



# CERCO-NEWS

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## Birder's paradise

We've always been very proud of Rhoko forest both as a nature-lover's destination, but also as an outstanding site for ecological research. Visits from knowledgeable specialists continue to confirm the exceptional quality of the forest. Dr. Scott Robinson is Professor of Ecosystems Conservation at the University of Florida, and he joined us for a brief, but very active visit in March. Here he takes up the story:

'I visited Rhoko to help my graduate student start her programme, and to explore sites for future research projects. I am also a birdwatcher, so I couldn't resist the temptation to spend some time looking for new birds on this my first trip to this part of the world.

My specialty is bird community ecology and I was very excited by what I

found. The field station itself is located in a primary lowland forest that contains a mixture of West African and Congo forest birds. From my perspective the main attraction is the nearly complete bird community present in the 'core area' that surrounds the field station.

All of the large hornbills are present and most are exceedingly abundant, a sure sign of an intact bird community. More than 50 hornbills flew over just as I began writing this note. Black guineafowl are routinely seen near the field station as well, although I did not see them myself this time.

Most of the birds in the forest seem to hang out in mixed-species flocks, which are amongst the most amazing I have ever seen in my research. In these flocks some species seem to specialize in catching insects flushed by other birds in exchange for giving loud alarm calls that warn the members of the flock (the 'beaters') when predators attack. These flocks are easy to find, which makes bird watching excellent, even



during the mid-day lull when nothing is singing. All you have to do is find a flock and follow it for an hour or two and you will be certain to see dozens of species. One flock I followed had at least 37 species! Many other bird species gather at ant swarms to eat the insects flushed by the ants.

There is an excellent and well-maintained trail system that enabled me to walk for hours without any risk of getting lost. The field station itself is comfortable and well run. There is a mix of researchers and a dedicated staff from various villages nearby and from other parts of the world.

Primate research is what got this place started, but there is outstanding potential for bird watching and bird research as well.'

Scott paid his respects in the village to Chief Owai





Claire Coulson  
CERCOPAN  
Director

## From the Director

Where do you go in your mind when you want to get away from it all? The beach? Shopping? The ski-slopes? For me it's always the rainforest. After years of fieldwork deep in the heart of pristine jungles I know there's no place where I can feel more at ease with myself and my surroundings.

So I have to admit feeling a pang of, dare I say it, envy for those who have recently been able to spend quality time in Rhoko either to indulge a hobby (see lead article) or for their professions (p. 3).

For me, my long times spent in the field were especially satisfying because my profession and my hobby were one and the same thing.

But as the Director of a conservation organisation, I now delegate the fieldwork, as I have to ensure that my experience is used in an oversight function where I can make more of a difference.

That oversight role can be very varied and at times really quite consuming. Recruitment, fundraising, completing our Annual Report, and coordinating an inter-

national conference, all came to the surface in the past month above my planning, coordination, and management duties. These are highly satisfying tasks to be fully engaged in, as ultimately I know they all have an important role to play in bringing about the protection of the rainforest that I love.

But isn't there time for relaxing journeys into the rainforest? I wish.... for now those opportunities will still just have to be in my mind!

*Claire*

## Report time



Our 2010 Annual Report has been published and is available for download from our website:

[www.cercopan.org](http://www.cercopan.org)

The heart of the report is devoted to a description of our programme activities for the year in community development & forest protection, primate conservation & rehabilitation, and education. For regular

readers of CERCOPAN you will have seen the news as it happened.

The 'About CERCOPAN' section at the beginning will give you a quick overview of how our programme integrates together, and just how vital it is.

We have a detailed financial report near the end, and finally a Thank You page for our sponsors – YOU!

*"...we are very keen to welcome anyone with good DIY skills who can volunteer time with us..."*

## Needs replacing

We bid farewell to two of our long-term volunteers on the same day in March. Rachel Hemingway had been with us since February 2010 in the role of Community Conservation Manager, primarily working on the alternative livelihoods programme in Iko Esai and Agoi. Her replacement has arrived (see below).

Dallas Buleziuk has been our Construction Coordinator since June 2010, which has involved a variety of tasks from overseeing the building of a pig-sty to fine-tuning our solar equipment to managing the delivery of a new roof for our Community Centre.

Dallas leaves behind a lasting record of his stay

with the luxury tourist accommodation he painstakingly built in Rhoko with the attention of a craftsman.

Construction and maintenance work is constantly required in our operation, and we are very keen to welcome anyone with good DIY skills who can volunteer time with us to fill this gap.



Eco-lodge by Dallas

# Hunting for hunters

The more remote corners of Iko Esai's community forest have long been the subject of speculation. In the map below, the Research Area in green and the Conservation Area (white to the south between the two rivers) are a 1-2 day trek from the village and therefore less attractive to hunters. On the other hand with 24-hour patrolling to enforce the ban on hunting primates centred on the Core Area (brown), it might be possible that hunters would deliberately choose the remoter areas.

In the last two years thanks to grants from IPS and IUCN we have been able to survey this region to understand the primate diversity better, and also increase the amount of patrolling there. Now in 2011 with our patrol staff numbers at six, we can make frequent excursions for both purposes.

Recently-arrived Ph. D students Carrie Vath and Sagan Friant will be making many trips into the Conservation Area for the

purposes of their research, and have just returned from a joint reconnaissance trip, accompanied by CERCOPAN's patrol. Carrie reports:

'Sagan and I were excited for our 4 day trek into the Conservation Area - a first for both of us. Sagan was interested in checking out potential red-capped mangabey release sites (part of her dissertation research) and I wanted to scope out the hunting sheds and mingle with hunters as part of my research project.

The forest was amazing and our three guides (newly hired patrol from Agoi and Owai), Arikpo, Nelson, and John provided excellent food and care throughout the 40km trip.

On the first day we heard a troop of putty-nosed monkeys shouting alarm calls at us and we also saw evidence of red river hogs. At our first sleeping shed we were joined by 8 other people (2 hunters, 4 women collecting wild salad, and 2 boys collecting periwinkle). The women offered me and Sagan a

taste of Periwinkle which we gladly accepted.

On day 2 we encountered two more putty-nosed troops and found forest elephant footprints and dung!



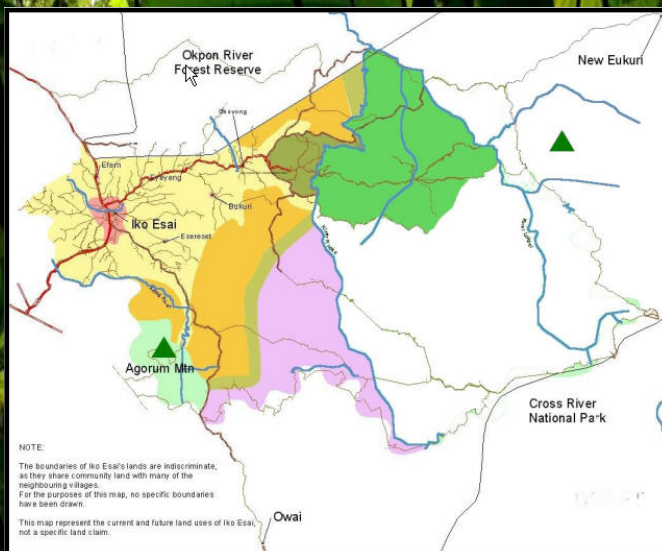
Carrie and Sagan setting out with patrol



At our next shed we shared the stay with 2 different hunters and they offered us cooked procupine. We were also offered roasted snails which tasted just like beef jerkey. The porcupine was served in a soup so although everyone tells me it tastes very sweet it only tasted of palm oil (the soup's base) to me. I had a wonderful time and look forward to my next forest adventure!'

*"On the first day we heard a troop of putty-nosed monkeys shouting alarm calls at us and we also saw evidence of red river hogs..... On day 2 we encountered two more putty-nosed troops and found forest elephant footprints and dung!"*

Iko Esai's Land Use Management Plan showing the Research and Conservation Areas to the East



# Like Columbus!

Our veterinary function is right at the front line of our programme. Assuring excellent health care for our captive primates is an absolute requirement if we are to continue to attract >17,000 visitors a year who we provide with a vital conservation educational message.

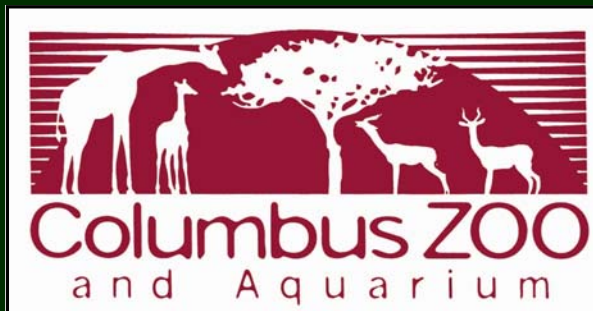
And at the same time our work with enforcement agencies to confiscate pets orphaned by the bush-meat trade allows us to drive home the message about compliance with the law banning the hunting of monkeys, thereby improving protection of wild populations.

orphaned pets to go to.

On this basis, grants to underwrite our vet work are some of the first we hope to gain each year.

Columbus Zoo have just informed us of a generous grant for 2011 that will cover the greater share of the vet programme for the year, and sustain our long-term strategy of building the capacity of local talent through international veterinary mentoring.

Columbus Zoo are one of our most loyal supporters, having also provided grants in 2008 and 2010.



But we would be unable to take these steps if we did not have a sanctuary and first-class assured care for the

## New kid, old hand

BenJee Cascio has just arrived in Iko Esai to take over the role of Community Conservation Manager, and it's hard not to think that all his life to date has been a preparation for this role.

Raised in Minneapolis, he gained a Bachelors in Psychology, and a Masters in Community Development. And with a love for travel, BenJee has already worked overseas in China, Ghana, Chile, and Jamaica.

The two years in Jamaica

were under the Peace Corps programme, involving living within a rural community with irregular power, no piped water and only basic provisions, and he tells us it soon became his second home.

Quickly settled into Iko Esai (where there is no power at all!) BenJee has taken no time to begin building the foundations of a long-standing relationship with community members, starting of course with

active participation in the football game every evening.

BenJee has experience with alternative livelihoods projects, and knowledge of the role and importance of Community-Based Organisations. Both of these structures are established in Iko Esai, but need an experienced hand to help them to continue and flourish, and be replicated in the neighbouring villages.

We can already vouch for the fact that BenJee is a talented Blues and Jazz musician, and also well-versed in the West African music scene. With his guitar in trail, here's expecting for a very interesting and popular cultural exchange happening right now deep within the far reaches of Cross River State.



BenJee during his time in Jamaica

# Full bore ahead

Hot on the heels of our article in January celebrating a year of achievements for the Community Conservation and Development Committee (CCDC) in Iko Esai, they have quickly notched up another success by gaining a grant from MPP9 (Micro Projects Programme in the 9 Niger Delta States).

MPP9 is a European Union initiative that provides around two thirds of funds for projects, with the balance coming from communities and Local Government Authorities. The aim of the grants is to reduce poverty at the community level, while providing reforms at local government and state levels for improved long-term accountability for

community welfare. The CCDC, with support from our Conservation Manager, wrote the application to the MPP9 programme. An existing borehole in the village, provided by Concern Universal was insufficient for the community's needs, especially in the dry season.

MPP9 has approved a modern size borehole powered by solar energy. Officials of MPP9 visited Iko Esai and inspected the readiness for the project to commence. The CCDC's Water Sanitation sub-committee will be responsible for maintenance of the new installation.

Iko Esai is anticipating two even larger projects to start up in the coming year. Approvals have been granted for asphaltting the existing



The existing borehole is at full capacity

laterite road from the village all the way to the main road at Ibogo. Furthermore the State Electricity Agency has announced its intent to extend power services out to Iko Esai. We'll provide updates once these projects start up, as both could be game-changing for the community's inhabitants.

# Strength in diversity

It has just been confirmed that CERCOPAN will be hosting this year's Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA) workshop on Education.

PASA is a US-based organisation that coordinates an alliance of primate sanctuaries across Africa. In addition to establishing a Code of Conduct for its members, PASA facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise across sanctuaries via three annual workshops covering

Management, Veterinary Healthcare, and Education.

The Management workshop will be held in the U.K., while the Veterinary workshop will be in Uganda. This is the first time that any of the workshops will have been held in Nigeria.

The workshop's locations are rotated around the membership countries, providing the opportunity to observe a variety of sanctuaries' work in action while attending the workshop. With the education workshop holding in August this year in Calabar, we will gain the chance to showcase the full range of our operational activities to the other

sanctuaries' representatives present.

There are twenty member sanctuaries in PASA from across twelve countries. Up until August we will be occupied with the complex task of finalising the diverse logistics for hosting visitors arriving from so many other African countries.



*"This is the first time that any of the workshops will have been held in Nigeria"*

PASA membership is spread across 12 countries in Africa



## WANT TO BE A PART OF IT?

- Stay in touch with our on-going programme by bookmarking our home page <http://www.cercopan.org/> and our Blog site <http://cercopan.wildlifedirect.org/> and joining our Facebook fan page <http://www.facebook.com/cercopan/>
- Volunteer for CERCOPAN in either Nigeria or the UK. We offer a range of different programmes so there is something for everyone! Visit our website volunteer section for further details.
- Help CERCOPAN attain corporate funding. If you work for a corporate sponsor who may be interested in funding CERCOPAN please contact [claire.coulson@cercopan.org](mailto:claire.coulson@cercopan.org)
- Undertake a sponsored event to raise funds for CERCOPAN. Use the Fundraising Pack on our web site to help you.
- Make a cash donation to CERCOPAN via our website...every little helps!
- Buy a gift for friends or family from the Good Gifts Catalogue ([www.goodgifts.org](http://www.goodgifts.org)). You can buy a month's supply of fruit for growing CERCOPAN orphan monkeys - called in the catalogue 'A-peeling Monkeys' for only £20! The price of the gift is passed on to CERCOPAN. So, it is an excellent way of solving your gift problems, and supporting our work! Alternatively visit the CERCOPAN gift shop on our website today.
- Donate useful goods and equipment such as building and fencing materials, veterinary medicines, old laptop computers etc. or services such as printing, blood testing and architectural design.

[www.cercopan.org](http://www.cercopan.org)  
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