



The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

Connecting people to nature.



Produced by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL)

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The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

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Sierra Leone

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A message from our President A message from our Director



Being the oldest environmental organisation in the country comes with a big legacy. We are aware of that legacy and for me as the president of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, it is an honour to continue in the footsteps of great conservationists in the country. The conservation of our

natural resources and our outstanding biodiversity should be of highest interest to everyone in Sierra Leone. We have achieved a lot – we as Conservation Society but also we as a country. Since CSSL was established in 1986, several protected areas were declared, a Ramsar site was designated, we have a Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and lately our government approved a plastic policy. All of these are important steps, but there is still a long way to go.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone will continue to support government and people to ensure that we will hand over a good legacy to the next generation. We are grateful for having our partners and members on our side. Happy reading!

Sincerely

Charles Showers
President of Board of Trustees, CSSL



Climate change is not theory anymore. Climate change is real and it is here. We can feel it, not only in Sierra Leone but all around the world. Through our work as Conservation Society of Sierra Leone we promote the wise use of natural resources and introduce climate change mitigation measures in communities. We support communities to sustain the forests which give important services to us and future generations, we are engaged in mangrove restoration, we are part of the first REDD+ project in West Africa and we support government in the development and implementation of policies.

We could not do any of this without our members and partners. It makes me happy and proud to know that the Conservation Society has built all these strong relationships on local, national and international level to work towards a greener and more sustainable future for all. We are here to connect people to nature because we believe: We for Nature. Nature for Us.

Sincerely

Dr. Sheku Kamara
Executive Director, CSSL

About CSSL

About us

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is the oldest environmental organisation in the country. CSSL was founded in 1986. Our aim is to promote a better life for all in harmony with the environment. We work with local communities, like-minded organisations, government agencies and international conservation partners to achieve our goals. We are a membership-based organisation. We are open to anyone with an interest in conservation and climate change. One of our objectives is to connect people to nature because we believe in the power of many to bring a brighter future for Sierra Leone.

Our Vision

Our vision is of a Sierra Leone where conservation, sustainable development, healthy people and sustainable livelihoods work together for a better future for all. To make CSSL a visible, self-supporting/sustainable organisation able to play a key role in influencing and implementing programmes for conservation, sustainable development and improved living conditions in Sierra Leone.

Our Mission

Our main mission is to conserve nature and ensure the wise and sustainable use of our precious natural resources for the benefit of the country's biodiversity, people's livelihoods and the quality of life of all Sierra Leoneans.

To promote conservation (wise use) and management of natural resources for sustainable development and to mitigate the effects of climate change in Sierra Leone.

Why conservation

Sierra Leone's magnificent and incredible wildlife and habitats are now more threatened with extinction than ever before. This trend is dangerous and poses a major threat to sustainable human survival. We all face the consequences of climate change, deforestation and pollution: potable water is becoming a scarce resource; landslides are a threat to people living on hillsides; weather conditions are becoming increasingly unpredictable for farmers; and the extinction of animals has a knock-on effect on the wider web of life.

What we do

Conservation is not just about protecting nature, it is also about protecting people's livelihoods, sustainable development and government policies. That is why we work in different areas with a multi-stakeholder approach to achieve our goal – the conservation of Sierra Leone's precious natural resources and biodiversity.

The four pillars of our work

- Saving species
- Protecting sites and habitats
- Conserving ecological sustainability
- Enabling communities for positive change

Short history of CSSL

Background and history

Sierra Leone is home to an incredible variety of wildlife, both terrestrial and marine. The country was once covered in precious rainforests and mangrove forests. Both of these are areas of high biodiversity. In recent decades, the forests have come under severe threat, along with the habitats of the animals and the livelihoods of the people of Sierra Leone.

Our forests are disappearing, and we are feeling the effects of man-made climate change more and more every year. We know that part of the solution is to conserve our forests and natural resources.

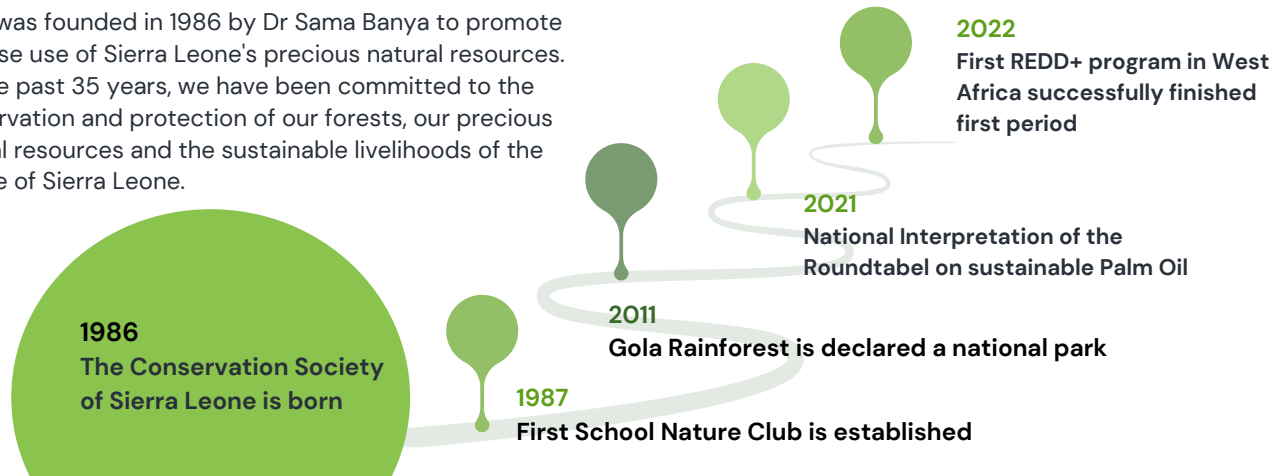
CSSL starts to make a difference

CSSL was founded in 1986 by Dr Sama Banya to promote the wise use of Sierra Leone's precious natural resources. For the past 35 years, we have been committed to the conservation and protection of our forests, our precious natural resources and the sustainable livelihoods of the people of Sierra Leone.

CSSL today

Over the past 35 years, we have gained many partners. We have expanded our national and international network to achieve our goal of protecting biodiversity and securing livelihoods.

Today, CSSL can count on many members who share our passion for nature and conservation. We are based in Freetown, from where we run our programmes in the Western Area Peninsula and Yawri Bay. Our staff in Kenema and Kabala work directly with forest communities and government organisations to protect nature and wildlife in the Greater Gola Landscape and around Lake Sonfon respectively.



Our partners in Sierra Leone

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) works with government agencies, like-minded partners and volunteers throughout the country.

Government of Sierra Leone

For us, government agencies are key partners in formulating and implementing strong climate change and environmental laws and policies. On the one hand, government agencies such as the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Forestry Department and the Wildlife Department are our close partners in implementing conservation in Sierra Leone. But we also see all other departments as important partners, because conservation and climate change is a multi-sectoral issue that can only be solved if all departments work together.

Local authorities

Local authorities can be the leaders of social change. They have the power to influence their communities, support conservation efforts and promote an environment that ensures a healthy and sustainable livelihood for the people of Sierra Leone.

Like-minded organisations

CSSL is one of many civil society organisations working on conservation in Sierra Leone. We know that we are stronger when we network, share experiences, support each other and work together on pressing issues such as deforestation, water insecurity and climate change. We are part of several NGO/CSO networks and work in partnership with various organisations in the country on our project sites.

Community members and volunteers

Over the years, CSSL has built a strong network of community organisations and volunteers to support our work at the local level throughout the country. Through these community-based approaches, we promote environmentally friendly practices and conservation at the village level.



Our international partners

Climate change is a global challenge. No country can solve it alone. It is up to all of us to think globally and act locally. Our international partnerships are key to securing technical and financial support, sharing biodiversity and species data, and working together to find solutions to climate change. We work with international partners at local level to help implement climate change mitigation and conservation projects.

Our main global partner is the **BirdLife International** family and our partner organisation, the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)** in the UK and **Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany**. BirdLife International is the world's largest network of conservation organisations. The BirdLife family has over 115 members covering every continent, landscape and seascape. Through a strong network of scientists, volunteers and practitioners, joint advocacy and strategically organised action to conserve species and their habitats, the BirdLife family is the leading conservation network.

In addition to BirdLife, the RSPB and BftW, we are delighted to have long-standing partnerships with a number of other international organisations such as **Wetlands International, MAVA Foundation, Darwin Initiative, European Union, USAID, Save the Children, Christian Relief Services (CRS), CaFoD, GOAL, TROCAIRE, Welthungerhilfe** and many others.



Climate change and peace are linked. CSSL is a proud member of the Bread for the World (BftW) – Civil Peace Service (CPS) network in Sierra Leone. Together with eleven other national NGOs, we work for climate justice, gender equality, peace and food security in Sierra Leone. **Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)** – our international CPS network partner – is the global development and relief agency of the Protestant churches in Germany. In more than 85 countries around the world, BftW empowers the poor and marginalised to improve their living conditions.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone takes this opportunity to thank all those who have partnered with us, who believe in us and support us in our work.

Would you like to become a partner of CSSL in the future? Do not hesitate to contact us, because conservation needs everyone: info@cs-sl.org

The Greater Gola Landscape

Saving Sierra Leone's Rainforest

A hub of incredible biodiversity and climate change mitigation opportunities, Sierra Leone's last remaining primary rainforest

The Gola Forest Landscape, covering 350,000 ha and straddling the Sierra Leone/Liberia border, is the largest remaining block of Upper Guinea Forest. In Sierra Leone, it includes the Gola Rainforest National Park, the Kambui Hills Forest Reserve and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. The landscape is part of a globally important biodiversity hotspot. It is home to at least 60 threatened species, including the endemic and rare Jentink's duiker, the critically endangered pygmy hippopotamus, red colobus, western pied colobus, pangolins, the endangered forest elephant and the world's second largest population of the endangered western chimpanzee.

The Greater Gola Landscape is home to 327 bird species, including the critically endangered Gola Malimbe, the endangered Timneh Parrot and the endangered Yellow-headed Picathartes. The forest plays a critical role through the range of ecosystem services it provides, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change both globally and locally, as the vegetation and soils of the Greater Gola Landscape are a major carbon sink of great value.

Threats to the ecosystems at the Greater Gola Landscape

With a growing rural population in the landscape, pressure on the forest and its biodiversity is increasing. The main threats to the ecosystem in the Gola landscape are logging and timber extraction, mining, poaching and slash-and-burn agricultural practices. The Kambui Hills Forest Reserve is particularly affected by the expansion of the town of Kenema. Deforestation continues at an alarming rate. This is partly due to weak law enforcement in the area.



CSSL involvement

The Gola Rainforest National Park was created in 2014. CSSL is part of the park's board of directors and involved in all conservation projects within the landscape. The first Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) project in West Africa was launched in Gola National Park in collaboration with NPAA and with the support of the British BirdLife International partner RSPB and funding from the European Union and USAID. This national and international collaboration is a great example of how conservation can work for nature and communities.

The Kambui Hills Forest Reserve is different. The Kambui Hills are under more pressure than the Gola National Park and are less protected. Community engagement, joint actions with NPAA and EPA, and with local authorities have not yet had the hoped-for positive impact on the conservation of the Kambui Hill Forest Reserve. Demarcation activities, forest guards trainings and community engagements for sustainable forest management are ongoing.



Our biggest celebration and success stories at the Greater Gola Landscape:

- The first REDD+ program in West Africa successfully sold carbon credits for the benefit of people and nature conservation!
- Demarcation of the Kambui Hills Forest Reserve is supporting the conservation of the forest!
- The Greater Gola Landscape is in the process to become Sierra Leone's first Nature World Heritage Site!



The Yawri Bay Wetland Conservation

The importance of the Yawri Bay ecosystem

The Yawri Bay ecosystem accounts for about 14% of the total mangrove swamp area in Sierra Leone. Mangroves are an important part of the West African coastal ecosystem, providing habitat for endangered species, resting places for migratory birds and mitigating the effects of climate change such as flooding and coastal erosion. Since the 1980s, Sierra Leone has lost more than 40% of its mangrove cover.

Mangrove forests are key players in the fight against climate change. They prevent coastal erosion, protect against flooding and are incredible carbon sinks. Mangrove forests are home to very unique species and are breeding grounds for many fish. Keeping mangroves intact is important for biodiversity conservation and the livelihoods of communities in the bay.



Threats to the fragile ecosystem of the bay

The ecosystem of Yawri Bay is degraded and vulnerable to further decline. The main threats are the destruction of mangroves for firewood, charcoal burning and fish drying, unsustainable harvesting of fish and crustaceans, loss of shoreline and human disturbance of wildlife and habitats. These threats are driven by gaps in knowledge about the bay, inadequate legal protection, non-compliance with existing environmental laws, and a current lack of understanding by local people of the benefits of protecting the bay's ecosystem.

CSSL involvement

CSSL began its involvement in the Yawri Bay in 2021. With support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), CSSL worked with key stakeholders to ensure better recognition and protection of the bay. Several interventions were completed during this time, including an assessment of the laws of the relevant authorities protecting the bay, with recommendations made.

CSSL developed a management plan for the bay, completed a comprehensive boundary demarcation, conducted biodiversity surveys, assessed the socio-economic impact of the communities in the bay, and initiated engagement with the private sector to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to draft a conservation agreement with the communities.

CSSL is currently working with the communities at Yawri Bay, with support from PAPBio, to ensure that this engagement continues. One of CSSL's objectives in the bay is to reforest the destroyed mangrove forest and restore the ecosystems. The long term goal is to extend the activities to Shebro Island, the Shebro River Estuary and Turtle Islands.

Our success in protecting Sierra Leone's wetlands at the Yawri Bay

- Community committees for conservation are established in all key communities in the Yawri Bay!
- Several hectares of mangrove forest are restored!
- Communities take ownership and continue the restoration work on their own!
- Yawri Bay and Shebro island are in the process to become the second Ramsar Site of Sierra Leone!



Lake Sonfon

Conserving nature and heritage

The unique ecosystem of Lake Sonfon

Lake Sonfon is one of the rare mountain lakes in West Africa and the largest inland lake in Sierra Leone. Located in the north of the country in Diang Chiefdom, it is far from the attention of the general public. Few people know about the unique environment, plants, animals and birds. Being at Lake Sonfon will give you the experience of the special fragrance of the herbs and flowers growing there, which is not easily found in other places in the country. The lake is also home to embedded bird species such as the Emerald Starling. It is a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and one of Sierra Leone's proposed protected areas.

The lake plays a very important role in the culture of the communities. The animals in the lake, the small island, the surroundings of the lake. They all play their role in the stories and customs of the Diang people.

Mining destroys nature, heritage and healthy livelihoods

One of the biggest threats to Lake Sonfon, its biodiversity and the health and livelihoods of the communities around it, is water pollution and ecosystem degradation from mining. Despite the fact that Lake Sonfon is a proposed protected area and the demarcation of the protected area and a buffer zone has been approved, artisanal and industrial mining has recently returned to the lake.

Protecting the lake also means protecting and preserving an unique cultural heritage.



CSSL involvement

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) has been working in and around Lake Sonfon for a number of years, raising public awareness of the importance of protecting the lake and supporting communities with alternative livelihoods to mining. The Conservation Society works closely with communities, local authorities and the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA) to achieve these goals. By 2021, all mining sites were closed. Unfortunately, most have reopened since industrial mining began again in the area.

CSSL continues to work with local authorities, government agencies and communities to educate them about the dangers of mining and the importance of conservation. Through alternative livelihoods, CSSL supports community members to find another way to earn money for their survival and daily needs.



Our success in conservation Lake Sonfon

- Mining activities stopped in 2021!
- 10 community structures established!
- Authorities and Key Stakeholders recognise the good work of CSSL in conserving Lake Sonfon!
- A case study at Yara CMA group showing Women operating a micro finance scheme from proceeds derived from the sales of honey and agricultural produce!



The Western Area Peninsula

Ecosystem services for Freetown and the whole peninsula

The Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPF-NP) was established as a national park in 2012. It had been protected since 1916. Nestled in the hills of the Freetown Peninsula, the forest was once known for its amazing rainforest and rich biodiversity. Today it is still home to endangered species such as western chimpanzees, duikers, picarhantes, pangolins and other vulnerable or endangered animals. But the forest is shrinking by the day. Habitat loss has reached alarming levels, and even the water supply for the peninsula's 1.5 million people is at risk.

The forest in the hills above Freetown plays a vital role in the protection and survival of communities around the peninsula. The trees cool the temperature, break heavy winds, prevent soil erosion and provide water security.

Under threat: Habitat for endangered species and water catchment for people

Due to unplanned urban expansion, logging, stone quarrying, charcoal burning and agriculture, the forest cover has decreased dramatically in recent years. The consequences are strong winds in the capital, floods, landslides, climate change and water insecurity in the dry season.

Although the Western Area Peninsula Forest is a protected area, protection is not fully enforced, fines are not high enough, and companies are even given permission to mine and log inside the protected area.



CSSL involvement

One approach to save what remains of the WAPF-NP is for the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone to work with communities and media houses to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the forest. Through School Nature Clubs (SNCs), radio programs and community engagements, messages and information are disseminated in families and communities to educate people about the benefits of the forest and the ecosystem services it provides to people.

Another approach is to engage government agencies through dialogue, meetings and advocacy in partnership with other NGOs and civil society organisations. Together with like-minded local organisations and international partners, CSSL continuously highlights the importance of protecting the WAPF-NP through better law enforcement and strict environmental policies.



Our success in conservation of Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park

- Increase in awareness among locals about the important and protection of the forest!
- The construction of an eco lodge at Big water minimises the level of land grabbing and deforestation within the areas of Big Water!
- Strengthened the collaboration with government MDAs unlike before!



Advocating for nature

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) promotes the wise and sustainable use of Sierra Leone's natural resources. Part of our work is to bring together partners, industries, communities and government to discuss regulations, policies and laws for a green and healthy Sierra Leone.

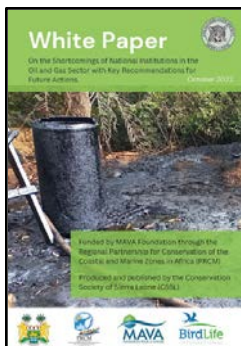
Coalition on Oil and Gas Pollution on the Environment (COGaPE)

As Sierra Leone braces itself to kick-start oil exploitation and production activities anytime in the near future in identified areas in the country, expectations of high socio-economic boom are rife in all walks of life, particularly across the political spectrum. These activities, however, do not go without grave attendant environmental consequences. The marine coastal environment and communities nearby, stand to be adversely affected by such activities.

CSSL has been working collaboratively with government institutions, oil and gas companies, CSOs and community representatives over the years in rolling out activities to mitigate the negative impacts of imminent oil pollution on the marine coastal environment and nearby communities. The aim is to adopt a policy and procedures for oil and gas extraction along the Sierra Leonean coastline.

African Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) and Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative (ASCI)

CSSL is the facilitating partner in Sierra Leone for the African Palm Oil Initiative (APOI). The mono-culture palm oil plantation is often having a devastating impact on biodiversity, community land rights and human health. Through the engagement of government bodies like the Ministry of Agriculture and its subdivisions, companies, and community stakeholders CSSL aims to influence the sustainability of palm oil production in the country. One big success was the National Interpretation of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil in 2021 and the expansion to the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative (ASCI) in 2022 during COP27 in Egypt.



Biodiversity Assessments and Research

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is one of the country's leading environmental organisations. Since its inception, CSSL has been a source of information for anyone interested in the country's ecosystems, biodiversity, species and nature. As a member of the BirdLife International family, it has the DNA to carry out surveys and assessments of Sierra Leone's resident and migratory bird species. As conservationists, we know that data and data collection are key to our work in advocating for nature. Research is an important part of our daily work.

Annual water bird census

Birds are important indicators for the health of ecosystems. When the number of species and/or the number of birds is decreasing, it is a clear sign that ecosystems are under threat. Birds don't know borders. Many species stay in Africa for most of the year and migrate to Europe for the breeding time. Loss of habitat in Europe or Africa has huge impact on the birds' migratory routs and their survival. CSSL conducts the annual water bird census along the coastline to collect data on migratory water birds. This data – together with the data provided through BirdLife partners around the world and other organisations – is used for biodiversity assessments and policy development on global level.

General biodiversity assessments

Due to the country's variety of habitats Sierra Leone is very rich in biodiversity and important for wildlife conservation. Being the home for more than 2.000 known higher plant species, about 150 known species of mammals, more than 170 breeding bird species, reptiles, amphibians and fishes, Sierra Leone is one of the countries of high interest for conservation. We still don't know all species existing in the country. There are not enough data regarding the development of numbers of species and the impact of habitat loss and other human activities. CSSL conducts biodiversity surveys in different parts of the country to fill the data gap and provide scientific information for conservation action.



Ambassadors for Nature

CSSL School Nature Clubs

Environmental Education (EE) is key to enabling children, students and adults to understand our environment, the services ecosystems provide and the importance of conservation. The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) engages schools, teachers and students through School Nature Clubs (SNCs) in different parts of the country.

Plant seeds today – support them grow for tomorrow

How do plants drink and eat? Why are some animals not seen any longer in our communities? Why is it cooler in the forest than in the city? All these questions are coming from our children. We are here to answer them and explain the interrelation between nature and human activities like deforestation, plastic pollution, overfishing, chemical fertilizers, and others.

CSSL works with more than 30 schools nationwide to educate pupils, teachers, and classmates about environmental issues and on solutions to environmental degradation. These young people are carrying the knowledge and the messages to their homes and families and bring change to their communities. We are happy to plant the seeds of conservation in their minds and support them to grow as this young generation will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Our environmental education materials are waiting for you on our website:
<https://cs-sl.org/ee-materials>

Get involved –

Start a School Nature Club at your school

Teaching pupils about how their decisions impact the environment is an important part of our school nature clubs. The young people learn that their actions have consequences, and they learn how to find solutions for existing challenges like plastic pollution and deforestation. To connect these young boys and

girls with nature through educational events, celebration of nature and exposure trips to nature sites is our way to ensure a brighter and greener future for Sierra Leone.



You want to start a CSSL School Nature Club at your school? Send us an email – we are happy to welcome new schools to our family:
info@cs-sl.org

Become a member!

Support nature.

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) is a membership-based organisation, open to the general public, with members from many different backgrounds. The strength of CSSL to intervene and act for biodiversity and sustainable development is largely dependent on the support of our valued members. The CSSL Board of Trustees is elected by the members every three years. Through the Board of Trustees we ensure that our activities and implementation are in line with our constitution and five year strategy.

With your membership you support us

- to address current and emerging conservation challenges such as wildlife and environmental degradation and climate change.
- to train communities to ensure their sustainable livelihoods while protecting the forest and its wildlife.
- to establish new school nature clubs and continue our environmental education programme, helping to train young Sierra Leoneans to become active in conservation and environmental protection.
- to continue our campaigns to protect watersheds and water sources.
- to continue our campaign for endangered species such as sea turtles, manatees, pygmy hippos and many more.
- to campaign for better laws and complement government efforts to protect our biodiversity.

Explore more about conservation in Sierra Leone through our video documentaries "We for Nature. Nature for Us."
<https://cs-sl.org/videos>

We for Nature. Nature for Us.

As a member of CSSL you will have full access to our information centre.

You will be invited to CSSL's general meetings, lectures, film screenings and birdwatching excursions.

Most importantly, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are preserving nature for yourself and future generations!

Contact us for more information:
info@cs-sl.org or facebook.com/conservationsl
<https://cs-sl.org/membership>

**Support our work
with your donation!**
<https://cs-sl.org/support-us>

