



**Darwin Scholarship - Final Report**

**William Kimosop,**

**Senior Warden, Lake Bogoria National Reserve, Kenya.**

Darwin Project Ref No.	162/12/003
Darwin Project Title	Flamingo conservation and Ramsar Site Management at Lake Bogoria, Kenya
Name of Darwin Scholar	William Kimosop
UK Organisation	University of Leicester
Your Organisation(s)	Lake Bogoria National Reserve
Your role within your Organisation	Senior Warden
Start/end date of Scholarship	October 2003-February 2004
Location	United Kingdom
Darwin scholarship funding (£)	£
Type of work (e.g. research, training, other, please specify)	Training and networking
Main contact in UK Organisation	Dr David Harper, University of Leicester
Author(s), date	William Kimosop, December 28 <sup>th</sup> 2005

## Background

Prior to this scholarship, my only direct involvement with the Darwin Initiative had been the discussions I had had with Dr David Harper in 2001 and 2002 about his proposal to apply for a 3-year Darwin project, when he was carrying out research at Lake Bogoria with my encouragement, funded by the Earthwatch Institute. When the award of this project was known, David was at Lake Bogoria running an Earthwatch team, so we were able to talk about this scholarship application in some detail.

My overall objective was to build up my knowledge and experience in the UK to further my own career and, in doing so, improve the status of the Lake Bogoria National Reserve and the livelihoods of people around it. David and I discussed the ways in which this would be possible in a scenario that was not just a formal M.Sc. syllabus and we came up with the following strategy in the scholarship application:-

1. Attend the University of Leicester's training programmes for new postgraduate students, particularly the elements of communication and presentation skills to enhance my future conservation role.
2. Attend additional University of Leicester Continuing Professional Development courses in Business Enterprise and visit sustainable marketing organisations in UK to enhance both my management of ecotourism (centred on LBNR) and enable me to enhance sustainable livelihood development based upon this tourist trade.
3. Meet key global players in Protected Area (IUCN), Wetland (Ramsar Convention Secretariat), Biodiversity (WWF, WWT) and Ecotourism (FSC) management and evaluate my future business plans for these elements with them.

The University of Leicester is ranked among the top 20 UK universities. David Harper is jointly responsible for ecology teaching and solely responsible for freshwater ecology research. He has been carrying out research in the Kenya Rift Valley lakes since 1982 and in Lake Bogoria since 2000. His funding from the Earthwatch Institute has been annual since 1987 and the output of his research team is now over 60 peer-reviewed scientific papers on these lakes. David has developed a new Distance Learning course in Global Ecology in partnership with the Earthwatch Institute over the past two years.

Lake Bogoria National Reserve is one of a network of protected areas in Kenya that are managed by local communities ('Reserves') rather than the national agent for the CBD, Kenya Wildlife Services ('National Parks'). LBNR is managed by the two County Councils within whose area it falls – Koibatek and Baringo – within the Baringo District and the Rift Valley Province. Bogoria is one of four major soda lakes in the Rift in Kenya (others are lakes Magadi, Nakuru and Elmenteita), three of which are Ramsar sites (except Magadi) and one a protected area (Lake Nakuru National Park). The two County Councils are proactive in the development of ecotourism and sustainable living and have in the last three years declared four more protected areas that I was given responsibility for, just before this scholarship. The area of the Rift Valley that the councils manage is semi-arid *Acacia-Commiphora* scrubland and the rural community grindingly-poor, with subsistence goat-herding and honey-gathering the main activity; cultivation is limited to small spring-fed and riparian areas. The income from LBNR (and 4 other reserves in the future) is a major component of the councils' income and its ecotourism development thus critically important to sustainable development.

## Achievements

The major activities which I undertook were as follows:-

1. Attended the training courses provided for postgraduate students in the Faculty of Biological Sciences, covering transferable skills such as presentations and Powerpoint, experimental design and statistical analysis, small group dynamics.
2. Attended (and passed) the following modules of Masters courses taught by the Department of Geography, totalling 90 credits
  - a. Research Design & Methods
  - b. Conservation Law
  - c. Environmental Economics
  - d. Biodiversity
  - e. Introduction to GIS
  - f. Sustainable Water Resource Management
  - g. Water Basin Management
  - h. Sustainable Management of Tropical Forest Resources
3. Attended the first module of, and am still completing, a Distance Learning Certificate in Business Enterprise, organised by the Institute of Life Long Learning, University of Leicester.
4. Made one week (total) of working visits to the offices of conservation administration in England (Dartmoor National Park) and Italy (Parco Nazionale del Circeo, Monti Aurunci Regional Park).
5. Made additional information-gathering visits to a variety of wildlife information centres – DNP Princetown; LRTNC Rutland Water; WWT Welney; RSPB Titchwell; NWT Cley.
6. Made 2 days working visits to the global headquarters of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Ramsar Secretariat – all in Gland, Switzerland.
7. Made 2 working visits and presentations to the European Offices of The Earthwatch Institute (Oxford) and at the same time established links with Oxfam staff (adjacent building) concerned with marketing honey from tropical countries.
8. Worked with Richard Brock of Living Planet Productions and the Brock Initiatives to develop a strategy for the production of short, conservation education videos with him and with David Harper, which will be produced over the three years of the Earthwatch/Leicester Darwin project that David directs.

A planned visit to Earthwatch USA headquarters was not made because of security difficulties, or to the Tradecraft organization because the links made with Oxfam were adequate. It was not possible to arrange discussion meetings with key people at WWT or FSC, due to mutual time constraints, although both NGOs were visited informally to understand the context within which they were operating.

Activities 4 and 8 were not in the application. Activity 4 was possible through the contacts of David Harper, with valuable shared experience discussions. Activity 8 took place as a result of progress made by David and Earthwatch subsequent to the scholarship application, in securing Vodaphone Foundation grant aid for Richard Brock's work in Kenya.

The main achievements and benefits can be described in general terms from the combination of all the above activities:-

1. Re-invigoration. I have been in the same post managing a National Reserve in Kenya for the best part of two decades. For most of that time I have been within my country, interacting with wildlife professionals in the Kenya Wildlife Services and NGOs, with Local Government professionals in County Councils and the Ministry of Local Government.

Inevitably, we all have a certain similarity in approach to our work, which is very different from the refreshing variety of approaches I experienced in my time in the UK.

2. Professional Skills. Many of the managerial skills that I have used in my employment had been self-taught. It was highly beneficial to supplement my experience with formal taught sessions and practical experiences developed in a critical academic atmosphere.
3. Academic Skills. My academic skills were both old and at only Diploma level. It was wonderful to renew, update and upgrade my knowledge of conservation biology – which has become a distinct academic discipline since my original training.
4. Practical Scientific skills. My scientific skills had been classroom-taught, so that my practical science was then learnt in the field – by trial and error! It was most satisfying to be able to build on these experiences in taught practical classes, and in places correct them!
5. Social skills. The group of people I work with in my professional day-to-day life in Kenya is small; I relatively occasionally mix within wider circles. The range of experiences and attitudes that I met in UK during my scholarship considerably enhanced my social skills, so that I now deal with people at all levels in Kenya with greater self-confidence and greater respect for the contribution that each can make to conservation and sustainability.

### **Outcomes, lessons and Impact**

My employment skills have been strengthened in the two main ways that I had hoped for when the application was written:-

1. I was, and am, the Senior Warden for Baringo and Koibatek County Councils. I have now been promoted to a new role in furthering ecotourism through the “Mid-Rift Forum” of these plus two other county councils. We are combining with other groups in the northern-central region of Kenya (e.g. the Laikipia Forum) to promote a northern tourist circuit in competition with the mass-market tourism of the southern circuit. The scholarship has given me a perfect preparation for this new role, particularly the promotion of sustainable tourism over mere tourism.
2. My area of the north-central Rift Valley is at a relatively low altitude and very arid. The natural habitat is *Acacia-Commiphora* scrubland. In the few areas where freshwater springs or rivers exist, agriculture is possible. Elsewhere, the most sustainable use of the environment is beekeeping, based upon the flowers of acacia. I am now able to provide much better advice to communities on marketing of honey, and developing ecotourism. I have incorporated ideas to improve marketing into the Earthwatch/ Leicester Darwin project.

My capacity to solve practical problems related to the sustainable use and/or conservation of biodiversity has been strengthened:-

1. The scholarship has given me much clearer recognition of the links between sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity, as illustrated in my answers above.
2. It has improved my practical skills in water basin management, to aid my new wider role in the Baringo-Bogoria lakes area.
3. The practical skills gained from the Certificate in Business Enterprise are being used in improving honey marketing and ecotourism development in the ways described above.

My involvement with biodiversity institutions and NGOs has developed in the following ways:-

1. I was already involved with UK WWF, in my position as joint-director of the WWF Community Education Project at Lake Bogoria. My visit to the global headquarters of WWF, combined with Ramsar and IUCN, added very valuable understanding of the organisation of these NGOs and appreciation of the possibilities.
2. Earthwatch office discussions provided me with an excellent background to understand the basis of research teams and the contribution, which such projects make to biodiversity conservation in Kenya as a whole.

3. The academic experience gave me additional knowledge and the confidence to participate in Earthwatch teams as a Principal Investigator. I brought my unique combination of scientific knowledge with local community experience to the long-running 'Lakes of the Rift Valley' project, in 2004. I continue to be closely involved with this project and, through my job, with Ramsar and WWF

My overall experience as a Darwin Scholar has been very positive. In particular I think that:-

1. The timing of this scholarship – at the beginning of the larger Darwin Project of Earthwatch/Leicester, was perfect. By the time I returned to Kenya I was very well equipped to give the project maximum assistance. I would thoroughly support this as a means of assisting home-country Principals to take a full-partnership in all future Darwin projects.

The overall impact can be summarized as:-

1. The real benefit of this scholarship was the combined effect of academic study, practical experience of specific goals and the broadening of my horizons by new thinking as a result of meeting people from different walks of life in the UK and mainland Europe. Prior to the Scholarship, I was a competent Kenyan professional working in Conservation, with my qualification plus practical experience in my own country. After the Scholarship, I am an international conservation biology professional, able to act with greater confidence in government and business circles, to ensure the future of biodiversity conservation integrated with livelihoods in my region and my country.

### **Scholarship deliverables – business plans**

The two main deliverables stated in the application are the business plans for ecotourism and for honey marketing. These are not yet completed, for the following reasons:-

- Ecotourism. The actual development of the Mid Rift Forum has taken longer than expected, with an administrative officer only in post from mid-2005. The project is still in its development phase, with the business plan timetable for about mid-2006.
- Honey marketing. This project has become part of the work of the main Darwin Project on Lesser flamingos and Lake Bogoria conservation and will be reported at the end of that project.

I expect to deliver these two Business Plans to my employers in the latter half of 2006. This will enable the Ecotourism report to take account of the completion of the establishment phase of the Mid Rift Forum, and the Honey Marketing report to take account of the achievements of the Darwin project *Flamingo conservation and Ramsar Site Management at Lake Bogoria, Kenya*, Ref. 162/10/005, which has incorporated some of my initial plans when I returned to Kenya after my Scholarship. Copies of these two plans will be forwarded to the Darwin Initiative.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Darwin Initiative and the British Government for giving me the opportunities to widen my horizons and, in doing so, improve the biodiversity and the livelihoods of the people with whom I live and work.

William Kimosop

Senior Warden, Koibatek & Baringo County Councils