PAPACO

Newsletter from African protected areas

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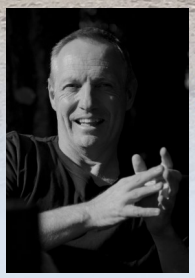


Editorial

Geoffroy MAUVAIS
PAPACO Coordinator

THE STATE OF THE WORLD

Come January, it will be the season to display fashionable optimism and wish each other all the best, including for our declining nature. Like every year before, we will try to convince ourselves that what has not yet been done to save it, will be, or simply can still be.

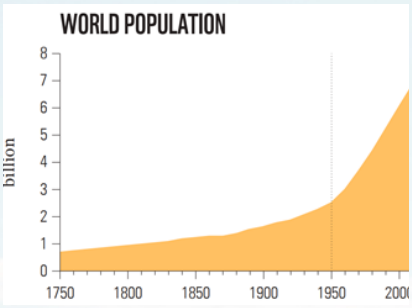
However, since we are not there yet, let's keep grounded a little more!

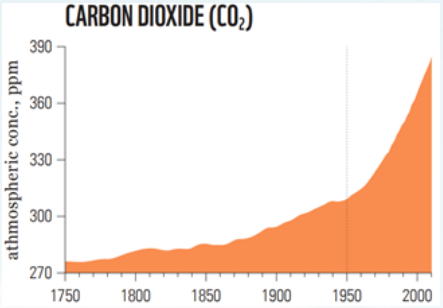
Every two years since 1998, WWF produces a report entitled *Living Planet* which describes the state of the world in which we live. This year, it asks a crucial question: how can nature be restored? This presupposes that nature can still be saved, bringing us back to the previous point.

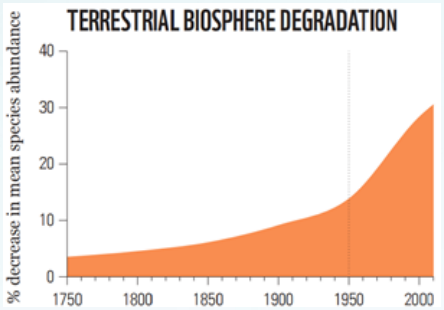
The 2018 edition of the report, published recently, is uplifting in many ways. It's a reminder to how essential nature is to us; yes, incredible as it may sound, we still need to be reminded again and again of something appallingly obvious, namely, that there is no planet B. The report even evaluates the value of the services provided by nature at $ 125 000 billion a year, which obviously doesn't mean much. Even if someone could afford to buy these services, what would he do and where would he go with them? Life has no value, precisely because without life, nothing matters, even in a bank vault or in a trading room. And, simply put, our life isn't possible without nature.

According to the report, less than a one fourth of the earth is still relatively unaffected by direct human activities, a proportion that is expected to fall to 10% in thirty years due to the increased use of space to meet the ever-growing needs of our ever-expanding species. But is it true that the growth of the human population impacts our environment? The report gives us some pretty straightforward graphs and each of us will draw his or her own conclusion. And if you do not see any connection between these curves, well, do not change anything to your habits, you are living in the trend!

The report also produces the famous Living Planet Index, which is an indicator based on the abundance of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles and

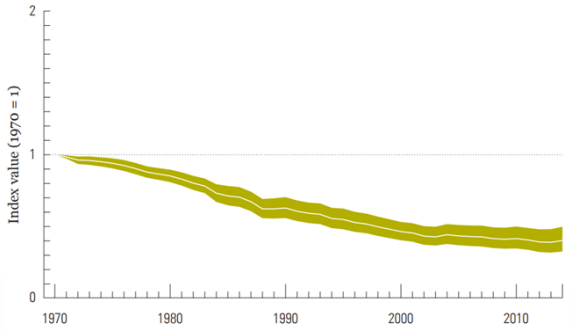






amphibians. Set at a value of 1 in 1970 (even if we know however that the situation had already worsened), the value of the index has decreased by 60% since. In short, we have lost more than half of life on earth in less than two generations.

Habitat index that focuses on the distribution of species, the Red List that covers their risk of extinction and the Biodiversity Integrity Index

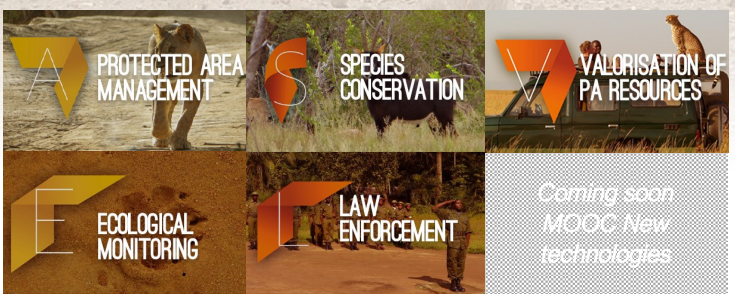


that measures the changes in the composition of the these species' communities) speak in unison: biodiversity is declining.

Still, the report concludes with an optimistic note that presupposes a radical change in our behavior in order to restore nature and ensure a better future (for us of course). It supports a three-step roadmap: "(1) clearly state the objective of biodiversity restoration, (2) develop a set of measurable and relevant progress indicators, and (3) agree on a series of measures to achieve the goal in the required time." I will let you decide whether this alone is enough.

Click here to read the full report.

Our MOOCs



End of the current session: 17 Dec. 2018

Make sure you finish off before this date, and if you passed the exams, **request your certificate** as soon as possible.
The next session starts **1 March 2019**, and registrations open in January.

Retrouvez le PAPACO sur :

@Papaco_IUCN
facebook /IUCNpapaco
Linkedin

Also read: monthly Protecting the Planet newsletter (GPAP).

In addition to PAPACO's page, join the 5,000 members on the Facebook group dedicated to MOOCs.

All links and useful information is on papaco.org.

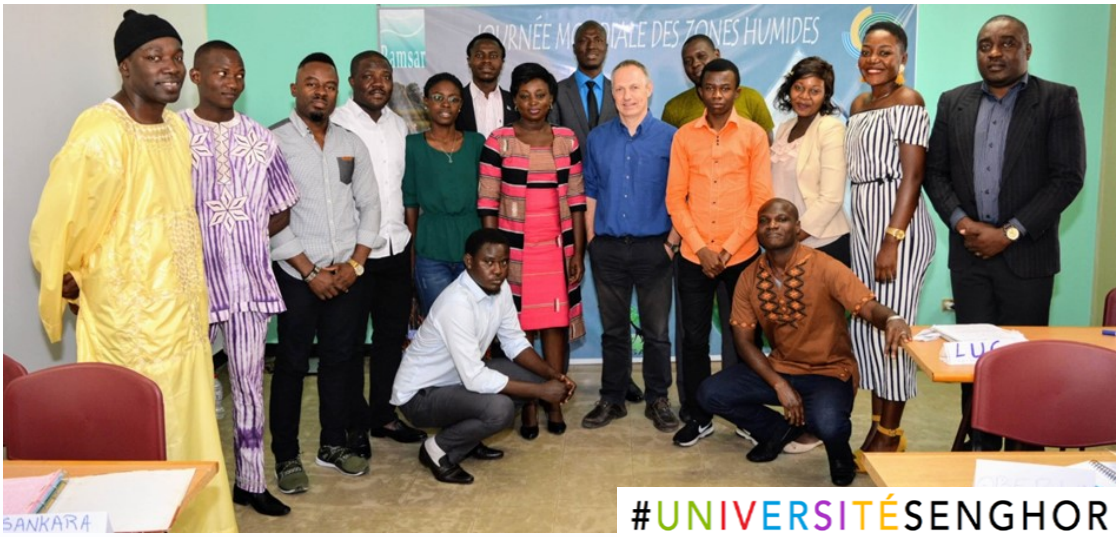
PAPACO Retreat 2018

In November, the PAPACO team went on a retreat in a South African reserve. The three winning sponsors were supposed to join us, but unfortunately, Kevin's flight was cancelled, and Emmanuel's visa was denied. Richard from DRC (see picture on the left) did make it, and he was able to share his point of view on the courses as well as some ideas. Over those few of days, we discussed the future of PAPACO, but of course, we also very much enjoyed the beauty of nature...

Our courses

Protected area management training: the fifth group doing the Masters GAP in Alexandria is in their final year

Fifteen students from 11 African countries (Burkina Faso, Benin, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazza, Gabon, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Madagascar) and from Haiti are currently busy with the second year of their Master's degree at Senghor University in Alexandria. They are following the protected area management course introduced by Senghor University together with Papaco. They will be finishing in June 2019. Selection for the next class will take place in spring 2019 — the exact date will be communicated, namely through the NAPA.



The fifth cohort at Senghor university in November 2018

UNIVERSITY DIPLOMA - FRENCH

The 15th edition of our university diploma in Protected Area Management is coming up.

What is it ? It is a short course that equips students with the tools they need to implement conservation policies, and to better understand socio-territorial issues in and aournd PAs.

Who can enrol? French-speaking PA managers or stakeholders in West-Africa.

Where? Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

When? 18 February to 12 April 2019

Registration deadline: 15 December 2018

For more info, click here.

Enrol here.

Talking research in practice

Should I pursue a PhD in conservation?

Dr. Gretchen Walters, Assistant Professor in Development and Conservation, Institute of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Recently, in my new capacity as an Assistant Professor of development and conservation practice at the University of Lausanne, I recruited PhD students to work on social and cultural conservation issues in Africa. I heavily circulated the announcement across a variety of networks including through NAPA and so received 120 applications. In answering the emails about the application process, in reading the applications, and in giving numerous candidates specific feedback about their applications, I thought it would be useful to reflect on this experience to help conservationists to decide if they should pursue a PhD and if so, how to develop a PhD proposal.

First you might ask, why did I do a PhD?

After a master's degree, I began working in Africa for the Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG), developing their work in Central Africa on biodiversity conservation. After receiving a large grant from the USAID, I found myself administering it and never having time to deepen my experience in field conservation. I saw my future in botanical conservation to be long-term and found that my work in project administration would not easily enable me to specialise in research topics. So, after a few years of project administration and program development, I applied for an interdisciplinary PhD program at the University College London's Anthropology Department's Human Ecology Research Group, while still working part time for MBG. It was through this experience that I developed a deep understanding of the conservation of cultural landscapes and learned how to critically evaluate conservation initiatives from an interdisciplinary perspective. This then prepared me to continue work in conservation program development for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, where I worked on applied research projects, and then recently became a professor.

What does a PhD help one to do?

- Conduct research
- Understand an issue in depth, from many angles, including critical ones
- Develop, apply or contribute to a theory
- Increase analytical or writing skills
- Innovate, bring together different approaches
- Bring together research and practice
- Contribute one's ideas to solving a problem
- Establish collaborations with other researchers

What can one do with a PhD that is difficult to do without one?

- Teach at a university
- Supervise students
- Develop independent research projects
- Participate in think-tanks
- Take senior roles in consultancy offices and conservation organisations.

In some cases, it may be possible to do much of this work without a PhD, but it is the exception and not the rule.

Questions to ask yourself before you do a PhD

- Are you passionate about the subject you will research? PhDs take 3 to 5 years and so loving your topic is essential.
- Is a PhD the only way to reflect on your experience and apply your knowledge to conservation? There are some ways to request a sabbatical and seek paid opportunities to take some time off and reflect on your work (example).
- Are there other ways to analyse issues in your conservation project?
  - ⇒ You can partner with conservation scientists to analyse aspects of your program/project
  - ⇒ You can develop collaborate research-practice programs which explore a topic. A good example is the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative which brought together 40 researchers and practitioners in 13 African countries.

In most cases, one doesn't need a PhD to conduct conservation research.

Why many applicants said they wanted to do a PhD:

- I want to explore a specific research question
- I need time to reflect on my experience in conservation
- A PhD would be the culmination of my research experience in research and practice
- I am not sure what else I should do. I cannot find a job, and so a PhD could be a temporary job. There is not much work in my country.
- I would like to be near a spouse already at the university
- I would like to advance in my career in research and teaching and, in my country, I cannot do that at a university without a PhD.

Considerations for making a better PhD application

- Enquire if your degree is acceptable to the university to which you apply. This is especially important if you have a professional master's degree.
- Several types of university disciplines and departments will offer the potential to conduct PhD studies in conservation-related fields.

⇒ Consider the department to which you are applying.

- If it is a social science, anthropology or geography department, ensure that your proposal makes links to theoretical frameworks relevant to the discipline. Cite the foundational works of that framework or field.
- If it is a biological science department, refer to systematic reviews of your topic. Refer to articles in the journals Conservation Biology, Biological Conservation, Conservation Letters, Conservation and Society, Ecology and Society, etc.

- Ensure that your proposal demonstrates a mastery of the subject, and refers to the scientific literature, and not just the grey literature. If you are applying to a francophone university, you should still refer to anglophone literature, as this is often dominant in conservation research.
- If you do not have access to the scientific literature, consider subscribing to researchgate.net or academia.edu or contacting a researcher directly to obtain a copy of their work. Do not only cite grey literature.
- Ensure that your proposal places your research question within a global debate. Refer to papers which explore the global context. It is not enough to just focus on documenting the status of the flora/fauna/carbon of a single protected area (this can be done for a Master's project). However, you can use related methods or data to work on a

wider question. If you want to study the usage of natural resources in a protected area, place this study in the wider debate of the rights of local people to access natural resources, etc.

- Ensure you state what new contribution your research will make to the field.
- Ensure that your proposal uses traditional formats, such as: introduction, methods, site, expected results, literature, or other accepted formats.
- Ensure that your interests match those of the supervisor. Look at their university webpage, researchgate page or academia page. Look at the requirements of the post.
- Consider if what you want to do is feasible in the time frame of a PhD (3-5 years, depending on the university). For example, you cannot within 3-5 years conduct a study of the floristic diversity of a protected area and the carbon content of the trees of that PA, as well as document the traditional usage of these natural resources. These are 3 distinct studies. However, you can ask 3 related questions, related to a protected area, but in a wider context.
- Ensure that your proposal goes beyond a project-type study which documents a situation. You must move beyond a project-NGO type proposal.
- If there is an email provided to contact the professor who is seeking students, contact them with your questions. This demonstrates interest in their work and the post.

In discussing this reflection with my colleague, Dr. Emmanuel Nuesiri of the African Leadership University in Mauritius, he reminded me of the role that PhD supervisors should play. In my view, a mentor should play a role of ensuring that the student is achieving their research in the timeframe proposed, while becoming part of a related research network. But to do this, the student will likely need support not just from their advisor, but also a larger network, including of other PhD students. The advisor should help you, when needed, to narrow your research focus, point you towards relevant research, meetings, and collaborations. They should also help you understand the research and publication process, and how to navigate this. It can also be highly beneficial to co-publish with your advisor on a topic of shared interest. And in my case, the advisor should help you think through how to apply your research to practical situations. There are many cases where advising can turn out to be negative (e.g. PhD supervisors: be better mentors, PhD supervisors: invest more time Why learning to mentor and teach is more important for US faculty members than publishing papers A Degree of Betrayal: the relationship between PhD students and mentors). However, working with PhD supervisors can be a fabulous experience, as it was in my case and the case for others. You can understand, to a degree, the type of advisor you will have through email exchanges, or in asking other students in the same program. It is worth trying to do this to ensure that you and your advisor are a good match.

Whatever the case, conducing PhD work can be very fulfilling and life-changing. But it is a challenge, and you will need the right level of interest and support to achieve it. Conservation needs critical researchers and practitioners that can improve where conservation is going. So, if you are up for the challenge, then consider conducting PhD research.

Other points of view on why to do a PhD

- Five reasons to study a PhD
- Why do a PhD
- Un doctorat, pourquoi, comment ?
- Faire une thèse en Afrique : « Pas d'autres moyens que la volonté d'y arriver » (French)

Opportunities for advanced studies

- Opportunities for Africans ;
- MA and PhD fellowships for African students.

Conservation news

Fin Whale, Mountain Gorilla recovering thanks to conservation action – IUCN Red List

Extract from IUCN press release – 14th November 2018 – more info here.

Conservation action has brought renewed hope for the Fin Whale and the Mountain Gorilla, according to the update of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The Fin Whale has improved in status from Endangered to Vulnerable following bans on whaling, while the Mountain Gorilla subspecies has moved from Critically Endangered to Endangered thanks to collaborative conservation efforts. But overexploitation also threatens the Vene tree (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) – an important source of timber – which enters The IUCN Red List as Endangered.

The IUCN Red List now includes 96,951 species of which 26,840 are threatened with extinction.

Photo: Aqqa Rosing-Asvid (cc by 2.0)

Whale populations on the rise

Previously listed as Endangered, the Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) is now listed as Vulnerable as the global population of the species has roughly doubled since the 1970s. The recovery follows international bans on commercial whaling in the North Pacific and in the Southern Hemisphere, in place since 1976, and significant reductions in catches in the North Atlantic since 1990. The status of the western subpopulation of the Gray Whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) has also improved, moving from Critically Endangered to Endangered. Both of these whale species were historically threatened by overexploitation for their blubber, oil and meat.

"Fin Whales and Western Gray Whales were severely depleted by hunting, and it is a relief to finally see their populations on the rise. These whales are recovering largely thanks to bans on commercial hunting, international agreements and various protection measures. Conservation efforts must continue until the populations are no longer threatened," says Randall Reeves, Chair of the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group. *"These examples of governments, industry and civil society acting together for conservation should provide inspiration for Parties gathering in Egypt this week at the Convention on Biological Diversity conference."*

The nearly complete protection of Fin Whales throughout their range has allowed the global population to reach around 100,000 mature individuals. Western Gray Whales have been protected from commercial whaling in almost all range state since 1980, but only recently has there been clear evidence of increasing numbers in the western Pacific, particularly off Sakhalin Island, Russia. The delay between conservation measures taking effect and the detection of whale recovery is due, in part, to these animals' slow rate of reproduction. Five Gray Whale range states – Japan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea, the USA and Mexico – have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation Concerning Conservation Measures for the Western Gray Whale Population. Industrial activity including oil and gas development and commercial fisheries also represent a potential threat to Gray Whales. Since 2004, an IUCN-led independent panel of scientists has been advising Sakhalin Energy, one of the largest companies operating offshore in the Russian Far East, on how to manage the potential impacts of its activities on the whales.

Hope for the Mountain Gorilla

This update of The IUCN Red List also brings hope for the Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*), which has improved in status from Critically Endangered to Endangered thanks to collaborative conservation efforts across country boundaries and positive engagement from communities living around the Mountain Gorilla habitat. The Mountain Gorilla is one of two subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*); the Eastern Gorilla species remains Critically Endangered.

Intensive conservation action, including anti-poaching patrols and in-situ veterinary interventions – such as the removal of snares – has contributed to the growth of Mountain Gorilla populations since the previous IUCN Red List assessment, published in 2008. The 2008 Mountain Gorilla population was estimated to be around 680 individuals, but 2018 estimates show that it has increased to over 1,000 individuals, the highest figure ever recorded for the subspecies. The population growth has been confirmed through coordinated and improved survey methods.

Mountain Gorilla habitat is restricted to protected areas covering approximately 792 km² in two locations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda – the Virunga Massif and Bwindi-Sarambwe. Both locations are bordered by land intensively cultivated for agriculture by a growing human population. Threats to this subspecies remain high, including poaching, recurring civil unrest and human-introduced diseases, ranging from respiratory infections to Ebola.

Photo: Ludovic Hirlimann (cc by 2.0)

"Whilst it is fantastic news that Mountain Gorillas are increasing in number, this subspecies is still Endangered and therefore conservation action must continue," says **Dr Liz Williamson of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group**. *"Coordinated efforts through a regional action plan and fully implementing IUCN Best Practice guidelines for great ape tourism and disease prevention, which recommend limiting numbers of tourists and preventing any close contact with humans, are critical to ensuring a future for the Mountain Gorilla."*

Illegal logging threatens the Vene timber tree

Vene (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*), a globally important timber tree, enters The IUCN Red List as Endangered, threatened by felling to supply booming demand for household products. Native to West and Central Africa, the dark pink-brown timber from this tree is used globally for affordable furniture, flooring, household utensils and in construction. Between 2009 and 2014, there was a 15-fold increase in the trade of timber from the Vene tree, a type of African Rosewood, to meet high demand from China.

"As demand outweighs the legal supply of Vene timber, illegal trade networks are becoming increasingly lucrative," says **Sara Oldfield, Co-Chair of IUCN SSC Plant Specialist Group**. *"Less than 2% of the tree's native forest is protected and much of its habitat lies within conflict zones, where conservation is not a priority. Protected areas need to be expanded to conserve this species."*

Illegal trade in Vene timber is widespread. Most range countries have legislation in place to protect the species, but this is often not enforced owing to a lack of resources and funding to control illegal trade. In Togo, a quarter of African Rosewood harvest was sourced illegally in 2008. A lack of awareness throughout the supply chain perpetuates the situation, threatening local livelihoods dependent on the tree for animal forage, fuel, clothes dye and medicinal use. Uses of the rosewood in Alzheimer's disease and dementia treatments are also being researched. *For more info, click here.*

Announcements

PANORAMA

SOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

Preserving LUFASI, a privately Protected Area within the densely populated Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria.

The Lekki Urban Forest and Animal Sanctuary Initiative (LUFASI) in Lagos, Nigeria, provides ecological benefits which contribute to the social economic development of the people and mitigates climate change issues in Lagos and Nigeria. However, due to habitat mismanagement practices, the LUFASI flora and fauna gets disturbed. In addition, there is a lack of awareness on the importance of the protection of our forests and its benefits. This should improve with the establishment of proper habitat management techniques.

Read full article here.

Read more about Panorama here.

> Site Coordinator <

Wildlife Conservation Fund

Where? Kinshasa, DRC

Planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of site-based activities for the Sustainable Wildlife

Full description of the position here.

Wildlife Conservation Society

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