

News and updates from *AfricanBioServices*, a European Union-funded research project investigating ecosystem services in the greater Serengeti-Mara ecosystem in eastern Africa.

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AfricanBioServices Updates

December 2015

Note from the project coordinator

Finally the AfricanBioServices project is officially launched! During five days of many presentations and intensive discussions in Mugumu in Serengeti District, northern Tanzania, almost 80 project participants met. Young scientists presented the work they plan to do. Members of each work package met and discussed their roles, while local stakeholders participated in the discussions.

Agreement was reached on where to store data in a repository as well as how to continue to build up our joint long-term database. All 13 beneficiaries were present. I noticed that enthusiasm was the backstage of all discussions. There is hope for the upcoming results and the involvement of local people in the project. We hope this will be a world-class example of a project where researchers involve the local people and stakeholders in their research and give feedback on their research findings, not only to the scientific world but also to lay people who will be involved in data collection.

The AfricanBioServices project is about ecosystem services and how different drivers might potentially change such services in the future. Our hope is that this project will contribute to better knowledge to influence change in policies and secure a sustainable future for ecosystems in Africa. Similarly, it is our hope that such sustainable use will contribute to poverty alleviation, bringing the local people in the Serengeti-Mara region up to a better life.

I wish all AfricanBioServices participants good luck with their work, particularly all the young MSc and PhD students as well as all postdocs who are engaged in the project. I look forward to meeting all of you in the field over the coming years.

Eivin Røskaft

Coordinator, AfricanBioServices project

TAWIRI team involved in a series of workshops

The team from the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) working on Work Package (WP) 1 has been busy with several preliminary activities over the past six months or so.

Together with the WP2 team, they held a workshop on 8-11 June at the Serengeti Wildlife Research Centre to establish the study transects and locations.

This was followed by a second workshop on 14-20 June at the same venue to describe the existing data sets and plan for data collection. The main data sets described were socio-ecology, socio-economic, biodiversity, health and environmental data.

A third workshop followed in August. This was a fairly intensive workshop aimed at finalizing the work plan and description of variables as well as identifying data sources.

On 1-5 September, the WP1 team collaborated with the WP7 team to organize a kick-off meeting at the Serengeti Wildlife Research Centre where the data sets were presented and priority list of data sets selected according to the needs of the other WPs.

From 20 September to 4 October, five researchers from TAWIRI and one from Kenya's Department of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing travelled to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) for a training workshop on database management.



Researchers from TAWIRI and DRSRS and facilitators from NTNU at the training workshop on database management held in NTNU on 20 September to 4 October 2015 (photo contributed by Janemary Ntalwila).

The researchers learned how to develop and manage a user-friendly database; the principles of database language; how to extract, manipulate data and normalize data and how to connect data with other programs such as GIS. A few data variables and data sets (rainfall, human population, and wildlife census) have been already uploaded on the internal website (<http://www.bio.ntnu.no/tanzania>).

The TAWIRI team supervised the AfricanBioServices seminar presentations at the 10th TAWIRI Scientific Conference which was held on 2-4 December 2015 in Arusha, Tanzania. They also worked with colleagues from NTNU to plan for the first consortium meeting held on 6-10 December in Mugumu, Serengeti.

Contributed by Robert Fyumagwa and Janemary Ntalwila

Thomas Morrison joins University of Glasgow team as postdoctoral research assistant

The University of Glasgow has recruited Thomas Morrison as a postdoctoral research assistant to help with the wildebeest and zebra geographic positioning system (GPS) collaring and the vegetation analysis as part of WP2 and WP4.

Tom brings a rich history of work experience in East African savannas that includes research on elephants in Amboseli, migratory wildebeest studies in Tarangire National Park and tree-grass-fire dynamics in Serengeti National Park.

In addition to deploying 40 GPS collars over the next five months, Tom will be assisting the rest of the University of Glasgow team (Grant Hopcraft, Dan Haydon, Joseph Masoy and Eliabu Lusingu) with estimating physiological responses of the animals as they migrate between core protected areas and village community lands.

In the coming year, Tom and the team will also be managing a network of camera traps across the ecosystem to estimate occupancy of wildlife and livestock in relation to proximity to protected areas. To add extra depth to this knowledge, the team is collaborating with Bernard Bett from the International Livestock Research Institute and Richard Reeve and Tiziana Lembo from the University of Glasgow on a foot and mouth disease surveillance system that will aim to map the potential flashpoints for disease transmission between migratory wildebeest and domestic livestock.

We welcome all the new collaborations and look forward to productive and informative research in the coming years.

Contributed by Grant Hopcraft

Xi Jiao to join the University of Copenhagen as postdoctoral researcher

The University of Copenhagen has recruited Xi Jiao as a postdoctoral researcher, the first of two such positions in WP5. Out of 21 applications received, five applicants met the qualifications and three were interviewed. The interviews were completed on 6 November.

Xi carried out her PhD at the university's Department for Food and Resource Economics. The title of her thesis was *Rural livelihoods, climate change and micro-level adaptive capacity in the Greater Mekong sub-region*.

Through her PhD research and consultancy assignments for the Asian Development Bank, Xi has gained relevant experience in evaluating ecosystem services and implementing large-scale socio-economic household surveys using econometric and spatial modelling approaches.

Xi will coordinate the household survey in communities surrounding the greater Serengeti-Mara ecosystem in Tanzania and Kenya. The survey will quantify household-level dependence on income derived from ecosystem services and evaluate the welfare implications of predicted changes in the provision of ecosystem services for different social groups and the aggregated societal costs.

Xi will also be responsible for designing survey tools and databases as well as data management and analysis, including multivariate and spatial modelling and future scenario analysis and simulations.

Xi joins the team officially on 1 January 2016 and we look forward to working with her over the next three years.

Contributed by Martin R. Nielsen

Give us your feedback!

We would like to hear from you! Please send us your feedback on this inaugural newsletter and share your ideas on how we may improve future issues of the newsletter.

Remember to send your contributions for the next issue of the newsletter no later than **Friday 6 May 2016** to Bernard Bett (b.bett@cgiar.org) or Tezira Lore (t.lore@cgiar.org).

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