

NEWS FROM PROTECTED AREAS IN AFRICA

NAPA 189

Conserving nature in Africa



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

ENVIRONMENTAL AMNESIA

>>> P.2 - EDITO

Environmental amnesia is a concept that describes the process whereby each generation considers the state of the environment it has known since birth as the reference standard... And this is a problem!

P.3 & 4 - OUR ONLINE COURSES <<<

A brand new tutorial: Words of Conservation! 100 illustrated expressions to strengthen your knowledge and fieldwork, in addition to our 7 MOOCs and 4 Essentials to help you build your skills at your own pace.

MOOCs, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

YOUTH CONSERVATION

>>> P.5 TO 7 - ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Youth Conservation news and testimonials from dedicated field actors... particularly in Cameroon and Togo.

P.8 TO 10 - WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL AMNESIA? <<<

A vibrant testimony about our environmental amnesia and how it impacts our ability to protect our natural environment...

FEATURE OF THE MONTH



EDITO

ENVIRONMENTAL AMNESIA

By *Geoffroy Mauvais*
IUCN-Papaco coordinator

»»» The only thing worse than dying is probably being forgotten!

Environmental amnesia is a concept developed in sociology of conservation. It describes the process whereby each generation considers the state of the environment it has known since birth as the reference standard. This leads to an erroneous perception of nature's evolution over time, as successive generations become accustomed to increasingly poor environmental quality. Unfortunately, the environment is gradually deteriorating before our very eyes...

I see this in the courses I give on site. I often ask students to present the park where they work, and they make a point of presenting it in the best possible light. In general, the image given is far too flattering compared to reality, but in any case, it's a far cry from the reality of a not-so-distant ago, 20 or 30 years earlier. And yet, it's very difficult to get them to admit that such a change could have taken place in such a short space of time, during their own lifetime! And that, as a result, they are partly responsible...

So, what is perceived as 'normal' today is in fact an impoverished version of the environment experienced by the previous generation, and so on. It is difficult to become aware of the environmental degradation that surrounds us. And therefore, of the need to combat it.

Environmental amnesia has several important consequences: by forgetting past environmental conditions, we minimise the seriousness of current problems, often ignoring, or even denying them.

Find the PAPACO online
[facebook/IUCNpapaco](#)
[Groupe FB MOOC](#) (English)
[@mooconconservation](#) (Instagram)
[@Papaco IUCN](#) (X)
[Website of the Papaco](#)

As a result, successive generations become accustomed to ever lower levels of environmental quality, which is accompanied by a manifest passivity in the face of the continuing degradation of nature. We are also gradually losing our memory of natural disasters and how to adapt to them, making us more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Obviously, because our perception of the environment is skewed, we no longer have any real reason to make the conservation efforts that are so desperately needed. This widespread indifference leads to resignation in the face of environmental issues; we let things happen because everything is normal.

How to respond: start with environmental education, of course (www.youth-conservation.org for example!), and make the younger generations aware of the history of biodiversity that they have never known. Keep detailed archives on the state of the environment at different times close at hand, in the form of stories, photos, drawings, etc. Nowadays, it's easy to use the media to disseminate information about environmental change, and to involve young people in projects to ecologically restore degraded natural habitats and help them understand what has been lost!

The excellent **Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux** (LPO) in France, a member of the not less excellent **Birdlife International** network, has chosen a singular approach in response to our amnesia. It has set up a programme called '*Drôles d'oiseaux!*' (Funny Birds), which aims to gather different generations around the conservation of local biodiversity. It brings together schools and retirement homes in the same area, raising awareness among schoolchildren of the need to preserve biodiversity, and enabling the elderly to talk to the children: in this way, the young learn from the elders, who have memories of the local natural heritage to pass on... and the elderly can smile again. It's a wonderful way to put an end to our environmental amnesia!

If you have any such great stories of your own, **please share them with us**. And let's not forget that working on memory also means preparing the future of the Earth!

Read more in "the feature of the month" in this NAPA





OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS, TUTOS AND ESSENTIALS



MOOC Conservation is the platform that hosts IUCN-Papaco's online training courses, developed in partnership with the Senghor University, in Alexandria.

Go online now!



Our 7 MOOCs, 4 Essentials, and 2 Tutorials are now open and accessible for free!

OUR MOOCS THEME-BASED TRAINING



>>> MOOC PA management
Goal: understand the essence and goals of protected areas. Through this MOOC, students will be able to grasp the importance of protected areas, their role and the different management aspects.



>>> MOOC Ecological monitoring
Goal: understand the different techniques used in protected areas to assess the impact of management by monitoring the ecosystem.



>>> MOOC Law enforcement
Goal: understand the different legal contexts in Africa, their strengths and weaknesses as well as the techniques used to effectively enforce rules in parks.



>>> MOOC Species conservation
Goal: understand the techniques developed to conserve species in PAs, in situ and ex situ. The MOOC covers the main threats, as well as solutions that can help face these threats.



>>> MOOC Valorisation of resources
Goal: knowing how the valorisation of different protected area resources can take place, and understanding protected area valorisation through tourism.



>>> MOOC New technologies
Goal: knowing the context of new technologies applied to conservation, existing techniques, prerequisites for their implementation, their opportunities and limitations, their uses in the field...



>>> MOOC Marine protected areas
Goal: understanding as the design and creation of MPA networks, governance, ecological monitoring, but also surrounding economic activities, and how to include all this to MPA management.

OUR ESSENTIALS PROFILE-BASED TRAINING

RANGER Essential
For protected area (PA) professionals who apply decisions and ensure the implementation of activities inside or around the PA.



MANAGER Essential
These two courses are for protected area professionals who need to plan, manage and assess the work carried out by field agents.



MANAGER LAW focuses on law enforcement and the valorisation of the PA and its natural resources.

MANAGER RESEARCH focuses on research activities, monitoring-evaluation and ecological monitoring.

LEADER Essential
For managers working in central management of parks or large NGOs, they elaborate national and regional policies, they proceed to cross-sectoral



coordination and manage complex plans and programmes. This course focuses on more general skills to enable a better understanding of the stakes of biodiversity conservation, all for better decision-making.

TO STAY UPDATED ON ALL PAPACO NEWS, SUBSCRIBE TO THE WHATSAPP CHANNEL.



OUR TUTORIALS: A SET OF SPECIALIZED RESOURCES TO STUDY EACH TOPIC IN MORE DETAIL

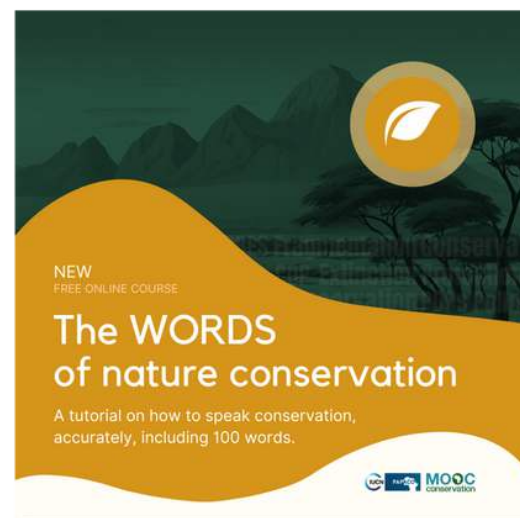


>>> NEW : TUTORIAL "WORDS OF NATURE CONSERVATION"

This new tutorial explains the **100 most important words in nature conservation**, the ones we often use without always knowing their exact meaning! 100 words or expressions explained and illustrated to **better understand their meaning and usage, and to strengthen your work in protecting the environment.**

To make learning enjoyable and interactive, the terms and expressions covered in this tutorial are presented through dialogues between an educator and students in a nature club. This didactic approach allows us to place certain words in a more precise context, thereby facilitating learning.

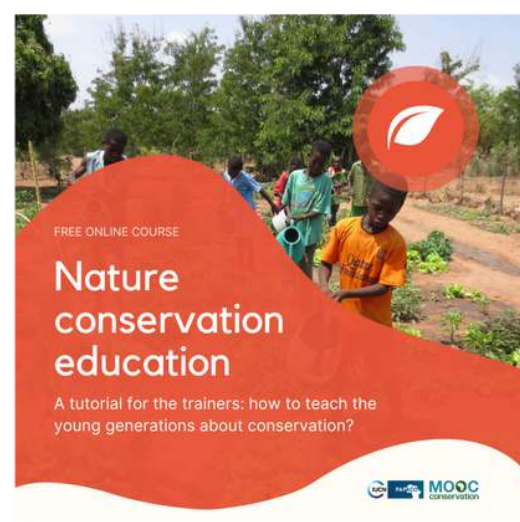
A two-part exam is used to assess the acquisition of knowledge, in the form of fill-in-the-blank texts to be completed with the words or expressions learned throughout the 6 chapters. **A certificate of completion** is awarded upon passing both exams.



>>> OTHER COURSE: TUTORIAL "NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION"

Do you know how to talk about climate change or the threats to biodiversity with children or young people? This tutorial provides you with **the language, methodology, and tools to raise awareness, educate, and train others in environmental conservation!**

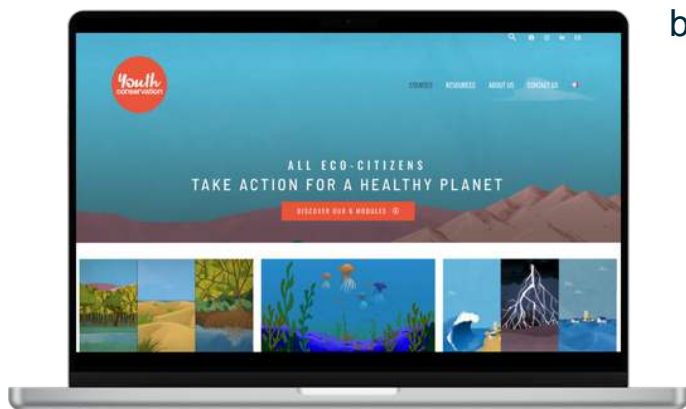
6 modules to help you become a great educator and inspire younger generations to take action. An essential tutorial for anyone guiding and training the eco-citizens of tomorrow!



Go to [MOOC Conservation](#) to follow these tutorials!



YOUTH CONSERVATION : **DISCOVER, UNDERSTAND AND ACT FOR THE PLANET**



THE online platform, 100% free of charge, brings together dedicated resources:

- For **children and young people**: 6 didactic and interactive courses on the major themes of nature conservation: terrestrial and marine biodiversity, climate change, nature and health, etc.
- For **educators**: downloadable teaching resources to facilitate learning and the running of educational sessions (posters, guides, etc.).

Visit www.youth-conservation.org!

»»» **NEW : PODCASTS CHANNEL "CONSERVATION MEETINGS"**

Dive into the heart of conservation with this podcast dedicated to protecting our environment. Through **inspiring interviews with NGOs, experts and green entrepreneurs**, from Africa and beyond, we explore the **challenges and solutions to preserve our planet**. Whether you are a professional in the field, a student, or simply a nature lover, join us to discover the initiatives and stories that are shaping the future of our biodiversity. **FRENCH** only for now. To date, the channel already has ten inspiring stories:

- . **A school vegetable garden in Mali** by Cheick Ati Guindo
- . **Zoomusicotherapy** by Frédéric Mbida Mbida
- . **Educate about environmental preservation and peace in the DRC** by Moïse Bumba Sylvain
- . **Discovering environmental awareness** by Moustapha Kaonfo
- . **Young Chadian eco-citizens** by Bere Olivier
- . **Environmental education in Maïko National Park** by Alain Mukiranya
- . **Journey of a green entrepreneur** by Elhadji Moussa Dial
- . **Ivorian movement for the protection of the environment** by Tiemoko Arsène Gono
- . **Towards a sustainable development in Benin** by Philemon Djoï
- . **Environmental education in Guinea** by Amadou Bailo Balde



Go to [Spotify](#) and [Youtube](#),
subscribe to the channels and
rate the episodes!
Very good listening!



TESTIMONIALS FROM THE FIELD (1/2)

»»» **NGO BEDD (CAMEROON) - BY JUSTIN DIDOLANVI, BIOLOGY ENGINEER AND ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE NGO.**

COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN CAMEROON: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES.

The Lion Conservation Project in the Benoue Ecosystem i.e. Bouba Ndjidda, Benoue, Faro National Parks and Surrounding hunting zones (30,000 km²), in northern Cameroon, is a critical initiative aimed at preserving the West and Central African lion (*Panthera leo leo*), a species currently facing significant threats from habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, and poaching. This project leading by BEDD focuses on a vital yet vulnerable population of lions inhabiting this savannah landscape which is characterized by a rich biodiversity and complex socio-ecological dynamics, making it crucial for both species' conservation and local community engagement.

Community-Based Approach

A cornerstone of the project is the implementation of a community-based conservation approach. This strategy emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in conservation efforts to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility for wildlife protection. The BEDD approach includes extensive training programs for Ecoguards and Lion Guards, who are equipped with the skills necessary for effective lion monitoring and conflict mitigation. Additionally, they collaborate with community leaders to promote sustainable practices that reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

Educational Outreach and Engagement

Education and awareness are integral components of this conservation strategy. They conduct sensitization campaigns in local schools and villages to educate the younger generation and community members about the importance of lions and the need for their protection. These educational initiatives include workshops, interactive sessions, and educational materials designed to enhance local understanding and support for conservation efforts.

A significant highlight of this outreach efforts is the organization of Bushcamp in the Bénoué National Park in 2023. These camps provide students with firsthand experience of the park's wildlife and ecosystems, fostering a deeper connection to nature. During these events, students participate in guided tours, wildlife monitoring activities, and educational sessions led by conservation experts. The Bushcamp aim to inspire a new generation of conservationists and reinforce the value of protecting our natural heritage.

Through these combined efforts, the Lion Conservation Project not only seeks to safeguard the lion population but also to build a sustainable model of conservation that integrates community engagement and education. By empowering local communities and nurturing a conservation ethic among the youth, BEDD strive to create lasting positive impacts on both wildlife and human communities in the northern Cameroon.



Education session in a school around Faro National Park



Awareness campaign in Manguéinwa, a village around Benoue National Park



Students watching hippopotamus in the Benoue National Park during the Bushcamp

If you would like to learn more about the NGO BEDD and their projects, you can contact them directly via email at contact@bioedd.org, visit their website, or check them out on [Facebook](#).

The article can be read on our [blog](#).

TESTIMONIALS FROM THE FIELD (2/2)

»»» NGO BRAS OUVERTS LUNA (TOGO) - BY AYMANE GBADAMASSI, CO-FOUNDER OF THE NGO

“In Africa, particularly in Togo, around 900 tons of plastic waste are generated in schools, but less than 1% is recycled. Our initiative Rôbalôtô, awarded by GIZ, the Togo Digital Agency, and ranked in the top 3 for the best digital innovation in Togo, represents a major advancement in my quest for a cleaner future. I am therefore leading the deployment of our solution to address this urgent problem of plastic waste management in schools across Africa.

We are **integrating sensors and applications into special bins to make them smart, with the aim of efficiently collecting data on plastic waste usage and optimizing its management.** Furthermore, we are transforming the collected plastic waste into Rôbanou solar bags, equipped with photovoltaic films to enable children in villages without electricity to study.

To date, we have reached over 20 schools and have removed and processed more than 100 tons of plastic waste, with a recycling rate exceeding 68%. We have a waste treatment center and are currently developing a citizenship manual for students. We are receiving support from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to expand our program throughout the country.”

After Rôbalôtô, Robassimé was launched **to buy plastic waste from households through an application.** Robassimé is a marketplace where individuals can purchase recycled products and sell their own waste. The app aims to enable anyone, in any country in Africa, to sell their waste, while recycling buyers can use the app to find out about the availability of large quantities of plastic waste in different areas and households, thereby facilitating their deployment.



*Thank you to Aymane Gbadamassi for this inspiring testimony!
If you would like to learn more about his projects, you can contact him directly via email at gbadamassiymane@gmail.com or by phone at +22891582404. You can also follow the NGO's [Facebook page](#).*

ENVIRONMENTAL GENERATIONAL AMNESIA: WHEN WE FORGET NATURE'S PAST

POSTED ON OCTOBER 13, 2022 - BY [REBECCA LEXA](#)

[READ THE ARTICLE ONLINE HERE](#)

FEATURE OF THE MONTH

One of the most traumatic and formative experiences of my life occurred when I was thirteen years old. The woods that I loved exploring behind our yard were completely bulldozed one day; I discovered this when I got off the bus from school. It was part of the destruction of an entire wild area that would become yet another subdivision devoid of trees and vines and wildflowers, with no place left for bobwhite quail or garter snakes in the flat green lawns. I was devastated, and in an attempt to try to help me my mom chatted with the developer when she happened to run into her in town. "She knows how you feel," my mom said. "Her woods were the ones that were torn down to make the junior high track." Not only did it just not make sense to me that someone who had been through what I was experiencing would then go on to do the same horrible acts, but it was also my first introduction to the reality of environmental generational amnesia.

Defining Environmental Generational Amnesia

The term was coined a few years ago in a paper by Peter Kahn and Thea Weiss. It refers to how each generation considers how it first experienced a place as its true baseline, and any change that comes after it is abnormal or unnatural. So for me, the track at my junior high with just a line of trees along the creek was my understanding of its baseline, but the developer remembered that land as acres of woods. A hundred years ago it may have been a farm. Go back several generations to when only the Osage lived here, and it was probably undamaged oak savanna, or perhaps a tallgrass prairie.

When you multiply that shifting understanding of the "normal" state of a place by all the people in a given area, something is bound to be lost as generations die off, and new ones are born into the present state. Couple that with a serious lack of nature literacy, and you have fewer people discussing what the place is versus what it once was.

In cases where almost all the land has been significantly changed by human activity for centuries, it can be incredibly challenging to piece together what it was like before we came through and wrought such imbalances. The only evidence may remain in a few remote undamaged patches, scraps of partial plant and animal communities, and oral and written information passed down by people, whether indigenous or colonizing. Sometimes ecologists and other scientists need to look at the ecosystems of neighbouring areas to get some idea of what might have been here before. It's often a matter of trying to piece together an incomplete puzzle, giving best educated guesses as to what filled the empty niches.



Why is Environmental Generational Amnesia a Problem?

If you have a population that has a dim memory at best of what a place looked like before it was changed at all, they're less likely to understand when there's a problem. I knew, for example, that it was wrong to tear down the woods behind my home, but my baseline was "mix of trees and shrubs of various species surrounding a creek with a limestone bed next to a twenty-year-old subdivision." No one could tell me what that farm looked like before it became a farm, and I didn't understand at the time that the mix of plants and animals I knew and loved were neither the complete original assortment, nor were they all native. How was I to know that my yard was once spacious grassland, dotted with white oak here and there? How should I have come to understand that the woods I had cherished were badly out of ecological balance compared to what had once been, that they were exhibiting signs of recolonization after multiple massive disturbances before I was even born?

And this is just one example of one person's understanding of one place. This environmental generational amnesia has rippling effects worldwide, with people not understanding that the rivers nearby aren't supposed to be as stick-straight as they are, that the coastline should be covered in wetlands rather than open sand, that the dense forest is only there because natural fires were suppressed and allowed the trees to take over the last meadows. There are even those who have no idea that their air, water, and soil aren't supposed to be loaded with pollutants, because pollution is all they've known for generations. It's tough to imagine an extinct wetland when you can't even see the water for the trash, and the sky is brown instead of blue.



What did this place look like 20 years ago?

Note that this is 500m away from the main entrance of a National Park!

So What Can We Do?

It's not going to be an easy task to try to revive the collective memory of Lands That Were. A good starting point is to talk to our elders, both alive and dead. When we ask those who still live what they remember of a place, we can glean important details even if they themselves weren't ecologists, or formal scientists of any other sort. If we can take them to these places and have them show us where important landmarks were and describe what has changed, we can start to see more clearly what's been lost. And when we read the writings and view the landscape art of those who are long passed, we get important snapshots of what was there long before any of us today were alive, tracing that ecological story closer to its origin.

We also need, more than ever, to preserve what ancient ecosystems still remain, whether that's old growth forests, or prairies that never knew the tearing of the plow, or wetlands never drained or polluted. We can't just miraculously replace them in a matter of a few years, and they offer us crucial pictures of the end goal in places where we are attempting long-term habitat restoration. They are living, breathing records of what places looked like before, of the biodiversity and other natural structures that were in place for thousands of years.

Finally, we need to be talking openly about the disconnect between what is and what was. If I, as an incredibly nature-obsessed kid, was startled to think about how my "normal" was only a faint shadow of past ecological glory, then imagine how jarring it must be for someone who is further removed from nature to understand that the forest they walk through is really supposed to be a prairie. (Especially after many years of being told that "planting trees" is the answer to all the ecological problems we face!)

With time and education, we can bring about awareness, and that awareness will help us make better decisions for the future. There are so many people who want to undo ecological destruction and make the world a better place; we just need to have better, more accurate information out there on what can be reasonably done. Much of that hinges on having a clearer idea of what's been lost, so that we can make plans to save whatever is left, and restore as much as we can.

Find the article online [here](#). Rebecca's website [here](#).



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Always take the shortest path,
and the shortest path is the one laid out by nature.”
Marcus Aurelius, former Roman Emperor

Find the PAPACO online
[facebook/IUCNpapaco](https://www.facebook.com/IUCNpapaco)
[Groupe FB MOOC \(English\)](https://www.facebook.com/GroupeFBMOOC)
[@mooconconservation \(Instagram\)](https://www.instagram.com/mooconconservation)
[@Papaco_IUCN \(X\)](https://www.x.com/Papaco_IUCN)
[Website of the Papaco](https://www.papaco.org/)

On your agenda:

Colombia will host the **next United Nations Conference on Biodiversity from October 21 to November 1.**



This 16th COP will be the first COP organized since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Agreement on December 19, 2022, which set the framework for international action in response to the biodiversity crisis. COP16 will therefore play a crucial role in institutionalizing an international biodiversity protection policy within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will specifically need to establish how global governments will monitor and evolve their efforts in biodiversity protection.

The good news of the month

Mozambique launches the **restoration of over 150,000 hectares of mangroves along its coastline.**

After two and a half years of studies, the green light has been given. Next November, the largest mangrove restoration project in Africa will begin on the Mozambican coasts, which have been weakened by deforestation, rising sea levels, and hurricanes.



Over the next sixty years, more than 200 million mangrove trees, a family of tropical trees, will be planted in the country's coastal wetlands. This endemic species, which gives mangroves their carbon sink quality, also protects local biodiversity and limits shoreline erosion.

The reforestation operations will be carried out by Blue Forest, a company dedicated to the protection of mangroves, whose projects are financed through the purchase of carbon credits by companies. With this initiative, it aims to absorb over 20 million tons of CO2 over sixty years.

CONTACTS - PAPACO

geoffroy.mauvais@iucn.org
madeleine.coetzer@iucn.org
info@youth-conservation.org

Program on African Protected Areas & Conservation - PAPACO
Program Officer PAPACO - Communication
Hélène Magdelain - Youth Conservation coordinator

Consider publishing in the NAPA (article, stories, pictures on protected areas in Africa, job offers, etc.),
contact us at moocons@papaco.org.

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF IUCN