 2009
Newsletter

Welcome to the 12th edition of the TBA newsletter. The TBA has enjoyed another action packed year, and what better way to hear about it than from people at the centre of the action? In this year's newsletter, you can read articles about recent courses and specialist training workshops, and from TBA trainees who returned as TBA teachers. Our alumni network continues to grow stronger and we have an 89% contact rate with all our trainees since we ran our first course in 1994.



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Delegates at Nigeria Tropical Biology Association's first International Seminar on Conservation Science at the University of Ibadan

One of the most exciting developments in recent years is the proliferation of TBA alumni groups across 13 African countries. Established by alumni to continue the TBA ethos after their courses, these groups are developing collaborative conservation projects and taking on capacity building activities nationally. In recognition of their commitment and potential to make a real impact, the TBA is launching a small grants programme to support TBA alumni groups in their conservation work.

Milestones

We ran our 50th month-long field course which included the 10th to be held at Tanzania's Amani Nature Reserve.

The snake species that a TBA course discovered in Kirindy Forest, Madagascar, has finally been described.

Two TBA course projects have been published, so congratulations go to the authors and encouragement goes to all of you who are yet to publish your projects.

The TBA bulletin board and funding database attracted record numbers of users last year. The bulletin board has developed into a one stop job shop for conservation in Africa and is by far the most visited page on our website, with over 12,000 visitors annually.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and feel inspired by the energy and commitment of the growing community of conservation biologists that the TBA is supporting.

Dr Rosie Trevelyan, Director

Institutional Members of the TBA

School of Life and Environmental Sciences, **Deakin University**,
Melbourne, AUSTRALIA
Institute of Zoology, **Karl-Franzens University**, Graz, AUSTRIA
Institute of Ecology, **University of Innsbruck**, AUSTRIA
Institute of Zoology, **Paris-Lodron University**, Salzburg, AUSTRIA
Faculty of Life Sciences, **University of Vienna**, AUSTRIA
Institute of Biological Sciences, **University of Aarhus**, DENMARK
Centre d'Études Biologiques de Chizé, **CNRS**, Chizé, FRANCE
Department of Sociobiology, **German Primate Centre (DPZ)**,
Göttingen, GERMANY
Institute of Systematic Botany, **University of Munich**, GERMANY
Department of Animal Ecology and Tropical Biology,
University of Würzburg, GERMANY
Department of Botany and Environmental Science Unit,
National University of Ireland, Galway, IRELAND
Department of Zoology and School of Natural Sciences,
Trinity College Dublin, IRELAND
Department of Zoology, **University College Dublin**, IRELAND
Community and Conservation Ecology, **University of Groningen**,
NETHERLANDS
Institute of Biology, **University of Leiden**, NETHERLANDS
Resource Ecology Group, **Wageningen University and Research Centre**,
NETHERLANDS
Institute of Environmental Sciences, **Jagiellonian University**, Cracow,
POLAND
Environmental Biology Department, **Warsaw University**, POLAND
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Centre for Research and Natural Resources, and the Department of
Systems Ecology, **Stockholm University**, SWEDEN
Swiss Tropical Institute, Basel, SWITZERLAND
Department of Integrative Biology, **University of Basel**, SWITZERLAND
Department of Biology, Ecology and Evolution, **University of Fribourg**,
SWITZERLAND
Department of Ecology and Evolution, **University of Lausanne**,
SWITZERLAND
Institute for Integrative Biology, **ETH Zurich**, SWITZERLAND
Zoology Institute, **University of Zurich**, SWITZERLAND
School of Biological Sciences, **University of Aberdeen**, UK
School of Biological Sciences, **University of Bristol**, UK
School of Applied Sciences, **Anglia Ruskin University**, Cambridge, UK
Departments of Plant Sciences and Zoology, **University of Cambridge**, UK
Institute of Evolutionary Biology and School of Geosciences,
University of Edinburgh, UK
Faculty of Biological Sciences Graduate School, **University of Leeds**, UK
School of Biological Sciences and Department of Geography,
University of Liverpool, UK
Department of Biological Sciences, **Imperial College**, London, UK
Department of Biology, **University College London**, UK
Institute of Zoology, **Zoological Society of London**, UK
School of Biology, **University of Nottingham**, UK
Departments of Plant Sciences and Zoology,
University of Oxford, UK
School of Environment and Life Sciences, **Salford University**, UK
School of Biology, **University of St Andrews**, UK
Faculty of Arts and Sciences, **Yale University**, USA

Hotspots 2008

The Hotspots course in 2008 was a great opportunity to bring together graduate students and conservation professionals from Africa and Europe. The two weeks spent in the Amani Nature Reserve within the Eastern Arc Biodiversity Hotspot were packed full of interesting lectures, fieldtrips and workshops. It was an important chance to broaden our understanding and come to grips with a variety of cultural, economic and social challenges to conservation around the world and how they are currently being tackled in Tanzania and other parts of Africa.

As two European graduate students who spend most of their time thinking about conservation theory and biodiversity science, we welcomed the interaction with conservation practitioners, faced with real decisions, as a breath of fresh air and a reminder of how conservation happens on the ground. We were greatly enriched by many of the discussions and presentations we were exposed to during the course and felt that the workshops focusing on conservation priority setting and fundraising were especially rewarding. We were inspired by the enthusiasm, determination and competence of so many of the course participants. We thank all the participants and the organisers for making these two weeks such a wonderful experience and hope our paths will cross again soon.

**Dorothea Pio, UK (07/4 Kirindy) &
Benjamin Isambert, France (06/4 Kirindy)**



The TBA Small Grants Scheme

TBA is pleased to announce the launch of this scheme, designed to assist TBA alumni groups in delivering priority conservation projects and to strengthen their capacity in natural resource management and research.

For further information, check with your alumni group coordinator or the TBA website.

TBA postgraduate scholarship: building careers

The TBA has now awarded a total number of 30 MSc Scholarships to alumni from 10 African countries. Eleven of these scholars have gone on to start PhD studies and, in 2008, Mao Angua Amis, a pioneer scholar, graduated with a PhD from the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Mao has now landed a top job with WWF South Africa as the Programme Manager for their Integrated Catchment Management programme and is considered an upcoming conservation leader by the African Conservation Telegraph (November 2008 issue).

The objective of the scholarship programme is to boost the careers of TBA alumni so that they can contribute more effectively to conservation in their home countries and institutions. The testimonials we receive show that our scholarship beneficiaries have excelled to become top conservation biologists and practitioners and that they continue to utilise their expertise long after their studies.

“My pioneering long-term amphibian research in Ghana has resulted in the discovery of two new species to science (one of them attributed to TBA funding). Interestingly, this is the only time in history a native (Ghanaian) is leading amphibian research in Ghana. Thanks to the TBA experience!” **Caleb Ofori, Ghana, 2008 scholar**

“3 months after [my] MSc, I was appointed to Head, Lushoto Silviculture Researcher Centre. This is the largest centre of [the] Tanzania Forestry Research Institute in terms of research facilities, human resources and expertise and research activities.”

John Richard, Tanzania 2005 scholar

“I am currently the country representative for the African Bird Club. I am also...the only female Malawian [bird] ringer in the country. I have set up a small initiative called BirdsMalawi through which I give talks to schools on bird conservation.

I am eternally grateful to TBA for its support that has helped put me in touch with the best in the field of ornithology and these will be a priceless resource to me for the rest of my career.” **Tiwonge Mzumara, Malawi 2007 scholar**

Seeing such achievements gives the TBA the determination to continue and we take the opportunity to thank our scholars for making us so proud.

Anthony Kuria, Program Manager



TBA Alumni Associations

TBA courses kick off our scientific careers – Benin TBA Alumni Group

In 2002 the first student from Benin, Kowiyou Yessoufou, attended a TBA course in Kibale, Uganda. Since then, seven other students have attended TBA courses. For many of us, it was the first multi-cultural working environment that we had come across. In 2007 we created the Benin TBA Alumni Group (BTAG) to help students go beyond the language barrier, popularise TBA activities among students and tropical biologists, share scholarship and job opportunities and to consolidate the group to keep the spirit of TBA alive forever.

Since 2007, three of us are completing our PhD Degrees: Kowiyou Yessoufou (02/2 Kibale), in Functional Ecology, at the University of Johannesburg; Nadine Worou (02/4 Kibale), BTAG Assistant Coordinator, in Crop Sciences, at the University of Bonn; and Etotepe Sogbohossou (04/1 Navaisha/Taita), in Wildlife Management, at Leiden University. Other alumni are: Ulysse Korogone (05/4 Kirindy) working as a Forest Officer at the National Forest Department, Alfred Hougnon (06/3 Mpala/Navaisha) who is about to complete his degree in Animal Resources Management and Sylvain Assogba who is currently teaching natural sciences to high school students. Two of us, Kowiyou and Etotepe were granted TBA postgraduate scholarships for their Masters degrees. We overwhelmingly acknowledge that TBA courses gave our scientific careers a kick-start. May the spirit of TBA live forever.

Kowiyou Yessoufou, Benin TBA alumni group coordinator (02/2 Kibale)

TBA Rwanda Alumni

Several members of TBA Rwanda alumni have acquired their scientific knowledge from different international universities like Oxford Brookes, Chester University and the University of Cape Town. Two members attended the student conference on conservation biology at Cambridge in 2008. The alumni group has prepared a workshop proposal on how to write a scientific paper which will be funded by TBA and Karisoke Research Center.

In 2009, Deogratias Tuyisingize received the 2009 TBA MSc scholarship to study Conservation Biology at the University of Cape Town. He is currently doing his coursework and will soon be writing up his project. He also did an internship with the late Professor Michael Majerus in April 2008 after the SCCS.

Deo Tuyisingize, TBA Rwanda alumni coordinator (06/4 Kirindy)

TBA Association of Kenya (TBAAK)

Tropical Biology Alumni Association of Kenya (TBAAK) held its first meeting on 9th February, 2007 at the National Museums of Kenya. It started off with approximately 16 TBA Kenya alumni members, but we now have at least 50 members. This marked the beginning of a long journey towards achieving the overriding goal of creating a network for effective biodiversity research, conservation, and management, through activities such as collective participation in environmental education and awareness, as well as research in biodiversity.

We have created a group on Facebook to enable us to share our ideas. Having developed a constitution, the group is currently undergoing registration with the Kenya Government Ministry of Societies and Groups. This will enable us to carry out our planned activities with ease in future. We look forward to working together with other groups and TBA at large, since conservation requires a multifaceted approach.

Margaret Awuor Owuor, TBAAK group coordinator (06/2 Kibale)



TBA alumni at Student Conference on Conservation Science in Cambridge in April 2009

Cameroon Tropical Biology Association Alumni

Since its creation in 2005, the CATBAA has witnessed a steady progress in deepening its roots as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation focused on the conservation of Cameroon's rainforests and savannah ecosystems. Achieving this will require the collaboration of both national and international institutions and TBA has a critical role to play. Of the 36 members, more than half have travelled abroad, either for further studies or for work. The home-based members are either employed in renowned national and international conservation organisations or are postgraduate students, while some are job seekers. One objective is to establish the CATBAA website, together with a yahoo groups forum, to enhance communication as well as to host future reports, publications and news postings.

CATBAA is very appreciative of TBA for the invaluable training/scholarship opportunities offered to Cameroonians. This continued growth in the capacity building of Cameroonians by TBA will produce the much needed pool of conservation experts within CATBAA, which is exploring areas for future biological field research in three regions of Cameroon. In addition, we plan to develop a proposal in partnership with TBA for funding and implementation.

Godwin A. Tanda, CATBAA coordinator (04/4 Kirindy)

The African Raptor Expedition

Having recently graduated from the University of Nottingham with a degree in zoology, I jumped at the chance to join raptor expert Simon Thomsett on a once-in-a-lifetime trip through Africa, collecting data on and photographing birds of prey

Birds of prey are especially vulnerable as they cannot be protected by simply cordoning off land. They suffer from direct persecution, poisoning, habitat loss, insufficient prey, and it is predicted that they will also be affected by climate change. The main aim of the expedition is therefore to raise awareness of the plight of birds of prey as, ultimately, their protection is in everyone's hands. We are also collecting road-count data and materials to put together a comprehensive book on the diurnal birds of prey of Africa.

After some unforeseen delays, we finally set off from Nairobi on 15th February. We started with a few days in the Mara wildlife reserve, where we hoped to catch some vultures. The Mara is quiet at this time of year, and we did not have much luck with the vultures as they all seemed to be following the wildebeest migration in Serengeti National Park.

So we followed the vultures into the Serengeti, where the wildebeests were calving. Eurasian Hobbies flew over us as we reached the top of the Ngorongoro Crater and tree-climbing lions posed for photographs in Manyara National Park. Tanzania is a stunning country with plenty of good raptor habitat. In Zambia, we were surprised to spot lots of Banded Snake Eagles in South Luangwa National Park, a species that had been rare on our trip until then. We searched the gorges on the Zambezi for the rare Taita Falcon, a speedy little falcon that nests on cliffs, unsuccessfully. We then crossed into Botswana where we plan to spend time in Chobe and the Kalahari looking for Pel's Fishing Owls and vultures.

Laila Bahaa-el-din, UK (07/1 Kibale)

Since she wrote this article Laila and Simon have continued travelling round Africa looking for raptors and seeing lots of wildlife. Read their blog at <http://simonthomsett.wildlifedirect.org/>. There's also a Facebook group: The African Raptor Expedition and Twitter: Africanraptor.



© Simon Thomsett

Conservation Today website

Since attending the 2007 TBA course in Madagascar I have travelled in East Africa and Tajikistan, visiting the magnificent Pamir mountains while volunteering for the Snow Leopard Conservancy.

In October 2008, I began a Masters in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation at Imperial College London, where I began working on a website set up by a fellow student, Will Pearse, www.conservationtoday.org. This site provides up-to-the-minute news and informed opinion on a wide range of topics relating to conservation, the natural world and our impact on it, and is written and maintained entirely on a voluntary basis.

I have since taken over editorial duties which involve updating the site daily – not always easy when your main workforce consists of students – contributing as often as I can manage, and trying to recruit new writers. We are always interested to hear from budding writers about your experiences from the field or simply topics close to your heart, so get in touch with any stories or photos and we will endeavour to get them out there for everyone to see. You can email me on jfw08@imperial.ac.uk.

Felix Whitton, UK (07/4 Kirindy)

"I think I owe it to TBA for getting me where I am today" **Mark Otieno, Kenya (01/2 Kibale)**

A dream too good to be true!

My first flight in an airplane to Entebbe was a dream come true. Having been a research assistant at the ornithological research institute in Nigeria, I never knew I would one day soar like the birds we study. After my selection to participate on the TBA course at Kibale, I told myself, "This would be the beginning of my international career in conservation!" Prior to the end of the TBA course, my prayer was answered when I got a sponsorship from the DNA barcoding team at Imperial College London to take up postgraduate studies. My London visit was a dizzying experience, one that captivated me completely. Meeting other senior researchers and students at the college transported me to another world and this resulted in my taking up a Masters opportunity with the South African DNA barcoding at the University of Johannesburg. Already, my experience at TBA has earned me "biological converts" at a rural secondary school where I teach biology as part of my one-year National Youth Service. I now occasionally take my biology students out for short field walks to nearby forest patches with the intention of orienting them towards a new perception of their environment and imparting new concepts of biodiversity conservation to them. I thank TBA for allowing me to share this unbelievable adventure. TBA was indeed a dream too good to be true!

Daru Barnabas, Nigeria (08/2 Kibale)

Two questions of “how” for the environment

The increasing global attention on the environment justifies two points: a global consensus of a problem we can no longer ignore and the need to do something now and fast. As a young researcher involved in policy analysis, the first question I asked myself was how did we get here? Why did we exchange the environment for our desired development? The climate is changing, biodiversity is being lost and our planet is in peril. Without a doubt, the changes we see in our natural systems are results of man’s past and present actions. There is a need to adjust our lifestyle in order to make significant efforts towards restoring the health and vitality of our environment.

The second question, perhaps a more important one is how did I get here? How did I find myself in this field? Well, it all started in the summer of 2005 when I attended a Tropical Biology Association course in Kibale National Park, Uganda for four weeks.

A memorable experience for me was the practical understanding of the complexity of our natural systems and the need to manage the ecosystems. From then, I have never looked back – I decided to study the policies and institutions required for the perpetual functioning of these fragile ecosystems. I am currently an Associate Professional Officer (APO) with the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), based in Cameroon working on climate change and the Congo Basin Forests. My job is to analyze policy oriented strategies for adaptation and mitigation for the region. In this capacity, I also conduct my PhD research with Wageningen University, Netherlands.

My field course in Kibale some four years ago, has not only given me a direction for a lifelong career but also a golden opportunity to contribute to my great continent. I thank TBA for the investment, not just for me and for Africa, but also for the environment.

Olufunso Somorin, Nigeria (05/2 Kibale)

Southern African insects

I’m in the second year of my PhD at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, comparing the native and alien ground dwelling invertebrates of Afrotropical forest, mountain fynbos, pine plantation and clear-felled pine in Table Mountain National Park. I recently completed the field work component of my study, with several challenges: steep slopes and rock falls, hot weather and snakes, baboons stealing my pitfall traps, and two pine sites felled during my sampling! I’ve also published a children’s natural history book: “My First Book of Southern African Insects”, featuring 58 common, charismatic insects of the southern African subregion, with text in English and three local languages.

Charmaine Uys, South Africa (04/2 Kibale)

TBA paved my way

The TBA course in Madagascar invited me to another world of science and showed me a way to sound conservation. I was exposed to fascinating field and class exercises on different aspects of biodiversity conservation. Although some topics taught during the course were new to some of us, we were not left behind as we had some of the best lecturers. I gained knowledge on a diverse range of concepts and techniques in ecology, conservation, experimental design and sampling methods that totally transformed my ideas of sound conservation. The knowledge and skills gained during the course have boosted my career to another level and helped me to get into the real world of science. I must underline the fact that it was fascinating to discuss and have common understanding of conservation issues with people from such diverse cultures. I am so proud of TBA and I will keep the flame of TBA burning.

Happiness Jackson, Tanzania (07/4 Kirindy)

A TBA alumnus – a good biologist

Tell me that you are a TBA alumnus and I will say you are a good biologist! When I went to Madagascar, my personal objective was to extend my knowledge on tropical biodiversity. After the course, not only did I satisfy fully my expectation but also I got a new approach to projects and write-ups and I do believe that was the most important thing. The exchanges during the courses between university lecturers, field conservationists and participants with different background and culture brought us a wide range of ideas which were useful for the projects we carried out.



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When I came back home, I completely reviewed the projects I carried out before, because they were no longer like a biologist’s write-up. I also helped some university friends to design their research projects, which I am still doing now and this is just the beginning of my career as a biologist. Through my experience, some of them discovered what TBA is and are now really excited to become the next TBA alumni, and future good biologists.

Achille Baudelaire Momo, Cameroon (08/3 Kirindy)

A stepping stone in my career

Having the opportunity to attend the TBA course in Kibale 2008 has been a stepping stone in my career. The new skills I brought back from the course to my organisation merited me a post of the bio-monitoring and research program coordinator of the Lebialem-Mone Cross River gorilla project. These skills, especially that of project design and writing, have also become very useful to many masters students at my home university as they come constantly to my organisation for consultancy on their project design and write-ups. I think TBA is just what I needed to keep rolling in the conservation field.

Francis Mbunya, Cameroon (08/2 Kibale)



"I thank you again for helping me out with a reference for the WorldTeach Program. I got accepted so will be going to China in August! Very Exciting! So THANK YOU!" **Lucie McGurn, UK (07/3 Amani)**

This is where I belong

Ever since I began to understand nature and all the problems we humans cause in it, I have been eager to change something, to save what's left to be saved. I knew I would study biology since I was 11 years old and after finishing school, I started right away. University was hard and sometimes disappointing. At some points I asked myself if I'm on the right path to achieve what I always wanted to. Then I started to do my Masters in biodiversity and environmental management and it was there that I heard of the TBA courses.

I was lucky to be able to join the Amani course. I was completely stunned and amazed by these five weeks of adventure, fun, and most of all, education. It was an absolute affirmation that I'm on the best path to do exactly the things I always dreamt of. We still have a chance to change something, to protect valuable life in so many forms. There are a lot of fascinating and eager people out there, who are willing to give their best to help mother earth as much as they can. TBA is a wonderful chance to get in touch with these people. I hope that there will be a chance to work together once again, when I'm done with University.

TBA opened my eyes and brought all my thoughts to one conclusion. We can make it! We live in a wonderful, amazing world. It's our duty to protect it for generations to come.

I'm thankful for this experience and for the chance to meet all the wonderful people who cared for us on the Amani course. Clive, Kuria, Adolpho, Walter ... And most of all, the late Mike Majerus, who was able to express our duties in this life like no one else. He almost made me cry in his very emotional speech about life and mother earth. He will always be my ideal in this cold scientist's world, so that I never forget that, even as a scientist, I'm allowed to be passionate, warm hearted and affectionate...

Sylvia Reiter, Germany (08/1 Amani)

It all came in handy

I am happy for the experience I got in the TBA course I attended. Why? Because it all came handy last year when I got a National Geographic Society Grant to do research on the Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekei*) in the North Rift region of Kenya.

It was a short lived project (only 6 months) and for sure, each and every thing I learnt while doing the TBA project was more than enough preparation for this. I worked with so much ease in data collection, analysis, reporting and photography! I am also glad for the notes we were given as I have referred to them more than 100 times!

Thank you very much for the chance TBA gave me to learn from a diverse community. I know I am getting better and I hope others benefit from this as well. My gratitude goes to Dr. Rosie Trevelyan for her tireless efforts in sourcing for funds and seeing that African students can attend the courses. I would also like to thank all the lecturers for their efforts and patience. You made me achieve this and I am honestly deeply indebted! I am very willing to assist in any way I can. Just keep me posted and whatever is in my capacity I will give back. Kudos TBA team, I love you all.

Mbenge Mary, Kenya (07/4 Kirindy)

TBA gave me opportunities

I would like to give my sincere thanks to the TBA team for giving me the opportunity to get exposed to current techniques and concepts on conservation that enabled me work efficiently as Game Officer at the Selous Game reserve where I was employed after my TBA course. The knowledge from the TBA course opened my eyes and helped me write a good motivation statement that enabled me to be selected for an MSc. in Sustainable Forest and Nature Management that I am pursuing at Copenhagen University under the Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

David Maleko, Tanzania (07/2 Kenya)

Teaching for TBA

Teaching the TBA field courses – a unique experience

When I attended the TBA field course over a decade ago (TBA 97/3, Naivasha, Kenya), I did not know it was a humble beginning of a 'journey' that would take me right back to TBA as a teacher. The knowledge and skills I gained during the TBA training greatly helped me during my MSc. and PhD field research and later in supervision of undergraduate and graduate research at the Department of Zoology, Makerere University, where I am currently employed as a lecturer.

Over the last eight years, I have taught TBA field courses in Kibale National Park. How unique is the experience of teaching a TBA field course compared to teaching at the university? In my experience, the uniqueness can be attributed to the international and multi-cultural nature of the participants and teachers. I like the practical nature of the TBA training, which has enabled me to demonstrate field techniques, in aquatic ecology, during field visits to the beautiful crater lakes of western Uganda. I have found that TBA courses are well-structured with a mix of seminars, lectures and field demonstrations, which allows participants to gain a wide range of skills and knowledge. As an alumnus, it feels rewarding to 'give-back' to the TBA, through teaching and sharing my experiences with young scientists from different parts of the world, and I believe I will continue to do so for a long time to come.

Jackson Efitre, Uganda, TBA teacher (97/3 Naivasha)

My motivation as alumnus and TBA teacher

The professional training I received during my TBA course in Amani, Tanzania compelled me to accept an offer to participate in teaching on the TBA field course, in Kibale. My experience has shown that attending a TBA training course offers vast opportunities for participants to broaden their understanding and see other opportunities not earlier revealed. After my participation in TBA training in Amani, I changed my professional focus from mammals to plants, including plant invasion ecology and related studies, which formed my PhD. study. During the course in Amani, I was impressed by a presentation by Dr Pierre Binggeli on an invasive plant study in the Usambara Mountains. My group published our project in XII World Forestry Congress 2003 proceedings.

As a professional teacher, my satisfaction is when I contribute to promoting conservation, by imparting to the young graduates experience and knowledge that I have accumulated over the years. It is inspiring and gratifying to receive positive feedback from the candidates who have appreciated my teaching and are interested in pursuing similar fields.

The fact that the TBA training courses enrich the participant's field experience and aspirations, as well as contributing to the attainment of academic and professional positions, is an affirmation that TBA is enhancing conservation practice. It has enabled many participants to seize the unlimited opportunities in the conservation world. TBA has thus become a breeding ground for future conservation and natural resource managers worldwide. Long live TBA!

Andama Edward (PhD.), Department of Biology, Gulu University, Uganda (99/2 Amani)

A chance to pay back

I attended the TBA course in 1995 in Kibale, Uganda. This was my first time to attend such a field-based course for people from different parts of the world. The programme, though tightly packed with academic work, also gave us time to relax and socialise. I was later to learn that TBA has maintained this spirit on all courses.

Perhaps my two most memorable moments during that course were the good times we had in Queen Elizabeth National Park; sitting in Landrovers in the wilderness of the park, observing and recording the behaviour of Ugandan Kob and surveying hippos and birds on a boat trip to Lake Albert for almost the whole day. There were so many hippos in the lake I feared they were going to overturn our boat!

Twelve years later, TBA invited me to join its course in Amani, Tanzania; this time, as a teacher. This was a great honour and I was delighted to join TBA because it gave me the feeling I was 'paying back', by sharing my experiences on the 'real world' of tropical biology with new TBA students.

Over the years, I have noted several good things about TBA. TBA has continued to grow stronger, expanding in Tanzania and Madagascar, in an effort to reach more young scientists interested in tropical biology. The courses remain unique because of the field oriented and practical based approach which introduces the students to the challenges they will meet in the real world. TBA courses create a good and friendly learning environment, narrowing the gap between students and teachers, and increasing the opportunities for student-student interactions.

I strongly encourage students from African universities to apply for TBA courses. There is a lot to benefit from these courses not only on the academic side but also socially, since participants network with people from all over the world.

Henry J. Ndangalasi Department of Botany, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (95/3 Kibale)

Follow up Support Programme

The TBA Follow up Support Programme (FuSP)

".. your support has really contributed to my achievements so far" Kenyan TBA 04/3

A decade has gone by since TBA launched its Follow up Support programme for African alumni. The programme is designed to make TBA's training courses more effective by helping trainees apply their new skills and connections in the longer term. It maintains a close contact with TBA trainees, ensuring that they are provided with advice and information on current opportunities that directly match their needs. The programme has created an active international network that brings together its 1,140 alumni with other tropical biologists and conservation practitioners.

The TBA bulletin board is one of the programme's web-based tools that has proved to be very popular. Receiving 13,000 visits a year, the bulletin board posts up to date information on training, scholarships, sources of project funding and many other opportunities for African conservation biologists. The TBA funding database is another web-based tool that maintains an up to date comprehensive listing of funding, grants, and scholarships relevant for Africans engaged in biology or conservation. The database is probably the largest of its kind and is free to access.

The TBA Nairobi office is the focal point for the follow-up support programme. To be able to identify specific needs of alumni, the office greatly relies on updates regarding their current profiles and progressions in their careers.

As we work to improve this programme, we welcome all useful suggestions and ideas from our alumni. To all of our alumni who have continued keeping in touch, keep up the spirit. We look forward to achieving even greater successes together in 2009/10.

Emmah Owidi, TBA Project Officer (alumni@tropical-biology.org)

Alumni updates are now available to view on the TBA website (www.tropical-biology.org).

Please send details of your current activities to us: alumni-updates@tropical-biology.org.

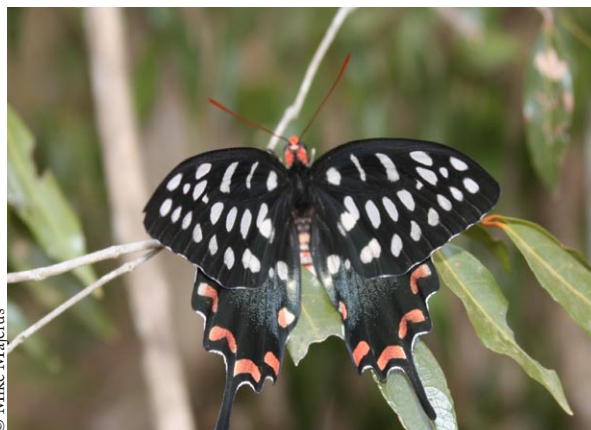
These will be posted on the website each year.

The TBA is grateful for support from:

The BAT Biodiversity Partnership
The Ben Voysey Scholarship Fund
The British Ecological Society
Zoology Department of the University of Cambridge
The British High Commission Uganda
The British High Commission Kenya

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The National Museums of Kenya
Nature Kenya
Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya
Makerere University Institute of Environment and Natural Resources, Uganda
Makerere University Biological Field Station, Uganda
Nature Uganda
Amani Nature Reserve, Tanzania
Tanzania Forestry Research Institute, Tanzania
Forestry and Beekeeping Division of the Ministry of Nature Resources and Tourism, Tanzania
Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania
Faculty of Sciences, University of Antananarivo, Madagascar
Ministre Eaux et Forêts and Ministre de l'Environnement, Madagascar



A photo of a Malagasy butterfly by Professor Mike Majerus, who taught on courses in Tanzania, Madagascar and Uganda and sadly passed away in January 2009

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