

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone



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From the Executive Director

Dear Readers,



Dr. Sheku Kamara

Whatever CSSL does within its mandate, it does for nature and people because our slogan is “We for Nature, Nature for Us”. Taking care of the environment is of reciprocal benefit to humans and nature. This is why CSSL employs a diverse range of approaches to ensure conservation of Sierra Leone’s natural resources... We offer livelihood support to forest-edge and riparian communities; and also embark on community ecotourism, all in a bid to enhance the protection of our environment while ensuring that people also thrive.

We do not turn our back during crisis periods. Therefore, CSSL solicits support for the communities we work with during the current covid-19 pandemic. We continue to work closely with communities in our operational areas and keep their hopes afloat.

Similarly, we do not starve our many members, friends, well-wishers and supporters of news about CSSL even during a pandemic of global proportion. I therefore, kindly invite you to relax and read the interesting updates of CSSL’s strides and other stories of interest in this edition.

Happy reading!

We for nature, Nature for us.

CSSL Empowers Communities in Diang Chiefdom through Alternative Livelihood Support



Proceeds from sales go back to the communities through the CMAs, who consult their members on how it is utilized for the benefit of all. Based on the huge success from this component, some community key stakeholders have now decided to privately embark on the beekeeping business instead of mining. According to one Mr. Ferenkeh Saccoh, he emphasized that, he and his family have realized the economic and conservation benefits that this activity has brought to them. He continued that, "... I can now make good savings from the honey I harvest every year; I use it to pay the school charges of my children and also cover other family welfare issues." He further committed himself to work collaboratively with other stakeholders to ensure the protection of Lake Sonfon from all forms of degrading activities that would disturb wildlife presence in the lake.

In an effort to continue work on the protection of Lake Sonfon in Diang chiefdom, Koinadugu district, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), through support from Bread for the World (BftW) on the 15th May 2020, supplied a total of 25 bags of rice and 25 bags of groundnut seeds to 6 Community Management Associations (CMAs) in the chiefdom. Beneficiary communities included Kansikoro, Kondembaia, Foria, Yarah/Gbenekoro and Dalakuru. This was done to enable communities around the lake undertake alternative livelihood activities in the form of climate smart agriculture that would change their mindset from mining and other activities that would destroy the lake.

After receiving the rice and groundnut seeds on behalf of the Kondembaia CMA group, the group's chairlady, Madam Alice Saio Koroma, said, "...on behalf of my group, I would like to thank CSSL and donors for this kind gesture. We will never forget this in a hurry because we have benefited a lot from the livelihood support provided by CSSL over the years. We will continue to make more efforts to ensure the sustainability of the protection of Lake Sonfon", She affirmed.

Another major alternative livelihood component of the project is beekeeping and honey production. CSSL provided the required technical skills to the CMAs, and 200 beehives to facilitate the process. Within the months of April and May 2020, the CMA groups produced over 300 liters of honey from 93 beehives.

Eco-honey, as it is dubbed due to its purity and organic mode of harvest, is now available for sale at the organization's Secretariat in Freetown, its Kabala office at 102 Makeni Road and Ali Bala Mini Market in Kabala.



The Dalakuru CMA group poses for the photo after receiving their supply of seed rice and groundnut

Text:
Alhaji Osman Kamara Advocacy Officer-CSSL & Abdul / CSSL
Photo: Alhaji / CSSL

CSSL Promotes Ecotourism in Sierra Leone



The design of the eco-lodge currently being constructed at Big Water community in the Western Area Peninsula Forest

In its continued quest to support efforts to sustainably protect the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park (WAPFNP), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), with support from Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany, is undertaking the construction of an eco-lodge at Big Water community near Tokeh, in the Western Area Rural district.

As part of the preparatory activities ahead of the construction, CSSL worked in collaboration with the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), National Tourist Board and Responsible Eco-tourism (RECTOUR) and jointly undertook a site identification tour on the 6th March 2020, for the construction of the eco-lodge in the National Park. After examining various proposed sites during the tour, the team unanimously selected a site that was deemed suitable for the construction and operation of the facility at Big Water community. This was followed by a consultative community stakeholders meeting at the aforementioned community on March 12, 2020. The meeting was meant to inform and solicit the full cooperation of all key stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of the project, which is a pilot initiative for the establishment of a network of ecotourism centers in Sierra Leone with the aim to promote ecotourism development in the country.

The well attended meeting was chaired by Charles Showers, President of CSSL. In his address, Mr. Showers briefly explained about the Society and how it has over the years supported conservation work across the country. The Project Manager, Papanie Bai-Sesay explained that, the eco-lodge construction was part of an ongoing project in Diang chiefdom, Koinadugu district, north of Sierra Leone to protect and conserve Lake Sonfon. He continued that, this is a pilot ecotourism project that could be funded at scale if successful. Papanie requested the full support of all stakeholders to ensure the achievement of the project

objectives. He maintained that, the sustainability of this activity hugely depended on the communities' willingness and involvement in the running of the facility. *"CSSL will only oversee the daily operations of the eco-lodge; but it will be run by the community"*, Papanie emphasized. A photograph of the proposed structure was later displayed for comments and suggestions. But this was gladly accepted by the stakeholders and other community members present.

The village Headman, Manso Sesay said, they were very happy to welcome such initiative from CSSL and partners. He intimated that, it was quite a long time since they were looking for such opportunity; and now that it was brought to them, they would grab it with open arms, and would provide the required support to ensure its success. Other key stakeholders also promised to do the needful to prevent all forms of activities currently happening around that have a tendency to destroy the forest.

The meeting was climaxed by a site visit that was attended by all present. They walked into the forest and endorsed the site initially identified for the construction of the facility.

Text: A. K. Dumbuya & Moses Luseni

Why Some Birds Live Fast and Die Young: *a scientific discovery*

Size, safety and parenting all have an impact on how quickly a species of bird matures, according to new research from the University of Sheffield that could help scientists to understand and predict how animals will respond to climate breakdown and the destruction of habitats. The team of scientists has studied thousands of species of birds to understand why there is so much diversity in the length of time they take to grow from a fertilized egg to an independent adult.

The research, published in Nature Communications, is the first study to consider the importance of lifestyle and environmental factors alongside evolutionary history and body size to explain the variation.

All organisms face a trade-off between reproducing and surviving and they solve this problem in different ways. The team found that bird species with a 'live fast die young' strategy develop quicker, allowing them to maximize the number of offspring they can produce in the short time they have available.

Findings showed that birds that breed and live in safer environments with fewer predators typically took longer to develop, possibly because they can afford to spend longer in a vulnerable state.

They also found that migratory birds develop much quicker, which may ensure they are ready to return to their winter habitats at the end of the summer.

As expected, the research showed that bigger birds took longer to develop -- but even among birds of a similar size there was variation in development times.

Dr. Chris Cooney, from the University of Sheffield's Department of Animal and Plant Sciences and lead author of the research, said: "The amount of time it takes for a fertilized egg to develop into a fully grown adult varies hugely across the animal kingdom. For instance, it takes an elephant almost 10 years to reach independence, whereas a fruit fly is fully grown after only a matter of days. "This extraordinary diversity is also encapsulated within birds, where albatrosses can take almost a year to develop from an embryo to an independent adult, but a typical UK garden songbird takes little more than a month.

We found that certain aspects of a species' lifestyle and environment are important in explaining how long they take to develop."

Dr. Alison Wright, co-author of the research from the University of Sheffield, said: "Our study on birds gives us some clues about the type of factors that may be important in other species. However, it may be that different factors are important for determining development length in other animal groups. "The next step is therefore to address these questions using data that covers the breadth of the animal kingdom -- from fish to mammals to insects -- to gain an even broader insight into the factors shaping these fundamental differences across species."

Dr. Nicola Hemming's, co-senior author of the research from the University of Sheffield, said: "The insights from our research may prove crucial in understanding and even predicting how organisms may respond when conditions change, for instance as our climate warms and habitats become modified."

The Department of Animal and Plant Sciences at the University of Sheffield is home to one of the biggest communities of whole-organism biologists in the UK. Our research covers animals, plants, humans, microbes, evolution and ecosystems, in habitats ranging from the Polar Regions to the tropics. This work aims to shed new light on the fundamental processes that drive biological systems and help solve pressing environmental problems.

Story Source: University of Sheffield



Short-tailed Albatross

Profiling the **Kambui Hills Forest Reserve** in **Kenema, Sierra Leone**

Kambui Hills Forest Reserve (KHFR) in the eastern province of Sierra Leone was established in 1920 and is an important remaining fragment of the Upper Guinean forest. The Reserve forms part of the greater Gola landscape that comprises the nearby 1,200 ha Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary on the Moa River to the south, and the 70,000 ha Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) contiguous with Tiwai to the south and stretching up north-east along the border with Liberia.

An Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA), the Reserve holds over 200 species of birds, including five which are of global conservation concern including the emblematic White-necked Picathartes. The following primates are found at the site: Western Chimpanzee, Western Red Colobus, King Colobus, Sooty Mangabey and Diana Monkey. Other threatened mammals include the African Forest Elephant and Jentink's Duiker, Black Duiker and Maxwell's Duiker. The Reserve also provides critical ecosystem services, in particular water, as a catchment area for a number of reservoirs that supply Kenema city and surrounding communities.



**Let's Protect their
Habitats for Sustainable
Ecotourism Development**

Courtesy of CSSL

CSSL Provides COVID-19 Prevention Support to Operational Communities

Following the announcement of the index case of the COVID-19 in Sierra Leone on the 31st March, 2020 by his Excellency the President, Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, several stringent measures have since been instituted to further implement the State of Public Health Emergency that was earlier declared before the index case was registered. All these were meant to stop or mitigate the spread. In spite of all these measures, the country continues to increasingly register new cases almost on a daily basis amounting now to over fifty fatalities and hundreds of positive confirmed cases.

Cognizant of the high consideration that the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) places on the health of communities in its operational areas across the country; conscious also of the fact that should this ugly trend continue in the country and the sub-region, all field activities currently being implemented by the Society will be brought to a halt, and the conservation gains so far made will therefore be reversed. CSSL therefore, solicited support from some of its donors that include Bread for the World (BftW) in Germany, the European Union (EU) and USAID to compliment government's efforts to strengthen knowledge and logistical support in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among forest edge communities in the greater Gola landscape and communities around Lake Sonfon in Diang chiefdom, Koinadugu district.

Having received funding support from BftW, CSSL commenced the distribution of COVID-19 prevention

materials in 21 communities around Lake Sonfon on 11th May, 2020. The materials included 135 veronica buckets with bowls, 135 tubes of liquid soap and 135 tubes of sanitizers.

During the distribution, Papanie Bai-Sesay, Project Manager for the project dubbed; “*Diang Chiefdom Community Empowerment for Sustainable Forest and Wetlands Management*” encouraged community stakeholders in all 21 communities to enforce the safety measures instituted by the Government for the safety of all from the COVID-19 pandemic. He implored community members to regularly wash their hands, use facemasks and as much as possible, observe social distancing in their daily activities. Papanie also thanked them for the tremendous support provided towards the protection of Lake Sonfon from mining and other environmental hazards.

In Kondembaia, the chiefdom's headquarter town, Paramount Chief Sheku Magba Koroma III thanked CSSL for what he referred to as “a great gesture” provided to his chiefdom by the organization. He promised to ensure that his people utilize the materials provided in order to maintain their safety from the pandemic. He also said he would continue to give his full support towards the protection of Lake Sonfon for the benefit of the nation. Other speakers like Pa Sandy Turay, who represented the land owners of the lake also thanked CSSL for the gesture noting that, the Society was the first NGO to provide such materials to them in the chiefdom for which they were grateful.

CSSL still awaits receipt of funds approval from the EU and USAID in order to continue providing the much needed COVID-19 prevention support to forest edge communities in the greater Gola landscape in the south and east of Sierra Leone.

Text: A. K. Dumbuya/CSSL Comms Officer &
Alhaji Osman Kamara/CSSL Advocacy Officer
Photos: Alhaji Osman Kamara/CSSL Advocacy Officer



One of the chiefdom key stakeholders receiving hand washing materials @ Kondembaia

Gola Rainforest National Park: an ecotourism destination in Sierra Leone



Thanks to our partners for all their support!



- BirdLife International
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Bread for the World
- PRCM
- IUCN
- Environmental Protection Agency of Sierra Leone
- Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry
- Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary
- Wetlands International
- Ministry of Lands...
- Family Kingdom, Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Hotel Africanus, Freetown, Sierra Leone
- MAVA Foundation



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