

# Newsletter 1 - 2024

## Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

*Connecting people to nature.*



## The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

*Connecting People to Nature.*

Dear members,  
Dear friends in conservation,

Earlier this month the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and entourage, together with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), visited our beloved Gola Rainforest National Park. This visit shows how important and exemplary this landscape is.

Gola Rainforest has put Sierra Leone on the conservation map, especially as the only National Park in West Africa that is currently engaged in carbon trade.

This is thanks to CSSL and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) who are very important partners of the government of Sierra Leone that ensured the protection and conservation of this biodiversity-rich rainforest national park in Sierra Leone. This partnership shows how important and successful partnerships for conservation can be.

The Gola rainforest national park is the lungs of Sierra Leone, and thus a fundamental component of our survival as a human race. But it is not the only precious natural site our country has.

Let's continue to work together towards a healthy, safe, and peaceful future for us all, together with nature. Like every quarter, we are happy to present to you our efforts towards this goal.

Happy reading!

Charles Showers  
President of CSSL



# Gola Rainforest:

## a forest to celebrate with pride



High level visitors to the Gola by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya

The International Day of Forests is celebrated on March 21st every year to raise public awareness on the importance of protecting forests and their link to human existence. On that Day, the relevance of conserving all types of forests, and trees outside forests is re-emphasized for the benefit of current and future generations. Each year, more than 13 million hectares (32 million acres) of forests are lost globally, an area roughly the size of England. The increased spate of deforestation and the attendant climate change effects has reinforced the need to redouble global efforts for more actions to protect the forests.

On March 21st, 2024, Sierra Leone joined the world in celebrating the Day in Joru, one of the forest edge communities of Gola Rainforest National Park in Kenema district, east of the country. The event was organised by Gola Rainforest Conservation LG (GRC-LG) and graced by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Giwoh Abdulai, and accompanied by the leaderships of Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and the National Protected Area Authority. Also present were the Paramount Chiefs of the seven Gola chiefdoms, representatives of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), relevant ministries, departments and agencies and the Chairman – Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Environment, among others.

During the event, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change revealed that the process of reviewing the forestry laws was ongoing, so as to enable government to protect the country's forests better. To do that, he said the Ministry would soon embark on consultative meetings across the country to gauge the views of communities on the best ways to manage the forests "in this era of climate change". The outcome of the consultations would be included into the climate legislation, he noted.

The Minister asserted that, "Gola Rainforest National Park is a success story in West Africa and the world. It is contributing hugely to the fight against climate change, and we will ensure that communities around Gola forest benefit from the services it is providing to the world." As GRC – LG currently supports forest edge communities in Gola with development projects, the Minister assured all that such support would continue even for future generations once the forest remains protected. He called on all Sierra Leoneans to plant at least one tree and protect it through to maturity for the benefit of all.



The Executive Director of CSSL, Dr. Sheku Kamara reminded all present about the efforts invested into the protection of Gola Rainforest by CSSL and partners. He said, CSSL and RSPB are the BirdLife partners in Sierra Leone and the UK respectively, and are very important partners of the government of Sierra Leone that ensured the protection and conservation of Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone. He encouraged all present to continue to work together to increase the gains so far achieved in the protection of the Park.

The celebration of the Day was preceded by community visits by the Minister and entourage around forest edge communities. The Minister informed communities (Belebu in Tunkia chiefdom and Lalehun in Gaura chiefdom) that, he was keen to have first-hand information about the benefits they are deriving from Gola. He also said he wanted to know what the government could do better to improve the lives of communities around the forest. The visiting team also walked through the Park to see the highest viewpoint and one of the colonies of one of the highly treasured birds – the Picathartes.

“The tour of the Gola Rainforest by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and entourage, together with the Conversation Society of Sierra Leone, shows how important and exemplary this landscape is. Gola Rainforest has put Sierra Leone on the conservation map especially as the only National Park in West Africa that is currently engaged in carbon trade. This is thanks to CSSL and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) who are very important partners of the government of Sierra Leone that ensured the protection and conservation of this biodiversity-rich rainforest national park in Sierra Leone. The rainforest national park is the lungs of Sierra Leone, and thus a fundamental component of our survival as a human race. On behalf of Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, I am expressing my sincere gratitude to the Environment and Climate Change Minister for prioritizing this visit and we will always be by him in conservation efforts in Sierra Leone.



Charles Showers  
President of CSSL

by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya



Group photo at Joru Gaura by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya



# Did you know...

Did you know...



An area roughly the equivalent of  
**14 million**  
football pitches is lost per year  
to deforestation.



#InternationalDayofForests

Did you know...




Forested watersheds and wetlands  
provide **75 %**  
of the world's accessible freshwater.

#InternationalDayofForests

Did you know...



Forests contain over  
**1/2**  
the global carbon stock in soils  
and vegetation.



#InternationalDayofForests

Did you know...




Forests are home to  
**80%**  
of all amphibian species.

#InternationalDayofForests

Did you know...




Insect pests damage around  
**35 million**  
hectares of forest annually.

#InternationalDayofForests

Did you know...




More than  
**30%**  
of new diseases reported since  
1960 are attributed to land use  
change, including deforestation.

#InternationalDayofForests



# Water for Peace!

World Water Day 2024



# Water for Peace

**Every year on March 22nd, the world celebrates World Water Day to remind ourselves about the importance of water for our life. Water is crucial as a source of living but also as a source of peace. When water becomes scarce, peace is threatened. To set a focus on that, the theme for World Water Day 2024 was Water for Peace.**

## **Water for Peace**

Water can create peace or spark conflict.

When water is scarce or polluted, or when people have unequal, or no access, tensions can rise between communities and countries.

More than 3 billion people worldwide depend on water that crosses national borders. Yet, only 24 countries have cooperation agreements for all their shared water.

As climate change impacts increase, and populations grow, there is an urgent need, within and between countries, to unite around protecting and conserving our most precious resource.

Public health and prosperity, food and energy systems, economic productivity and environmental integrity all rely on a well-functioning and equitably managed water cycle.

## **Prosperity and peace rely on water.**

Without clean water, we cannot survive. Without water, we cannot farm, build or develop our country. The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) works with communities and government to ensure the protection of water sources. At Lake Sonfon and the Pampana River, for example, we advocate for a clear “no to mining” to ensure clean water for the communities living there. Around the Western Area Peninsula Forest, we advocate for the protection of the forest to ensure that the Guma reservoir will not run out of water but continues to provide uninterrupted water for the people of Freetown and the whole peninsula.

**Let’s protect our water sources and water catchments! Let’s ensure peace in our community!**



# Follow-up on Mangrove Restoration

CSSL's engagement for restored Mangrove forests at the Yawri Bay did not stop with the planting of Mangroves.



Growing Mangroves at the Yawri Bay by Paul Musa

To monitor the growth and survival of mangroves planted in July 2023 with funds from Wetlands International through [PAPBIO](#), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) made a site visit to examine the growth and survival of the mangroves on 11th February 2024.

During the visit, the team that comprised the Project Manager, Abdulai Dauda, Livelihood Officer, Paul Musa Jr. and Woodie Bakie Koroma, Public Relations Officer of the Sierra Leone Artisanal Fishermen Union (SLAFU) observed that the majority (90%) of mangroves planted survived, and have grown to an average height of 3ft.

Mr. Osman Kargbo-Deputy Town Chief and member of the Mangrove Restoration Committee explained that the high survival rate of the new mangroves was because of the commitment and active participation of the community members in the restoration process. He added that, they served as local monitors for the mangroves. We can't destroy what we have planted, he emphasised.

This therefore, reinforces the fact that community engagement immensely supports sustainable mangrove restoration.





# Gardening, beehives, and community engagements

An update on our work with communities at Diang and Sambaia Chiefdoms



Community engagement by Alhaji O. Kamara

**The communities around Lake Sonfon are already facing the negative consequences of mining as the water quality is degrading and the environment is polluted. We as Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) are working with the communities for several years now. Our experience shows that, some of the effective ways to stop mining are awareness raising and providing alternative livelihood options for the families.**

## Training on small scale farming

CSSL started the year 2024 with several community engagements around Lake Sonfon and Pampana River. In January, the CSSL team in Kabala visited the Community Management Associations (CMAs) together with Abubakarr S. Marah from the Crop Division of the Ministry of Agriculture in Koinadugu district, Kabala town. During the trip, seeds for different vegetables like carrots, corn, cucumber, and tomatoes were distributed to the community members along with gardening tools. Mr. Marah trained the CMAs on the best use of the tools and the needs of the different vegetables for them (the vegetables) to thrive. A successful harvest starts with the right preparation of the soil, the right way to plant the seeds and the right care for the seedlings. With the new knowledge gained, it is expected that the community members will be able to increase their income in the next harvesting season.

“

*We are all worried about the consequences of mining at the lake. But we don't have other means of income. We need money to feed our children and to send them to school. For most of our men, mining is their only income generating activity.”*



community management team member

**Scaling up Beekeeping and Organic Honey Production**

One of the great success stories of CSSL’s engagements on alternative livelihoods around Lake Sonfon is the beekeeping groups. Honey from Lake Sonfon is one of the best in the country as the flowers and plants around the lake are very special.

Owing to the high esteem that this component is held among the Diang people, communities passionately requested CSSL for more support and capacity building with regards to beekeeping and organic honey production. Our honey expert, Fasalie Conteh, is therefore currently supervising the construction of new beehives and also training new beekeepers. We are already looking forward to the next fresh organic honey from Lake Sonfon!



Bee-hives ready for distribution.

**Environmental Education and awareness raising**

Apart from mining, another threat to biodiversity and wildlife in Diang and Sambaia chiefdoms is the behaviours and customs of people living in the area. The Wildlife Act of Sierra Leone actually forbids the hunting, keeping and eating of several wild animal species like monkeys, chimpanzees, crocodiles, parrots, turtles and others. Not everyone is aware of these laws. Not everybody is aware of the health risks coming along with eating wild animals. The diseases of the last years like Ebola and Covid showed that being close to wild animals and eating them can become a severe risk for human health.

To raise awareness and educate communities about existing national laws and health issues related to wildlife and so-called bush meat, the CSSL team in Kabala organised community meetings and distributed posters and stickers with clear messages and information for everyone. Our main aim is to protect wildlife and human well-being.

*by Kathrin Prinzing*





# Education on threatened bird species of Sierra Leone

SPRING ALIVE PROGRAM 2024



by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya

Sierra Leone is a country rich in biodiversity including bird species. Birds are an important indicator of environmental health and hence, very crucial in the ecosystem. Current data suggests the existence of more than 600 bird species in Sierra Leone, but several of them are under tremendous threat. Increased deforestation, urbanization, other unsustainable practices and environmental pollution continue to have a heavy toll on the habitats and food chains of birds, which put them in perpetual existential danger.

In a bid to continue to support its bird conservation drive in schools and communities, HEIDELBERG Cement provided funds to the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) through BirdLife’s Spring Alive program for the 2023 campaign. The overall aim of this program is to help African children, their families, friends and teachers, to understand, engage with, and take action for birds and nature and to understand the need for international conservation for migratory species. It also encourages the broader community to get more involved with nature conservation in their respective countries by supporting BirdLife partners. CSSL is the BirdLife partner in Sierra Leone.

CSSL designed a poster capturing most of the threatened bird species in Sierra Leone and their respective status (according to the IUCN red list). The poster, which was accompanied with a flyer (guide) containing key messages, aimed at educating school pupils, teachers and the communities about ways to identify such threatened species when spotted in their environment, and to take active actions to protect them.





A team from the organisation's Environmental and Communication Department visited ten (10) schools in the Western Area Urban and Rural districts, and distributed the IEC materials and provided the pupils and teachers with basic education about the content of the materials. The engagement sessions, which spanned from January 26th through 31st 2024, were hugely successful. The team met with many young ambassadors for nature and biodiversity, and had engaging conversations about wildlife, threatened birds and how all is connected with the protection of forests and nature conservation.

“

...thanks to CSSL and the donors. This was really very educative and insightful especially for our pupils. We will take it from here by having weekly nature talks during our morning devotion”

Augustine Babadi-Kamara,  
Principal, Peninsula Secondary School, Waterloo

“

“Before today, I used to think bird caging was helpful to birds, especially pigeons. But I now realise how cruel we have been to these important creatures... I'll take the message home to my family and neighborhood”

Mariatu Conteh,  
pupil of Alfred Akibo-Betts Municipal Junior  
Secondary School, Freetown.

The materials are online and on school noticeboards where more people continue to access them. Please click on the link provided to see the poster on our website and check your knowledge “Do you know our threatened species?”:

<https://cs-sl.org/threatened-bird-species/>

by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya



by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya



# Wetlands and Human Well-being

World Wetlands Day 2024

## Wetlands landscapes nurture wellbeing and mental health.



Every 2nd February, World Wetlands Day joins people around the globe in celebrating the value and beauty of our planet's wetlands. It calls nations and each of us to act on behalf of these highly productive natural environments whose existence is interlaced with our own. World Wetlands Day spotlights our most vulnerable ecosystem.

Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests. Yet, wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, world economies and more. It is urgent that we raise national and global awareness about wetlands in order to reverse their rapid loss and encourage actions to conserve and restore them. World Wetlands Day is the ideal time to increase people's understanding of these critically important ecosystems.

Wetlands are essential for human life. From filtering water, to providing food, to supporting biodiversity, to mitigating climate change, to offering livelihoods, to inspiring unique cultures, these ecosystems provide

vital services that sustain our wellbeing. Yet, wetlands are the Earth's most threatened ecosystem and we're losing them three times faster than forests. World Wetlands Day increases global understanding of how much wetlands do for humanity and that we must care, nurture and support them for a sustainable future.

### **Every wetland matters. Every effort counts.**

This year's campaign spotlights how interconnected wetlands and human life are – with people drawing sustenance, inspiration and resilience from these productive ecosystems. Importantly, the theme for 2024 underscores how all aspects of human well-being are tied to the health of the world's wetlands. It calls on each of us to value and steward our wetlands.

**Wetlands and people.  
We need each other.**





**Wetlands and human well-being**

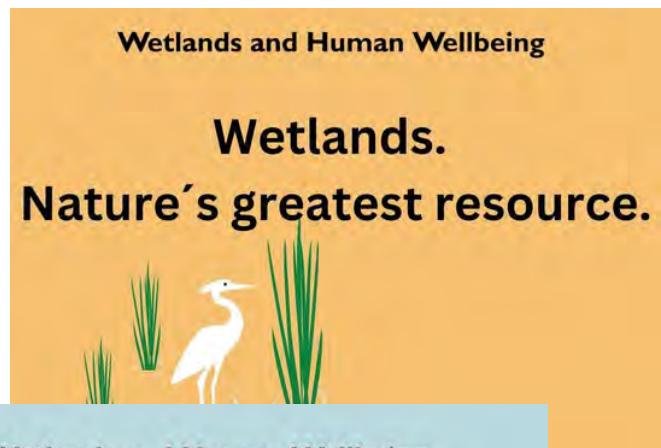
This year’s campaign spotlights how interconnected wetlands and human life are – with people drawing sustenance, inspiration and resilience from these productive ecosystems. Importantly, the theme for 2024 underscores how all aspects of human well-being are tied to the health of the world’s wetlands. It calls on each of us to value and steward our wetlands. Every wetland matters. Every effort counts.

Wetlands are a major, planet-wide habitat that makes life on Earth possible. Wetlands are essential, biodiverse ecosystems where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and plant and animal life. They may be saltwater or freshwater, inland or coastal, natural or human-made, permanent or temporary, static or flowing. Currently, wetlands cover about 6% of the Earth’s land surface. Freshwater wetlands include rivers, lakes, pools, flood plains, peatlands, marshes and swamps. Saltwater wetlands include estuaries, mudflats, saltwater marshes, mangroves, lagoons, coral reefs and shellfish reefs. Human-made wetlands include fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and saltpans.

CSSL has been working in wetland protection and restoration for several years. Learn more about our work at Yawri Bay through our past and current projects including the [CEPE](#), [PAPBio](#) and [BNCFF](#) as well as about our [Mangrove Restoration](#) with community members.

Learn more about the importance of wetland protection and restoration for human well-being in our presentation: [Presentation World Wetland Day 2024](#).

Download [our poster with important messages about “Wetlands and Human Well-being”](#) to spread the knowledge and raise awareness.





# Protecting mangroves and saving money

CSSL establishes and trains village savings and loan associations (VSLA) in the Yawri Bay



by Luc Bessel

Mangrove forests are rich in diverse resources, supporting the coastal livelihoods of people living in and around these areas. These coastal communities have strong economic links with the coastal ecosystems with which they intermingle. Despite their huge importance, mangroves have not survived the impact of human activities. The main threats to mangroves come from deforestation for agriculture, pollution and coastal development. These activities have led to a significant loss of mangrove forests.

As a way of protecting these vulnerable ecosystems from the adverse effects arising from human activities, the Village Savings and Loan Scheme has been used as a strategic approach not only to mitigate climate change but also to increase the income of rural households thereby making them financially independent.

In a bid to support the financial independence of coastal communities in the Yawri Bay Marine Protected Area, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, with support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) through the Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility (BCNFF), established and provided training on financial management and leadership skills for five (5) Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) in five (5) communities including Ribbi, Morchail, Moyambe, Samu and Shengebull.

The training, which spanned from 14th to 28th March, 2024, was facilitated by Mr. Musa Wullarie from the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP), and brought together a total of 150 VSLA members from across the five groups comprising 30 individuals including 25 females and 5 males. Expatiating on the importance of VSLA, Mr. Osman Kargbo of Morchail community said, "... In addition to enhancing our financial independence, I believe the VSLA scheme will further bring us together as members in our various communities."

The training was climaxed by the provision of each group with a start-up fund of Le 6,000 and a VSLA tool kit, which comprised savings boxes, ledger books, pens, rulers, tables and chairs.

In the end, there were clearly defined governance structures with key executive positions, including chairpersons, treasurers, key controllers, and collectors, all held by women. The position of Secretary General in each group was assigned to a man as this required a certain level of literacy.



# Photo impressions from Waterbird Census 2024







# CSSL THANKS ALL MEMBERS AND PARTNERS!

Great White Egret by Kathrin Prinzing



## Contact us

Email: [info@cs-sl.org](mailto:info@cs-sl.org)  
Phone: 075 078 832  
Whatsapp: 076 325732

## Visit us

Office: 86A Main Road, Congo Town, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
Web: <https://cs-sl.org>  
Facebook: <https://facebook.com/conservationsl>