

NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS

NAPA 209

CONSERVING NATURE IN AFRICA



THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

EDITORIAL

P.2 FROM THEORY TO PRACTISE

How to translate our online courses (MOOCs) into concrete realisations on the ground?

MOOC, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

P.3 & 4 OUR ONLINE COURSES

Stay up to date with all the latest from our MOOCs, Tutorials, and Essentials, and join the platform at mooc-conservation.org.

YOUTH CONSERVATION

P.5 & 6 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Youth Engagement in Climate Adaptation, Health and Conservation in the DRC.

THIS MONTH IN THE NAPA

P.7 TO 10 TESTIMONIES FROM THE FIELD

Discover the feedback of our learners who participated to our internship program...



From our MOOCs to the field: Training Conservation Professionals

By Joie Didier Sossoukpe
IUCN Project Officer -
Senghor University

Effective management of protected areas is essential for conserving biodiversity and safeguarding the ecosystem services they provide. It also generates significant socio-economic benefits for the local communities living within and around these areas. However, for protected areas to remain an effective tool for biodiversity conservation, it is crucial that all stakeholders involved, directly or indirectly, in their management possess the knowledge and skills required to achieve their conservation objectives.

With this in mind, the IUCN PAPACO, in partnership with Senghor University, has been developing and delivering fully free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for more than ten years, specifically designed for professionals working in the conservation sector. These courses cover key topics related to the effective management of protected areas and conclude with an examination leading to the award of an Online Certificate (CEL), equivalent to 15 university credits.

Recognizing the importance of complementing theoretical learning with practical experience, IUCN PAPACO, in partnership with Senghor University and with the support of the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), launched a field internship programme in 2025 for graduates of the Online Certificate (CEL). The programme aims to provide participants from diverse professional backgrounds—including forestry officers, environmental crime specialists, ecologists, GIS and mapping specialists, researchers, veterinarians, and conservation project management experts—

with a three-month immersion in protected areas. Through this experience, participants gain first-hand insight into the day-to-day management of protected areas, strengthen their professional and technical skills, and actively contribute to ongoing conservation initiatives.

The first cohort of the internship programme was successfully completed in December 2025, with a total of 14 internships carried out. In addition, 20 laureates from the second cohort began their field placements in May 2026. A third cohort is currently being prepared and is expected to start in the coming months.

The interns are hosted by protected areas and conservation management institutions across several African countries, including Benin, Cameroon, Madagascar, Senegal, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Sierra Leone. On behalf of the IUCN PAPACO and Senghor University teams, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the managers of these protected areas, as well as to our partner organizations, for their collaboration and commitment to this programme by hosting interns.

Feedback collected from participants in the first cohort shows that the internships have delivered encouraging results. Several host institutions have expressed their interest in continuing their collaboration by welcoming future interns with similar profiles, thereby ensuring the continuity and increasing the impact of conservation activities. These positive outcomes demonstrate the added value of the programme, which strengthens participants' skills and employability while providing meaningful support to institutions responsible for the management and conservation of protected areas. We encourage conservation professionals and practitioners to strengthen their capacities through the IUCN PAPACO MOOCs and to apply for future cohorts of the field internship programme.

OUR ONLINE COURSES: MOOCS, TUTORIALS AND ESSENTIALS

Our 10 MOOCs, 4 Essentials and 7 Tutorials are always open and available!



MOOC Conservation

Free online training courses for amateurs and professionals in conservation and protected areas

Start learning →

To follow the ESSENTIAL MOOCs and Courses, you will need an Internet connection and access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.



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

See you on:

www.mooc-conservation.org

THE MOOCS THEME-BASED TRAINING

MOOC BUNDLE FOR THE ONLINE CERTIFICATE

The following MOOCs must be completed to sit the exam and obtain the Online certificate in protected area conservation:



PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT



ECOLOGICAL MONITORING



LAW ENFORCEMENT



SPECIES CONSERVATION



VALORISATION OF RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



NEW TECHNOLOGIES



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

[Learn more about the online certificate here](#)

Next date: 2nd of December 2026 for English speakers

OTHER MOOCS AVAILABLE ON MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG



GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS



COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION



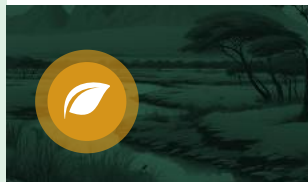
THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH

TUTORIALS TECHNICAL TRAINING



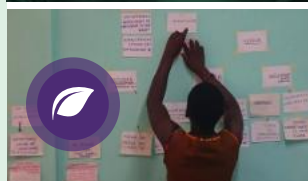
NATURE CONSERVATION EDUCATION

For teachers, educators, parents, etc., to provide them with the tools and methods they need to teach the children in their care about nature conservation...



WORDS OF CONSERVATION

An interactive glossary with 100 essential words and expressions you need to know if you want to conserve nature and understand PA management...



MANAGEMENT PLANNING OF PROTECTED AREAS

A step-by-step guide to organising the preparation, implementation and evaluation of your protected area management plan...



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

A simple method for understanding, anticipating and responding to conflicts between humans and wildlife...



RESTORING PROTECTED AREAS

A practical guide explaining the different steps to follow to prepare, restore and assess a damaged protected area...



SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR PROTECTED AREAS

How to sustain your protected area and develop a powerful business plan...



MANGROVE RESTORATION

A practical guide to plan, implement and assess, step by step, your mangrove restoration project...

MOOC CONSERVATION IS SUPPORTED BY THE
FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL



PLANNED IN JULY

INTERNSHIPS AND RESULTS OF THE LAST ONLINE CERTIFICATE IN PA



MOOC CONSERVATION INTERNSHIPS : THE SECOND COHORT IS OUT IN THE FIELD!

In early 2026, we launched the second phase of recruitment for trainees who would go out into the field to put into practice the knowledge they had acquired through the MOOCs. Following a review of applications and individual interviews, **a second cohort of 21 trainees (including just one woman)** was selected, and the first group set off for the field in May and June!

As a reminder, all successful candidates for the online Certificate in Protected Area Conservation who are also nationals of French-speaking Africa and Haiti are eligible. This internship component of the Papaco programme is made possible thanks to **financial support from the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) and academic, logistical and technical support from Senghor University.**



Prospective trainees for the third cohort are currently being selected. **A final call for applications will be launched in the last quarter of 2026**, particularly for those who passed the CEL in June.

RESULTS OF THE LAST ONLINE CERTIFICATE - 17 JUNE 2026

The most recent CEL exams took place on 17 June, and thanks to the **31 new successful candidates**, the total number of certificate holders now stands at **328 since 2020!** Furthermore, these successful candidates represent **40 different nationalities, 15 per cent are women, and the average age is 33.**

Well done to everyone on your success!

2026
MOOC CONSERVATION
CALENDAR

2nd of December: Online
certificate exam for English
speakers

>> [Click here](#) to learn more

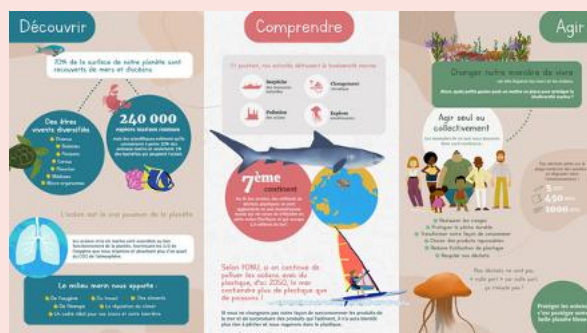
YOUTH CONSERVATION

DEDICATED RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO RAISE AWARENESS AND INSPIRE THEM TO TAKE ACTION!

On the [Youth Conservation environmental education platform](#), you will find dedicated resources tailored to children and young people, available in a variety of formats to suit different needs. Everything is 100% free and open access, and the content is offered in several languages, including national and regional languages. Please feel free to share widely to help educate, raise awareness, and inspire younger generations to take action!



Tailored video learning pathways



Clear, illustrated posters



Audio content available on [Spotify](#) and [YouTube](#)

YOUTH CONSERVATION - VOICES FROM THE FIELD

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION, HEALTH AND CONSERVATION IN THE DRC, BY VOLUNTEER TUTOR JEAN-PAUL KABI

The Democratic Republic of the Congo faces growing climate-related challenges, characterised by the degradation of ecosystems, increased environmental risks and a resurgence of climate-sensitive diseases, notably malaria.

In this context, the structured engagement of young people is a strategic lever for strengthening climate adaptation and community resilience.

The Youth Corps Against Malaria (CJP ASBL DRC) is a youth organisation committed to promoting **community health, preventing malaria and integrating climate-health approaches into local initiatives.**

The organisation recognises the **interdependence between climate change, ecosystem conservation and the dynamics of vector-borne diseases.**

In this context, the CJCP has been officially selected to organise the Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, scheduled for October in Kinshasa and Goma, with the option of hybrid participation (in-person and online), under the auspices of YOUNGO, the youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The implementation of the LCOY DRC draws on the **in-house expertise of more than five mentors from the Youth Conservation network**, who are active members of the CJCP and provide technical support in the areas of climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation and environmental education. This synergy helps to promote an **integrated approach linking climate, health and conservation**.

The LCOY DRC aims to:

- build young people's capacity on climate, health and environmental issues;
- promote local adaptation initiatives led by young people;
- formulate recommendations based on local realities, aligned with national priorities, contributing to the implementation of the DRC's NAPA.

Through this initiative, the Youth Corps Against Malaria is establishing itself as a key youth actor in climate adaptation, promoting community resilience and the integration of health and environmental issues into national climate policies.

For further information, please visit the [organisation's website](https://www.organisation's-website.org) or contact them by email: contact@cjpdrc.org.



FEEDBACK ON THE INTERNSHIPS

SUCCESSFUL FIELDWORK ASSIGNMENTS

New Technologies Supporting Conservation at Comoé National Park (Côte d'Ivoire)

Hedman Geris Massala Nkaya, laureate of the first cohort.
Three-month internship (1 October – 31 December 2025) at Comoé National Park (CNP), Côte d'Ivoire.



A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Comoé National Park is one of the largest protected areas in West Africa and serves as a vital refuge for the biodiversity of the Sudanian-Guinean savanna. It is home to numerous iconic and threatened species, including the African savanna elephant and the West African chimpanzee. Conserving this exceptional natural heritage requires increasingly innovative management approaches to effectively address the challenges posed by poaching, illegal gold mining, bushfires, and other human-induced pressures.

Within this context, the internship focused on the application of new technologies to ecological monitoring and the fight against illegal activities in protected areas. Its primary objective was to gain a better understanding of how digital tools and emerging technologies can enhance the effectiveness of protected area management and surveillance.

The internship began with an introduction to the institutional framework of the North-East Regional Directorate of the Ivorian Office of Parks and Reserves (OIPR), the institution responsible for managing the park. This initial phase enabled the intern to become familiar with the various technical and administrative departments involved in the conservation of the site. An extensive literature review was subsequently undertaken to deepen his understanding of the park's management challenges, ecological monitoring methods, and technological innovations currently used in conservation.

The intern then conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders involved in park management, including ecological monitoring officers, field rangers, control room operators, ultralight aircraft (ULM) pilots, and drone operators. These discussions provided valuable insights into the technologies currently deployed at Comoé National Park and their contribution to improving protected area management.

The study highlighted the park's highly advanced technological infrastructure. For surveillance activities, the park relies on field GPS units, digital tablets, VHF radios, and platforms such as SMART Conservation and WisePark, which enable patrol tracking, centralized data management, threat analysis, and improved coordination of field teams. The park also makes extensive use of innovative technologies for ecological monitoring. These include camera traps for wildlife monitoring, telemetry collars for tracking elephant movements, drones and ultralight aircraft (ULMs) for aerial surveys and surveillance, as well as automated weather stations for monitoring climatic conditions.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS), mapping software, and image-processing platforms further support spatial analysis and the planning of conservation interventions.

During the internship, Hedman Nkaya participated in several field activities that enabled him to observe the practical application of these technologies. He contributed to monitoring the water quality of the Comoé River and its tributaries, participated in floristic inventories, and took part in drone-assisted monitoring of illegal gold mining sites. These experiences provided a deeper understanding of the role that new technologies play in data collection, early threat detection, and evidence-based decision-making.

The internship also highlighted the importance of combining human expertise with technological innovation. While these tools significantly improve the effectiveness of conservation operations, their successful deployment depends on sustained investment in equipment, maintenance, and continuous capacity building for conservation staff.

Reflecting on his experience, the intern concluded that new technologies have become an indispensable component of modern and effective protected area management. The internship strengthened his technical skills, enhanced his understanding of large-scale conservation challenges, and exposed him to innovative solutions that can be adapted to other African conservation contexts.

His experience fully reflects the mission of the IUCN PAPACO Field Internship Programme: to bridge the gap between the knowledge acquired through the MOOCs and the realities of field conservation, while preparing a new generation of professionals capable of integrating technological innovation into biodiversity conservation efforts across Africa.



Immersion at the Heart of Conservation in the Kassa-Balantacounda Community Marine Protected Area, Senegal

Marie Hélène Téning Faye, laureate of the first cohort.
Three-month internship (1 October – 31 December 2025) at the Kassa-Balantacounda Community Marine Protected Area (CMPA) in Lower Casamance, Senegal.



Established in 2016 and expanded in 2024, the Kassa-Balantacounda Community Marine Protected Area covers more than 80,000 hectares of coastal and estuarine ecosystems, including mangrove forests, wetlands, bird breeding islets, and highly productive fisheries resources. Located across the regions of Ziguinchor and Sédhiou, this protected area plays a strategic role in biodiversity conservation while supporting local development.

This internship built upon the intern's doctoral research on the governance and management of natural resources in Senegal's coastal protected areas. The field immersion provided her with an opportunity to deepen her understanding of the institutional functioning of a co-managed protected area while actively participating in field-based management, ecological monitoring, and stakeholder consultation activities.

During her placement, the intern took part in several biodiversity monitoring operations, including the monthly waterbird counts conducted across different sectors of the protected area. These surveys, carried out aboard motorized pirogues alongside CMPA staff, contribute to monitoring bird populations and assessing the conservation status of key habitats.

She also participated in a training programme for twelve community-based fisheries data collectors from six neighbouring villages. The initiative aimed to improve the collection of information on fish landings, species composition, catch volumes, and fishing revenues in order to strengthen the sustainable management of fisheries resources and support evidence-based decision-making within the protected area.

The internship also enabled the intern to contribute to ongoing discussions on equity and inclusion in protected area governance. She participated in a workshop dedicated to the development of technical guidance documents addressing gender issues within the CMPA. Discussions highlighted the need to strengthen the participation of women, young people, and persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies and in natural resource management activities. Another highlight of the internship was the monitoring of mangrove restoration activities carried out at several sites within the protected area. Field observations revealed highly encouraging results, with restoration success rates reaching 98% at certain sites and exceeding 90% across most of the areas assessed. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of the ecological restoration efforts undertaken by partners and local communities to conserve these ecosystems, which are essential for biodiversity conservation and the resilience of coastal communities.

The intern also attended the renewal of the CMPA Management Committee, a key milestone in the governance of the protected area. The meeting brought together representatives of local authorities, community-based organizations, technical services, and conservation partners to discuss participatory management and strengthen collaboration for the sustainable management of the protected area.

Reflecting on her experience, Marie Hélène Téning Faye emphasized the significant contribution of the internship to both her professional development and the advancement of her doctoral research. The immersion enabled her to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with the management of community-based protected areas while putting into practice the knowledge acquired through the IUCN PAPACO MOOCs.

Her experience perfectly illustrates the added value of the IUCN PAPACO Field Internship Programme, which supports the professional development of future conservation practitioners while making a tangible contribution to the sustainable management of protected areas across Africa.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

« Conservation is a positive exercise of skill and insight, not merely a negative exercise of abstinence and caution. »
 - Aldo Leopold, US philosopher, scientist, forester, and conservationist

READING OF THE MONTH

WE ARE NATURE, NATURE-BASED EDUCATION FOR PLANETARY HEALTH

BY L. CAMARGO L. AND N. SEGOVIA

Nature-based education: reconnecting young people with the natural world

This book makes the case for nature-based education (NBE) as a transformative approach that **places nature at the heart of learning**. By combining environmental education, indigenous knowledge and experiential learning, NE fosters a deep sense of belonging, responsibility and commitment to the natural world — with measurable results: a better understanding of ecosystems, heightened sensory awareness and more environmentally responsible behaviour, contributing to more thriving and cohesive communities.

The authors also examine the **conditions necessary for its implementation**: political will, appropriate educational frameworks, greener learning spaces and well-trained educators. Their central message echoes the very mission of Youth Conservation — because recognising that we are part of nature is the first step towards building a resilient and regenerative future for our planet. Download the report in English [HERE](#).



IN THE NEWS

UNESCO: TWO NEW AFRICAN SITES JOIN THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

To mark World Environment Day (5 June 2026), UNESCO has designated **14 new biosphere reserves in 14 countries**, including two in Africa: **Takamanda - Cross River Gorilla in Cameroon** (on the border with Nigeria) and **Theniet El Had in Algeria**.

The Takamanda site contributes to the **protection of the Cross River gorilla**, a critically endangered species. Theniet El Had, meanwhile, protects **forests of Zeen oak trees, conserves water resources and combats erosion**.



These new designations bring the total number of biosphere reserves across **145 countries to 797**, including around 40 African countries. **Biosphere reserves are areas where people and nature coexist in harmony, preserving biological and cultural diversity whilst promoting sustainable development.**

For Cameroon, this recognition opens up opportunities for funding to demarcate the site, carry out wildlife surveys, conduct ecological monitoring and implement income-generating activities for local communities.

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To contribute to a NAPA (article or publication on protected areas, cover photo, job offer, etc.), contact us at moocs@papaco.org.

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