

Project Update: March 2011

Background to second phase of project: Using the initial grant from the RSG programme, we developed a programme of activity, with the communities to highlight the potential extinction of the Mountain Bongo, unless these few remaining Bongo were protected. The awareness programme was created through the investment made possible by RSG. In this first phase Mountain Bongo wildlife clubs, were launched in key schools. The schools club members are 9-10 years and form an influential group, playing a key role in awareness in their local communities. Each year it is hoped the new pupils in this age group will have the chance to experience the activities and conservation focus of the Bongo Wildlife Club.

With the support of the RSG programme, we have been able to offer more pupils the opportunity to experience conservation first hand through these Mountain Bongo School Wildlife Clubs. The educational activities of planting trees, investing in alternative fuels to conserve the environment are a top priority, together with the continuation of the field research of our Bongo Surveillance teams.

The Mountain Bongo is in need of priority protection, as a forest –dependant species and flagship for Kenya’s remaining high-forest ecosystems. Efforts geared towards conservation of bongo will in turn benefit the Kenyan forest cover which presently stands at 1.7 %, way below the recommended 10%. The bongo inhabits home ranges up to 15 km². and therefore is an ideal "umbrella species"; saving the bongo will protect a significant fraction of Kenya’s montane forest biodiversity

There are estimated to be less than 140 Mountain Bongo living in the wild in the Kenyan high forests. The surveillance is a continual process by the Bongo Surveillance Project (BSP). In 2008 a DNA analysis of the dung mucus collected, by the team confirmed the Bongo antelope was still in existence though numbers were small. (Refer to www.mountainbongo.org for copy of research paper released on new ground breaking DNA research activity – February 2011).

A key milestone in recognition of the activities of the Bongo Surveillance Programme took place in July 2010, in Nyeri, Kenya. A strategic international workshop facilitated by IUCN, The Species Survival Commission for the Antelope Specialist Group gave formal recognition that the Mountain Bongo is a Critically Endangered species and unless key actions were taken this species in the wild would soon be extinct. A full report of the recommended actions from the workshop was issued by the IUCN (October 2010). This is available through the IUCN/CBSG website.

One of the main outputs identified, for the strategy, is to strengthen the activity of the Bongo Surveillance programme, i.e. provide surveillance/ protection to the bongo groups identified in the wild and to build on the capacity of the school wildlife clubs and community programme.

We now have nine schools in the Eburu, Aberdares and Mt Kenya areas. Outreach is now estimated at 10,000 local people and children. The nine schools have been selected as they

are in relative close proximity, to where the last remaining Mountain Bongo has been identified by the Bongo Surveillance team.

By supporting the schools, through the BSP Clubs, an alliance is forming to help prevent poaching, conserve the forests and give direct educational support to the community. The commitment from the Headmaster, the Patron and school club champions are vital to the success of the project.

Project Launch: The second phase of the project has resulted after a formal review was held with various BSP stakeholders, to assess future ideas and community involvement. The output from the report evaluated the need to not only continue to develop the BSP project but to in fact strengthen and expand this further.

Capacity Building: To develop and share best practice, patrons and teachers from the schools and community members will be invited for in-situ training, including educational conservation films, provision of environmental information/leaflets, and presentations on key income generating activities such as agriculture, and fisheries projects.

Conservation and Income generating activities:

Conservation activities have been initiated; these will include tree planting, piloting solar lighting, and introducing new cooking methods i.e. donating jikos (using sawdust/dung) as well as creating tree nurseries.

Income generation activities will include: building fish ponds, establishing potato farming, with the objective to increase local income for the community.

Activities Report January 2011 to March 2011

The Bongo Surveillance programme works in partnership with the Kenya Forest Services and Kenya Wildlife Services, and other NGO's in the local areas such as Rhino Ark and the Mt Kenya Woodley Trust. Whilst in the field, the BSP team collect bongo evidence; habitat data and camera trap outputs, and are now formulating a "wild" bongo library. The feedback of the continued bongo presence, by showing camera trap photographs, is very motivating to the communities and the schools. These are included as attachments to this report.

The BSP form a vital link to the authorities, reporting on any illegal poaching activity and timber extraction. All these actions in the field are very important, for the remaining bongo to survive. During recent field surveillance exciting new camera trap images have been emerging from Eburu (during January the bongo group were seen "live" by BSP local representative Soloman Ngaruro).

January – March 2011:-

Ongoing training:

Our School Coordinator Peter Munene works closely with the School Patrons, Headmasters and the local Eburu coordinator – Soloman Ngaruro. He has introduced the programme to

the patrons, new pupils each year, giving clear Club objectives, informing of ongoing wildlife club successes, briefing about sponsors, and why the programme is important.

Regular training with the Bongo coordinator or School "Bongo" Patron will include:-

- The Environment – Africa Our Home (educational book).

Forest and Mountain Bongo

- Mountain Bongo Conservation – strategy.
- Discipline and Respect of our Forest.
- Tree Planting and Tree Care.
- Importance of Aberdare, Mt Kenya, Eburu, Mau Forest – water for our communities.

Tourism – Importance of

- Opportunities for working in this sector and conservation.

Animal/Human Conflict: Food/income alternatives –to prevent bushmeat use.

Forest /Human Conflict: Fuel alternatives to prevent timber extraction.

Activities: These vary according to the progress of schools, but generally include:-

- Tree planting March/April (trees have just been purchased)
- Tree Nursery establishment
- Seeds Collection
- Conservation Film Show (currently working with a producer for a variety of educational CDs on the Bongo)
- Field and National Park Visits (After rains July 2011). To-date Sept/Nov 2010
- Income generating activities – fish ponds, wormeries, agricultural (potato beans).
- Alternatives lighting (solar lamps) - reduce use of kerosene costs.
- Jiko Cooker (utilising sawdust, dung minimising charcoal, saving timber/costs).
- Bee hive introduction (May – Eburu)
- Materials supplied for Patron of school wildlife club, Educational Conservation Books, Africa Our Home, Posters and leaflets (40 each)"Save the Bongo"

Key Events:-

ABERDARES SCHOOLS

Kamburaini Primary School "Bongo Challenge Day" – Saturday Jan 22nd 2011

As an initiative to involve the pupils, in a greater understanding of the critically endangered bongo, various team challenges were set for the wildlife club members.

These ranged from "conservation treasure trails" and bongo puzzles. The objective of the day was to have fun, but learn in a more *active* way. The school had the opportunity to showcase their environmental projects, such as the tree nurseries, tree planting and development of their income generating projects for this season. i.e. agricultural projects

such as potato and bean growing. The school has taken a great step forward for the pupils, nutrition wise and to improve the school's feeding programme for this year. The project has given the community, a great knowledge in organic farming. The sales of potatoes have helped with high school entrant requirements and school uniforms. With the rains, the school will plant five bags of potatoes, maize and beans during April. Kamburaini have also been restocked during March with more fish fingerlings (fish pond project). It is hoped with a mix of tilapia and catfish, this combination will eliminate any pond impurities.

Karai Primary School (Potential new school) – Aberdares

The BSP project has a high demand from surrounding schools. We are currently investigating how to include this new school. The school itself have tree planting project and the community have constructed an extensive tree nursery and started replacement tree planting on the edge of the forest.

Bondeni Primary School- Aberdares

A fish pond has been developed during early 2011, and has now been stocked with 200 fingerlings. i.e. tilapia and catfish to control pond impurities and eliminate some diseases. We will need to keep monitoring the ponds for success.

The Mau Forest and Eburu

Mau Forest 16 & 17 March 2011

The Bongo Surveillance Team participated in a second field expedition in March to follow up findings from August 2010. There was still evidence of Bongo in this area. A report of the forest status and findings is currently being followed up with Kenya Wildlife Services and Kenya Forest Services. In discussions with the Kenya Forest Services, they have offered a familiarisation, for our school's coordinator. In addition, Kenya Forest Services have made recommendations for Bongo Wildlife Clubs for 2-3 local schools in this area.

Eburu Forest – 19th March 2011

Songoloi and Ndabibi Schools – Bongo Challenge Day

These new schools to the Bongo Surveillance project are embracing the "Conservation Challenge".

Songoloi Primary School – BSP donated 200 seedlings – water berry, *Olea africana*, *Prunus africana*, *Podocarpus*, cedars. This has encouraged the local community and school to do more and in total currently there are almost 1000 trees planted, and a community tree nursery of 5000 plants

Muthaiti Primary School - BSP donated 200 water berry, *Olea africana*, *Prunus africana*, *Podocarpus*, cedars and this has encouraged a tree nursery and further planting (1,600 seedlings)

Ndabibi Primary School – we donated 200 seedlings - - Yellow fever acacia, *Prunus africana*, cedars, *Olea africana*. Encouraged they have now other varieties of fast growing trees, and currently 7000 trees in the school and 10,000 planted in the nearby forest as well as their own nursery of a further 3000 seedlings.

Demonstrations – Molasses /Sawdust Jiko - A neighbour to the school has produced 12 working Jiko and he has sold 4 to the community as a result of the recent presentation. Ndabibi has one of these Jikos and a sawdust version too. Songoloi and Muthaiti also have the sawdust Jiko.

Solar Lamps – Donated to each school, and this has led to an approach from the school and parents, with a request for more. For the pupils this gives additional time to work on homework. For the family this reduces household costs, with a reduction on the purchase of kerosene. (Subsequently, there is not the need to get charcoal from the forest, to sell to make money for kerosene). At present the desire for solar lamps by the community (if funded) could be 1000+.

Soloman BSP Coordinator Eburu Review of 2010 – 2011

“I have always had a passion about conservation, and have spent many years in the forest. I truly appreciate the wildlife and trees, and what it means to my life. Back in the 1970’s in the Mau and Eburu forests (then continuous forest), there were many Bongo. My work then was honey gathering. I took this opportunity to be involved in the BSP to save the forest as I had enjoyed its precious resources when I was growing up. I am a close link to the schools and the community, and believe the educational development of the young is the way forward. One segment of the community (30,000) members depends on the water supplied from Eburu forest. 1million domestic animals rely on the forest spring as a source of water. I have developed technical skills, I could use for the future, for example GPS for my tracking of Bongo, camera traps, DVD presentations, mobile phone technology. I could have recently taken a live photo of the Bongo, with a hand held camera, and would indeed appreciate this for the future. I have met contacts worldwide at the Bongo ICUN conference that I participated in at Nyeri. I have been to Mombassa for a Workshop on Environment, Nature & People organised by KWS. I liaise with KFS, Green Belt Movement, KWS, and L. Naivasha Nature Club. With my income from the BSP I have managed to save for a rainwater water tank, this will be a conservation saving on more efficient use of water and an improvement for my family life. I am encouraging the Eburu Women’s Group, to become more involved in conservation.

Recently we had a raging fire and the community helped save the day, as they now appreciate the forest resources”.

Peter Munene – School Coordinator “There is a positive attitude now in the community with regards to conservation. Most of the members of the community are interested to act in an environmentally friendly way, and really just need the encouragement, and guidance, and tools to do so. There is a desire to conserve the forest and hence protect their futures and subsequently the Bongos. It makes economic sense to do this also, and the project is a

facilitator to help deliver these goals. The community and pupils have an inspired wish and talent that has previously not been nurtured and with this commitment it has help strengthen a conservation plan for each school, and this could be duplicated in many other schools. I have received requests from other schools who really want to be part of this. We need to identify income generating; sustainable initiatives that will help them fulfil a sense of ownership".

Eburu Forest Reserve – Scientist Adam Mwangi

"With deployment of a small permanent BSP patrol team in the Eburu Forest, we have witnessed a tremendous reduction of illegal human activities such as cedar post logging, wildlife poaching and charcoal production. Our group of ~ 8-12 bongo remain unmolested and indeed while on security patrol, the BSP team managed to sight 7 bongo – 2adult males, 4 adult females and 1 young male. This is a very special and unusual encounter. The BSP has brought the Eburu Forest into the spotlight by revealing the bongo's presence. This has motivated local stakeholders to come forward and participate in conservation programmes".

Mt Kenya – Schools

Bongo Challenge Day -22 March 2011

In addition to the activities schedule, as per page 3, our two Mt Kenya schools were involved in a Bongo Challenge Day. The Wildlife Clubs have worked well under the patron to really persevere with their tree growing. The pupils, who have specific trees each to care for, are really proud of the growth of their trees. In one school the area is now fenced from cattle to prevent, the destruction of the trees.

New materials, pencils and exercise books for conservation essays and drawings were given out to the new wildlife club members.

A fish pond for income generation has been allocated with the community/patron and in March was stocked with fingerlings.



