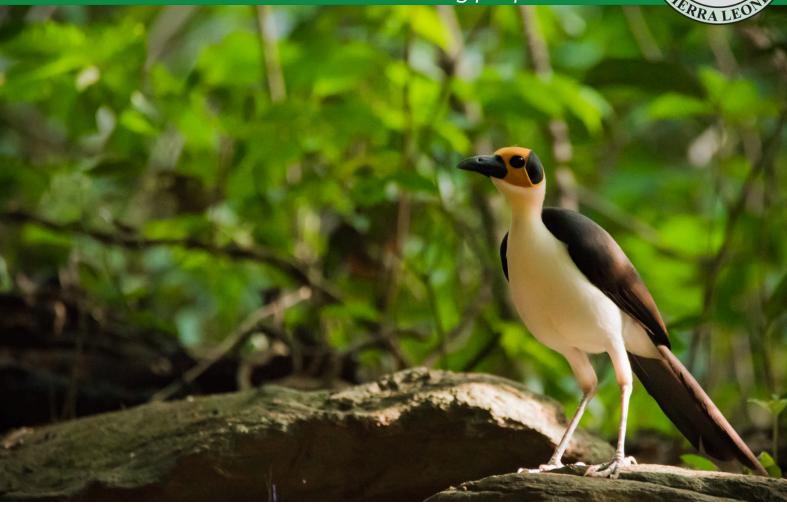
Conservation Society of Sierra Leone





From the Hon. President

Dear Esteemed Readers.

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter.

this issue. CSSL's effective In collaboration with EPA-SL continues as we join sincere efforts to safeguard the more efforts environment. safeguard the environment with collaboration community stakeholders, BNCFF project involves Yawri Bay communities as partners in conservation. And CSSL participates in the Birdlife international council for the Africa Partnership Meeting in Senegal among others.

Wishing all a happy reading.



Charles Showers, Hon. President, CSSL

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CSSL Extends Olive Branch to EPA-SL in Joint Efforts to Safeguard the Environment



The Executive Director of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Dr. Sheku Kamara, alongside the Head of Programmes and Communication Manager, made a historic visit to the Headquarters of the Environment Protection Agency – Sierra Leone (EPA-SL) on July 17, 2024, in a laudable display of camaraderie and shared commitment to environmental conservation. The primary aim of the visit was to extend heartfelt congratulations to the newly appointed Executive Chairman of EPA-SL, Dr. Abu-Bakar Massaquoi, and initiate discussions on enhancing collaborative efforts between the two organizations to tackle the pressing environmental challenges facing Sierra Leone.

Amidst a backdrop of growing environmental concerns and the urgent need for coordinated conservation actions, the visit of Dr. Sheku Kamara and his team signified a pivotal moment in forging stronger ties between CSSL and EPA-SL. The delegation's gesture of goodwill and support towards Dr. Massaquoi's new leadership role underscored the spirit of unity and solidarity within the environmental conservation community in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Sheku Kamara, a respected figure in the field of conservation, expressed his organization's unwavering commitment to working hand-in-hand with EPA-SL under Dr. Massaguoi's stewardship to address critical environmental issues plaguing the country. He emphasized the importance of synergy, cooperation, and mutual support in devising sustainable solutions to combat deforestation, pollution. habitat degradation, and other environmental threats that jeopardize Sierra Leone's natural heritage.

During the courtesy visit, Dr. Kamara commended Dr. Massaquoi on his appointment as the Executive Chairman of EPA-SL, recognizing his proven track record, expertise, and dedication to environmental protection. He lauded the Agency's role in safeguarding Sierra Leone's biodiversity, ecosystems, and environmental quality while advocating for policies and initiatives that promote sustainable development and conservation practices.

Furthermore, the collaborative meeting served as a platform to explore innovative strategies and opportunities for fostering closer partnerships between CSSL and EPA-SL. Discussions centered on joint projects, research endeavours, public awareness campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and policy advocacy efforts aimed at bolstering environmental resilience, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation across Sierra Leone.

The Head of Programmes at CSSL, Edward Sesay, in outlining potential areas of cooperation, highlighted the

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CSSL Strengthens Collaborations with EPA-SL



urgency of addressing deforestation, illegal wildlife trade, marine conservation, and climate change adaptation as key priorities for collective action. In a similar way, the Communication Manager, Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya, emphasized the critical role of effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and public outreach in raising awareness and mobilizing support for environmental conservation endeavours.

In his response, Dr. Abu-Bakar Massaquoi, the newly appointed Executive Chairman of EPA-SL, warmly welcomed the CSSL delegation and expressed his gratitude for their visit and words of encouragement. He acknowledged the significance of collaborative partnerships and alliances in advancing the shared goal of environmental sustainability and underscored EPA-SL's commitment to working closely with CSSL and other stakeholders to address complex environmental challenges effectively.

Dr. Massaquoi reiterated EPA-SL's mandate to enforce environmental regulations, conduct monitoring and compliance activities, develop conservation policies, and promote eco-friendly practices to safeguard Sierra Leone's natural resources and mitigate environmental degradation. He stressed the importance of fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, knowledge exchange, and innovation in tackling emerging environmental threats and building resilient ecosystems for future generations.

As the discussions unfolded, both Dr. Kamara and Dr. Massaquoi expressed optimism about the potential impact of reinforced collaborations between CSSL and EPA-SL in catalyzing positive change, driving sustainable development, and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship among citizens, businesses, and policymakers in Sierra Leone.

The visit marked the beginning of a promising chapter in the journey towards enhanced environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience in Sierra Leone. CSSL and EPA-SL's joint efforts are poised to set a precedent for effective partnership models that prioritize environmental sustainability, community empowerment, and inclusive decision-making processes to address the interconnected challenges facing the nation's natural ecosystems.

The rendezvous between CSSL and EPA-SL symbolized a profound commitment to collaborative action, shared values, and a united vision for a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Sierra Leone. By joining forces and pooling their expertise, resources, and networks, these esteemed organizations are paving the way for impactful environmental advocacy, policy reform, and grassroots engagement that will shape a brighter future for the environment and all living beings in Sierra Leone and beyond.



By Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya





Home to thousands of species

A wide variety of species live or breed in the mangrove ecosystem, from fish and crabs to birds.

When mangrove forests are gone, it can disrupt and threaten the survival of many wildlife and with it the livelihood of people.



forests for the benefit of nature and humans!

Carbon absorber

Mangrove forests contribute to the fight against global warming by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Moreover, mangrove forests are one of the top three carbon-capturing ecosystems.

A natural coastal fortress

Mangroves act as a natural fortress against floods and storm surges.

The sediments from the land and the river are filtered by the roots of mangroves, eventually protecting the coastline from flooding and slowing erosion.



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Environmental Actors Call for Actions to Save Protected

Environmental Actors Call for Joint Patrols and Surveillance with Military to Strengthen Protected



"Our national reserves have lost about 10,103.4 forest However, some of these lush forests and Marine areas, and we continue to lose more trees and forests to Protected Areas currently face existential threat from unregulated human activities. As this spate continues, more carbon dioxide and other dangerous gases are lodged into the atmosphere which increases the global climate crises", laments, Edward Momodu Sesay, Head of Programmes at CSSL during a roundtable conference Over the years, the Conservation Society of Sierra organised by CSSL in Freetown on July 31, 2024.

Sierra Leone's protected areas and reserves host a significant population of West African chimpanzees, the black and white colobus monkey, the brush-tailed porcupine, and Maxwell's Duiker – a small antelope, populations of the extremely rare pygmy hippopotamus, West Africa Dwarf Crocodile, and a large variety of rare native and migratory birds. These sites including Gola Rainforest National Park. Kambui Hills Forest Reserve. Loma Mountains, Lake Sonfon, Outamba-Kilimi National Park, the Western Area Peninsula National Park, Yawri Bay and Sierra Leone River Estuary among others, have numerous important economic and social benefits. Benefits include providing ecosystem services such as clean water, non-timber forest products and fish nurseries; supporting the country's young ecotourism industry; and preserving leisure spaces for Sierra To continue with its advocacy drive, CSSL organised a Leoneans themselves.

anthropogenic activities including timber logging, mining, housing, over-fishing, mangrove cutting for fish smoking, among others.

Leone (CSSL) has been working with designated government institutions under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change including the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), the Environment Protection Agency (EPA-SL), Forestry Division, etc., the Ministry of Agriculture, communities environmental like-minded civil organisations to protect and sustainably manage these sites. But year in year out, additional threats keep emerging from communities, individuals as well as companies interested in exploiting the minerals hosted in these sites. This is much to the detriment of the population living in these communities that largely depend on the ecosystem services and other related services provided by the forests and environment.

roundtable discussion for state and non-state actors on

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Environmental Actors Call for Actions to Save Protected Areas



the protection and sustainable management of national protected areas and reserves.

Addressing participants, the Executive Director of CSSL, Dr. Sheku Kamara, asserted that different organizations have different areas of focus; and CSSL's priority is the protection of humans, and other animals, especially birds. He noted that if animals, especially birds go extinct, it would pose a significant threat to humans, and many would be left to wonder as to what might have led to their extinction or what would potentially happen to the human race in the near future.

Dr. Kamara furthered that there was now a shift in semantics regarding what a protected area is and what it is not. He therefore, re-emphasized the necessity for stakeholders to sit and discuss these issues, and urged the Ministry of Environment and its specialized agencies to come clear to the public on these differences.

Dr. Kamara also lamented about the different mandates within the environment sector that tend to strangulate the overall efforts of government and partners in the protection of the environment. He then called on the Ministry of Environment to strengthen collaboration among partners for the protection of the various national parks and reserves across the country. The CSSL Communication Manager, Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya, screened four video documentaries that featured some critical sites in danger including the oldest National Park - Outamba-Kilimi National Park, Western Area Peninsula National Park, Yawri Bay and Lake Sonfon. Community members in the videos are very clear and insistent in their messages to government for stringent actions to stop the current onslaught of degradation of particularly the mangrove and terrestrial forests that is dwindling the population of the country's endangered wildlife.

Ethel Sharon Sillah from GreenLife West Africa attributed the whole problem to ineffective planning from across the spectrum, and called on the government to step up in the fight against climate change. She referenced some excerpts of the documentaries where community people bitterly complained about lack of alternative livelihood support from the government. Fishing, cutting of mangrove trees for fish processing and mining are their only means of livelihood. Ethel suggested that in addition to improved collaboration within the sector, improving facilities for cold storage, optional fish-

smoking like improved ovens, better stock delivery services, and many other key interventions might help communities to increase their livelihood options.

"There is also the need for government to review, strengthen and enforce our current environmental protection and biodiversity conservation laws. Defaulters should be seen to be dealt with by the laws", she emphasised.

The representative from the NPAA, Ibrahim Sorie Kamara commended CSSL for putting together the documentaries on the sites. He further intimated that his institution was working in close collaboration with CSSL in the protection of those sites.

Daniel Sesay from Namati declared that if all the recommendations provided in the documentaries were implemented by government and communities, the country would surely grow in terms of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. He suggested that government should make a strong commitment to provide communities with about 50% of benefits generated from forest resource and asserted that it will motivate communities to support forest protection.

George Rogerson from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change intimated that since the ministry was established, policies including the Forestry Policy, National Environmental Policy, National Climate Change Policy, and the National Developmentinduced Resettlement Policy among others have been reviewed and/or developed to address environmental issues in the country. Rogerson assured the gathering that those efforts were also meant to improve decision making, promote and strengthen good governance, for sustainable environmental management. "We must all work together to save this inheritance as we've all seen from the various ecosystems documented by CSSL across the country. We must all work together to save this inheritance for future generations", he urged the assembly.

The engagement was described by all present as very timely and on the right track. Participants were very frank in bringing out the issues, and proffering actionable recommendations. Key among these is that government should establish joint patrols and surveillance with the military in all protected areas across the country. It is however the hope of everyone including CSSL for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to take the much-anticipated lead role in ensuring the right things be done to save our environment.

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Lake Sonfon in Diang Chiefdom, Koinadugu District; Pampana River in Sambaia Bendugu Chiefdom, Tonkolili District; and the Western Area Peninsula National Park are very important ecological sites. The sites host important varied plant and animal species including West African Chimpanzees, the Black and White Colobus monkey, the Brush-tailed Porcupine, and Maxwell's Duiker — a small antelope, populations of the extremely rare pygmy hippopotamus, West Africa Dwarf Crocodile, and a large variety of rare native and migratory birds. They are also critical sources of portable water for communities as well as animals living in and around these places.

However, numerous anthropogenic activities including mining, charcoal burning, timber logging, poaching and human settlement expansion continue to gravely affect the integrity of these sites, with biological diversity survey reports showing drastic reduction of populations of important animal species, as well as shrinking water sources.

With support from Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) has been working collaboratively with like-minded partners in communities around these sites, encouraging community people and local authorities to take up ownership for the protection and conservation of such important natural resources. Diverse approaches including advocacy, community and media engagements

and alternative livelihood interventions, among others, have been used.

Mid this year, the CSSL/BftW project team in Kabala provided farming support to nine communities which constitute the Community Management Association (CMA), a local structure established by CSSL to support in natural resource management in its operational areas. The support was in the form of rice and groundnut seeds to enable communities undertake climate smart agriculture. At Big Watta community, one of the forest edge communities of the Western Area Peninsula National Park, the project provided the community with groundnut seeds, pigs, goats and chickens as alternative livelihood support. It is expected that the support provided would help in diverting the attention of communities from destroying the forests, while improving their economic wellbeing.

Reports from routine project monitoring exercises conducted by CSSL indicated huge prospects of success from the various support provided by the project. The inland valley swamp (IVS) rice and groundnut farms in Koinadugu and Tonkolili districts are thriving with high expectation of good harvests. The situation is also the same at Big Watta where the initial 6 pigs supplied to the community have increased to 51.

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Community members are very appreciative of the alternative livelihood support that CSSL has been providing them. Most group members at Big Watta disclosed to the

project field staff that with the support provided by CSSL, they are very hopeful of being able to support their children's education and solve other social problems without interfering with the forest.

Story of Hope for forest conservation



"We are happy to say that this project has helped in supporting us to protect our forest. Before now, our attention was really focused on plundering the forest to support our daily family needs. We will continue to work with CSSL to strengthen the protection of this forest for us and the next generation",



Madam Memunatu Banya Headwoman, Big Watta community.



by Alhajie Osman Kamara and Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya







TOGO PARADISE WHYDAH Vidua togoensis

This is a nest parasite that lays its eggs in the nests of Yellow-winged Pytilias. As with other whydahs, breeding males are spectacular and strange, whereas non-breeding males and females are drab and inconspicuous. Breeding males are mostly black with a rufous breast, a yellow back of the neck, and a long, narrow tail. Non-breeding male and female plumages are poorly known, but show a streaky brownish back and pale underparts. The bird is generally scarce and local in savanna and cultivated areas. The breeding male is similar to other paradise-whydahs, but has a longer and narrower tail.

Its range includes Bumbuna. You should keep your eyes open for this magnificent bird whenever you are birdwatching in Bumbuna.

by Charles Showers	



BNCFF Promotes Community-based Mangrove Conservation in Yawri Bay



In recent years, scientists have cautioned against the unceasing vanishing of mangrove forests worldwide. The decline is reported at 1 - 2% per year with a total loss of around 35% disappearing in the last 20 years. Mangroves in Sierra Leone are amongst the worst degraded globally, but solutions have started to be derived at both local and national levels.

Mangroves are important nature-based solutions to the climate change crisis. They store carbon four times more than traditional rainforests, serve as shoreline protection against floods and storms, prevent erosion, and maintain water quality and clarity. They are a hub for biodiversity, while providing various economic benefits to communities.

The Yawri Bay coastal scape incorporates three major creeks: Ribbi Creek, Bompeh Creek and Kagboro Creek and consists of marshes, mudflats, mangroves, and intertidal sand and mudflat at the mouth of the Kagboro Creek. In recent years, the mangrove ecosystems in Yawri Bay have faced significant degradation due to various anthropogenic activities including mangrove harvesting salt production, charcoal burning, housing construction and domestic purposes. This has exacerbated the increased climatic effects such as erosion, temperature rise and heavy wind surge.

As a solution to reversing the level of degradation and maintain the integrity of the Yawri Bay ecosystem, Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility (BNCFF) provided funding support to the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and Green Life West Africa to restore 50 hectares of mangroves in selected communities. The project kick-started earlier this year with community and stakeholder engagements, biodiversity and socio-economic assessment and alternative livelihood support interventions, which paved the smooth road to the restoration activities.

Between July and August, 2024, the project staff from CSSL and Green Life West Africa worked assiduously with communities and undertook what many described as very successful restoration activities in three (3) communities (Ribbimen, Morchail/Moyambe and Gbankoh). A total of 285,000 propagules were planted in 57 degraded sites in these communities.

A critical aspect of site restoration is monitoring and ensuring the growth of the seedlings. The clarity of the messages delivered during the community engagement phase that preceded the restoration enthused community members and made them commit themselves to ensuring the constant monitoring and protection of the newly planted propagules.

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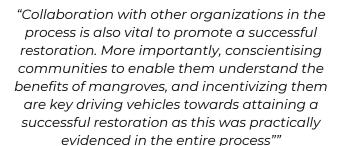
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The Headman of Ribbimen, Alusine Koroma, called on his people to take full responsibility for monitoring the mangroves they have planted. "As a leader, I have pledged with all of you to desist from any attempt to destroy the mangroves we have planted. Our actions, as community members, have over the years contributed to the destruction of the mangroves which has been adversely affecting our lives. But I believe that with this project, the security of our lives and livelihood is very hopeful for the near future. As a commitment, I will do all my best as a leader to secure the protection of the mangroves we have planted", Koroma assured the project team during a meeting at Ribbimen.

"I am grateful today that our long-deteriorated ecosystem has been restored with mangroves. We will now have an ecosystem that will support fish population and other marine species in our marine ecosystem to flourish for our benefit. This activity is truly a testament that once we come together to support the growth and sustainability of these mangroves, our lives will be protected from flooding, excessive wind storms and climate change impact in future", Ibrahim Bangura, Headman-Morchail, expressed with high optimism.

The BNCFF-CSSL Project Manager, Abdulai Dauda, emphasised that any mangrove restoration initiative can only be successful if communities are involved and fully participate in the process.







Abdulai Dauda BNCFF-CSSL Project Manager



by Abdul K. Dumbuya

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"Teranga" is a Wolof word that literally translates to "hospitality". Hence, Senegal is known as the 'Land of Teranga'. Our BirdLife Africa Partnership and various collaborators and guests were privileged to enjoy this hospitality while attending the BirdLife Council for the Africa Partnership meeting of 2024 (CAP 2024) from 2nd to 6th September 2024 with the theme; 'Flyways: Interconnectivity and Sustainability'. This hybrid event that hosted bv Nature-Communautés-Développement (NCD, BirdLife in Senegal), brought together participants from the BirdLife Africa Partnership, Supporting Partners, the Secretariat, and various external guests. Around 100 participants from 35 countries across the world attended!

Lt Col. Thialao Sarr, the representative of the Minister of Environment and Ecological Transition in Senegal, opened the meeting and emphasised Senegal's importance for birds and their flyways, citing the country's numerous terrestrial and marine protected areas and the signing of various relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA).

CSSL, led by its Executive Director, Dr. Sheku Kamara, gave a detailed progress report presentation on behalf of the Africa Partnership regarding implementation of the BirdLife Strategy and Africa Regional Plan, including a video with global highlights. The Africa Partnership highlighted the need for improved monitoring and consolidating impact reporting on BirdLife Partnership's work at regional and global levels.

A donor and investor discussion on financing conservation in Africa was the highlight of the event

This discussion included experiences from the Africa Partnership. Mark Anderson, CEO of Birdlife South Africa, spoke about donor stewardship, and Dr. Sheku Kamara, Executive Director of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, presented on the Gola REDD+ programme. External speakers at the event included Ousseynou Ndoye, the Regional Coordinator for West and Central Africa, who spoke about the AFR100, a country-led initiative aimed at restoring one hundred million hectares of land in Africa by 2030, and Bradley Hiller from the Islamic Development Bank, who shared the Bank's experience financing climate change.

The event also featured a Partnership Fair, insights into Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) assessments, field highlights, excursions and challenges, and fundraising opportunities for other **BirdLife** programmes in Africa, including Extinctions, Forests and Marine Seabirds.

Before the end of the event, participants endorsed the draft conservation strategy for the East Atlantic Flyway and the Eastern Part of the Africa-Eurasian Flyway, pending the addition of inputs obtained during the CAP 2024 sessions. Furthermore, the participants reached a consensus and committed to implementing these strategies.

event culminated with significant announcements, such as Global Birdfair's \$125,000 donation to support the Galala Bird Observatory in Egypt and the election of Khaled El Noby (NCE) as the new Chair and Tiwonge Gawa (WESM) as the new Vice Chair of CAP.

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