

Project Update: November 2010

Mr. Mark Origa has worked hard to accomplish the building of the HFG/KISTOC boat. His reports indicate that the experience has been a rewarding, but often trying one. Work of this type requires great patience in Kenya as well as constant vigilance to insure that materials or money do not “disappear”. Mr. Origa has struggled to keep the building on budget, get the approval required by the Kenyan government officials often accustomed to special monetary remuneration, and worked diligently on communicating with the Hippo Focus Group. This will be the first step towards self-sustaining activities for the HFG, a step that brings responsibility and unforeseen difficulties for the group and its leader. To facilitate their transition into ownership, the KISTOC team has taken responsibility for the boat and AoTOP/KISTOC members are working with the hippo group to establish use guidelines and policies that are equitable and acceptable to all.

At this time AoTOP is working with another U.S. and Canadian based zoological group focused on the Lake Victoria cichlids to coordinate education outreach efforts. This includes exploring joining our efforts in Kisumu to capitalise on their existing education materials, our existing clubs and functioning outreach team, the presence of an experienced, trusted, ex-museum curator who they can pay to assist with teacher training, and working together in the future to obtain additional seed funding. AoTOP also is submitting grants to create four roving wildlife and conservation libraries that will include field equipment such as binoculars. These will be rotated to each of the 20 targeted schools twice each year where they will stay for 1 month. Further reports on the progress of this effort will be submitted in future updates.

After the test and inspection the findings were sent to their headquarters for the final approval which came back on 26 October 2010. This states that the boat is seaworthy and a certificate has been given to that effect. We used this certificate to get Vessels License No. 13244 for operation as a tour boat in Lake Victoria for one year up to 26 October 2011, after which it must be renewed annually. At this time the motor is being held by Mr. Isaac Oluoch of KISTOC and the boat is moored at the private hotel located on Dunga Beach. This situation will be maintained for the security of the boat until permanent arrangements can be made with the hotel owner or Kenya Wildlife Authority for long-term mooring.

Within the next few days the fully operational boat will be handed over to the HFG. The operation of the boat will be with full supervision of the KISTOC/AoTOP team within the objective of the conservation and outreach education objectives on Lake Victoria. Education emphasis will focus on all the biological life of the region using the otters of Lake Victoria as focal species.