

Project Update: April 2009

Mountain Bongo Community / School Wildlife Clubs Project

The aim of the Mountain Bongo Community/School Wildlife Clubs is to conserve and protect this Critically Endangered sub-species of bongo, by working together with local communities and schools. The project works in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Services.

Area	School
North Aberdares	Kamburaini Primary School
Mid Aberdares	Bondeni Primary School
South Aberdares	Gichami Primary School
South Aberdares	Karurumo Primary School
Mt Kenya	Kiangemi Primary School
Mt Kenya	Githirathiru Primary School

***New School – located Eburu (the school is 4.5 km from Eburu forest where mountain bongo have been identified)**

Ndabibi Primary School, Rift Valley Eburu – 3 local Patrons, 1222 school population (40 school clubs members). There is a dedicated Area Bongo Surveillance representative, Solomon Muriithi, who has been working with the forestry department and community before becoming part of the Bongo Surveillance Project. The first official visit by the Bongo School Coordinator, took place on 30th/31st March 2009. There is much pressure in this area from charcoal burning and wildlife poaching. There is extreme poverty, and water comes from boreholes as rivers are drying up. This is a major concern for towns such as Naivasha and the wildlife.

What has been Happening January – April 2009.

The schools and associated communities have been involved in a number of key activities.

Special Activities January – April 2009:-

- Bongo Drawing Competition – Mt Kenya schools.
- Educational Visits, 6th February 2009 to Mt Kenya Schools with Bongo Surveillance Team. (see below)*
- Kamburaini School – Water Installation Project and Environmental Day 5th February.
- Bondeni School Project Visit 5th February. Introductions to new Headmaster and update on scheme.
- The children also received recognition certificates. The days were actively supported by the Club patrons, teachers and UK bongo supporters.

The Bongo Surveillance Teams gave presentations to the Mt Kenya schools and lead discussions with the Wildlife Clubs and Patrons:-

- Peter Mwangi, gave a presentation on his life associated with bongo, as a lead tracker for the conservation programme.
- The Bongo Surveillance Team members also gave presentations on their experiences to the club members.

30th & 31st March visit Eburu new school: Demonstration completed at the school and community shopping centre of alternative cooking stove (using local gel, molasses from sugar cane), being a way to avoid wood fuel and be available, affordable and effective. This can be made locally.

Tree Planting Project

It is intended to successfully grow 200 trees in each school. It is with hope for increased rains this year the schools are preparing holes and fencing. With the associated educational sessions the objective will be to create demonstration sites for the community.

Due to lack of access to water, a plan was vitally needed for two of the project's schools, Kamburaini and Bondeni School. Working with these two schools and with funding it has been possible to do the following:-

Aberdares - Kamburaini – As of 5th February 2009 the school officially now have a water supply coordinated and funded through the Bongo Wildlife Project. They now have access to free flowing water, where as previously it was carried in containers from the river 6+ miles away by donkey or by hand.

2nd Environmental Day 5th February – Kamburaini School - Poems were recited on key learning points on conserving the Bongo. Stories were relayed by mime and dance by the entire school. The school made by hand a “look a like” bongo from local materials (used papers, used cloth, wire, dry wood, dry grass, sand, brown local soil were used).

Aberdares - Bondeni School – As of February 2009 they now have access to water through a new plastic water tank for rainwater harvesting (2,500 litres). It will give the schools drinking water and the piped water will be used for watering the tree seedlings.

Mount Kenya Schools - Have been provided with seedlings and have received educational sessions during December on tree care to catch up with the other schools. Incentive awards have been given for most successful “carers” and tree plants since planted.

Materials for Teaching Conservation:-

Through a workshop the School's Wildlife Coordinator Peter Munene has been involved in developing a poster to create further awareness of the dangers facing the bongo and its habitat. Also an educational booklet is being scoped based on the bongo and its biodiversity. The production and distribution of these will take place after May.

Update on wildlife club membership for schools

Officially registering the Bongo Wildlife Clubs with the organisation Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, is a positive step forward for maximising resources for the schools and communities. Each school has a certificate, and each member has a membership card giving access to the facilities offered by the wildlife clubs. Updates by their magazine, and access to educational materials on biodiversity and conservation, will be a great help for teachers and patrons. The Wildlife Clubs of Kenya is in cooperation with KWS and the National Parks.

William Holden Wildlife Educational Centre – Mt Kenya

The PACE educational book has been very much appreciated by the Educational Centre for the lessons it gives to local children visitors. The centre is organizing a two night potential prize, based on a questionnaire from the trip to the centre by the Bongo Schools Clubs in 2008. The prize will be for 40 pupils and to 5 adults).

UK and Bonfo Wildlife Clubs Schools – Pen Pal twinning to learn about conservation.

All the Bongo Wildlife Club schools are very interested in twinning with the UK schools and this will commence in Spring 2009 with the two schools Bondeni and Kamburaini as a trial with two schools in UK/Bedfordshire associated with Woburn Educational Centre.