

Newsletter 3 - 2025

Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

Connecting people to nature.



Dear readers,

As the need for more collaboration and awareness campaigns on the environment grows, CSSL partners with FAO Sierra Leone to develop a REDD+ Communication Strategy which is a guide towards creating awareness and therefore a better understanding of how we should continue to sustainably use and protect our valuable environment.

As a member of Birdlife International, a global organization that promotes bird conservation, CSSL has revived its birdwatching exercise by creating the Freetown Bird Club. Its aim is to get partners more involved and interested in bird conservation as Sierra Leone is home to over 600 bird species.

The above, among others, are interesting must-read stories that are in this edition of our newsletter.

Wishing our valuable members and partners a happy reading.

Happy holidays in advance!

Charles Showers
CSSL Board President



Strengthening Gola Rainforest Partnership

Sierra Leone High Commissioner Engages RSPB



His Excellency Dr. Morie Komba Manyeh, Sierra Leone's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, held a high-level meeting with senior executives of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) at the iconic David Attenborough Building, Cambridge University.

The world-famous Sir David Attenborough's connection to Sierra Leone dates back to 1954, when he visited to film the BBC's **Zoo Quest**, documenting the Gola Rainforest and its rich biodiversity. This early work launched his long and distinguished career and brought global attention to Sierra Leone's pristine natural heritage.

The Cambridge meeting that was held on 7th July 2025 focused on strengthening collaboration to conserve the Gola Rainforest and support sustainable development in forest-edge communities.

Covering over 70,000 hectares and home to 327 bird species, the Gola Rainforest is one of West Africa's most important biodiversity hotspots. Through the pioneering Gola REDD+ Project (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) – West Africa's first large-scale forest carbon initiative – the partner-

ship has protected habitats for endangered species such as pygmy hippos and chimpanzees, while supporting more than 24,000 people in 122 forest-edge communities. The project also generates carbon credits that help prevent approximately 500,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually and promote sustainable livelihoods through agroforestry, education, healthcare, and conservation enterprises.

Attending the meeting were RSPB senior officials: Dr. Jo Gilbert (Director, International), Alade Adeleke (Programme Manager, Sierra Leone), Richard Dixon (Head of Greater Gola Landscape), Lilian Goredema (International Programme Officer), and Bruce Liggitt (Senior Policy Officer). They presented updates on the Gola Programme's successes and plans, including transboundary collaboration with Liberia across the Greater Gola Landscape—covering 350,000 hectares under the Mano River Union framework.

Dr. Manyeh, (who was accompanied by Second Secretary Mrs Mbalia Sankoh and Information

Attaché Abdulai Braima) commended the RSPB and its partners, including the Government of Sierra Leone, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), and local communities, for their decades-long commitment to conservation and sustainable development. He reaffirmed Sierra Leone's readiness to support initiatives that protect its natural heritage while creating economic opportunities for rural populations.

The Gola Rainforest Conservation (GRC), a non-profit company managing the project, exemplifies successful partnerships between government, communities, and civil society. It serves as a model for sustainable landscape management and post-conflict peacebuilding in the region.

*by Abdulai Braima
Information Attaché
SLHC – London
<https://www.slhc-uk.org/>*



WAPNP Wildlife Poster

Let's combine our efforts in protecting one of the nation's jewels, the Western Area Peninsula National Park. Apart from being a source of potable water for Freetown and surrounding communities, the Park also hosts numerous endangered species, which makes it a hot-spot for ecotourism in Sierra Leone.

Protecting the Western Area Peninsula National Park: *for people and nature*



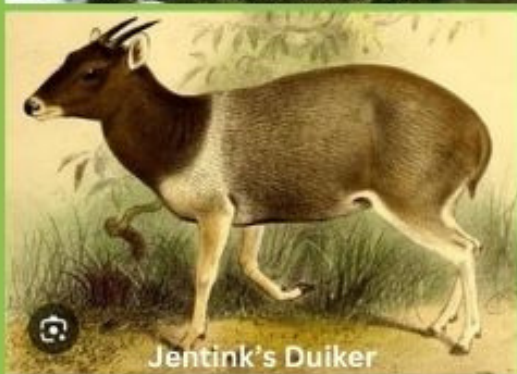
Yellow-casqued Hornbill



Green-tailed Bristlebill



Greater Honeyguide



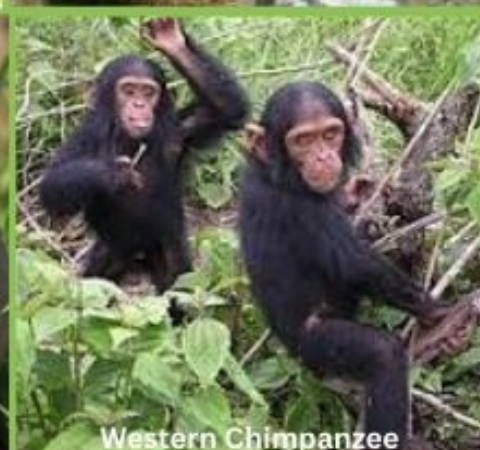
Jentink's Duiker



White-necked Puffbird



White-bellied Pangolin



Western Chimpanzee



White-spot Nosed Monkey



Forest Hinge-back Tortoise



Diana Monkey

CSSL-JOA Project Supports Community-led Mangrove Restoration

Tissanah Community in Western Area Rural Sierra Leone



“...the mangroves are not just trees for us; they are our shield against the sea; they are our source of livelihood for the welfare of our children. From the experiences we have had, it is obvious that if we lose the mangroves, we lose our homes.”

*Pa-Alimamy Sesay,
Chief of Tissanah community*

Mangrove ecosystems are critical for sustaining fisheries, protecting shorelines, and mitigating climate change impacts. Like many other coastal communities, these ecosystems in Tissanah have however been severely degraded due to overharvesting, unsustainable land-use, and other anthropogenic pressures.

To reverse this situation, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), through GOAL Sierra Leone, received funds from Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) to work with affected local communities to restore the degraded mangrove areas in the Western Area Rural and Kambia districts. The project started off with sustained community engagements and environmental education to familiarize the communities with the benefits of mangrove restoration and mangrove conservation, while soliciting their fullest support and participation in the site selection/mapping and restoration activities to ensure sustainability.

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In late August 2025, CSSL conducted a comprehensive site mapping exercise to assess both degraded and intact mangrove areas in all project communities in the Western Area Rural and Kambia Districts. This activity also proffered good restoration recommendations to strengthen mangrove conservation efforts in both districts, including the use of a community-driven approach in conservation.

From 12th – 24th September 2025, CSSL undertook and successfully completed the restoration of 17 hectares of degraded mangrove areas in Tissanah community where 85,000 propagules were replanted across identified degraded sites. This was followed by the establishment of monitoring groups to ensure sustainability of the restored sites. “Our work is heavily reliant on community support, hence the reason for the establishment of the Mangrove Monitoring Group. CSSL will continue to work collaboratively with all community stakeholders to sustainably conserve these very important ecosystems”, Bobson Kobba, Project Manager, CSSL.

It is expected that the restored mangroves will increasingly improve the ecological health of the Tissanah coastline, providing better protection against erosion and other climate impacts on coastal communities in the near future. The intervention will also support efforts at improving local fish nursery grounds, contributing to enhanced livelihoods.

The project has demonstrated that when communities are at the center of conservation, massive community support is assured for ecological recovery and livelihood sustainability. This initiative has laid the foundation for future community-led restoration efforts that address both environmental and socio-economic priorities.

“The mangroves feed our pots and protect our children’s future. Joining hands with CSSL in this restoration has given us more than work to do. We the women of Tissanah now see ourselves as keepers of our mangrove forest. We promise to watch over all that we planted because we know our survival depends on them.”

Madam Hawa Kamara
Tissanah community

by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya



CSSL Partners with FAOSL

Developing a REDD+ Communications Strategy for Sierra Leone



The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation in Sierra Leone (FAOSL), concluded two separate technical workshops for key stakeholders on 17th and 24th September 2025 to develop a draft REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) Communications Strategy for Sierra Leone. The sessions were held at CSSL and CHASL conference rooms respectively in Freetown, and brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from local communities, civil society organisations and the REDD+ Technical Committee to ensure the document is inclusive, practical and aligned with the national climate and forest governance priorities.

The REDD+ programme is a relatively new initiative in most parts of Sierra Leone and therefore, requires sustained engagements, consultations and awareness for all stakeholders, including communities to enable them to fully understand its objectives towards sustainable forest management and community development. Achieving this requires a communications strategy that provides a strategic framework to manage and coordinate the wide variety of communication activities that will be rolled out during all phases of programme implementation.

The strategy will provide a clear roadmap for all communication activities in order to facilitate the achievement of the programme objectives. The process of developing the strategy includes hiring a Communication Consultant, Dr. Francis Sowa, by FAOSL who had already developed a zero draft of the document that required inputs from relevant key stakeholders.

In both engagements, Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya, Communications Manager at CSSL, emphasized the importance of incorporating feedback and comments from stakeholders to strengthen the final draft. "The validation will not be successful if we do not have a document that everyone accepts", he said. The strategy must reflect Sierra Leone's social, economic, cultural and traditional values, allowing people to understand and own the work of REDD+. Dumbuya highlighted the vital role communities play in the implementation of the strategy, stressing that community stakeholders must be fully engaged in developing culturally sensitive messages. "When communities are involved in designing and delivering messages, they take ownership of the process and conservation becomes part of their identity", he added.

The workshop also addressed the need to manage misinformation and disinformation surrounding REDD+. “This strategy will help manage misinformation by ensuring that communities receive clear, accurate and reliable information about REDD+, its benefits and potential challenges.”

During the first session, Dr. Francis Sowa presented the zero draft and solicited technical input from participants which he integrated into the strategy for review. He leveraged on the stakeholders’ technical expertise while presenting the first draft for review. He outlined specific activities, timelines, responsible individuals and institutions, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Dr. Sowa emphasised the importance of grassroots approaches such as door-to-door awareness campaigns, and community groups, among others in effectively disseminating information.

Musa Septimus Koroma, Environment and Safeguards Specialist, and a member of the Project Implementation Unit at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Sierra Leone, represented the National REDD+ Technical Coordinator at FAO, Dr. Gbessay Ehlogima Sam Momoh in both engagements.

He commended participants for their commitment for environmental protection and forest governance. He stressed that the strategy should be action-oriented and culturally sensitive, and the key messages should be translated into local languages to ensure the communities understand and own the process. “Protecting our forests is not just about conservation; it is also about preserving our natural heritage, tackling climate change, and ensuring sustainable development,” Koroma noted.

Ansumana Babar Turay, Chairman of the National Technical Committee, said communication is very important for the success of every stage of the REDD+ project. “Obviously, we cannot develop this document without the support of all of the key stakeholders, including local communities”, he emphasised.

Stakeholders from various districts also made contributions to strengthen the communication strategy and ensure that the tools and plan reflect the realities of local communities across the country.

text and photos by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya

Beautiful Birds of Sierra Leone

The SIERRA LEONE PRINIA

Connecting People to nature. is our slogan. To connect you with the nature around you, we regularly introduce birds of Sierra Leone to you. Today it is the **Sierra Leone Prinia, *Schistolais leonitica***.

A mostly dark gray long-tailed warbler with a striking whitish eye, buff flanks, and pinkish legs. It is local and scarce in a handful of hills and mountains in Upper Guinea, where pairs and small groups skulk low down in very wet forest edge, riverine scrub, and thickets in gullies between 600 and 1,600 meters of elevation. Its calls include a high-pitched “sit-sit-sit,” and a more nasal “bur-bur-bur.” Other warblers lack the pale eye.

The Sierra Leone Prinia is mostly found in Loma Mountain National Park.



COMMON BIRDS
OF SIERRA LEONE



AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE GUIDE



Learn more about our birds with “**Common birds of Sierra Leone – an indigenous languages guide**”

Published in 2024 by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone
154 pages, 60 common birds, lot’s of information about habitats and bird watching in general.

Get your copy now

at CSSL’s office (86A Main Road, Congo Town, Freetown)

Freetown Bird Club

Organising its Maiden Birding Event



Established in September, 2025, by the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), the Freetown Bird Club is the counterpart of other bird clubs of other BirdLife Partners in numerous other countries across Africa and the world over. The long overdue initiative was brought forth to CSSL by the Country Manager of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in Sierra Leone, Alade Adeleke. Like CSSL in Sierra Leone, RSPB is the BirdLife Partner in the United Kingdom.

The bird club is a platform where people are provided an opportunity to learn and understand about birds, including their importance to the environment. Birds are a very important indicator of a healthy environment, hence their critical importance in the ecosystem.

With logistical support from Alade, the Freetown Bird Club organised its maiden birding excursion on Saturday, 27th September 2025 at the Golf Club, Aberdeen in Freetown. The birdwatching event attracted over forty (40) bird enthusiasts from various parts of the country, who were provided with bird guides along with binoculars and telescopes to facilitate easy sighting and identification of birds during the event.

Charles Showers, President of the Board of Trustees at CSSL, said the excursion was an opportunity for people to have a focus on the other side of the beaches. He disclosed that birds also form an important component of the beach ecosystem. "We shall be organizing such events every month in different locations. This is one of the ways to garner much needed support for birds' conservation and protection", he disclosed.

Abdulai Dauda, Project Manager at CSSL opined that there is something special about starting the day at dawn with birdwatching when the environment is still quiet and the birds are most active. "The morning hours offer a unique opportunity to witness a wide variety of bird species, often when they're most vocal and visible. Today offers a unique opportunity at the Golf Club where birders experienced sweet sounds, colourful flying patterns, and feeding behaviours of birds", Dauda expressed.

The event was very successful as it served as an eyeopener for most first-timers. A total of twenty-three (23) different bird species were sighted and recorded. The next event is scheduled for the last week of October at a location to be disclosed by the organisers.

Interested to join the Freetown Bird Club?
Contact our office for further information.

*text by Abdul Kaprr Dumbuya
photos by Noah Conteh*

CSSL THANKS ALL MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND DONORS!



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