

Conserving Tanzania

The conservation areas of Tanzania cover 28% of the country. There are six categories based on the degree of protection - National Parks, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Game Controlled Areas, Partially Protected Reserves and Forest Reserves.

The Eastern Arc Mountains stretch from the Taita Hills in Kenya to the Udzungwa Mountains in south-central Tanzania. This ancient range rises to 2,635 metres and ranks among the most important biodiversity hotspot areas of the world for its unique flora and fauna. The Eastern Arc habitats are partly protected by two National Parks - the rest of the region is either managed as Forest Reserves or is currently unprotected.

Tanzania is not a rich country and external support is often required from international conservation organizations. One way this can be achieved is through the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI). This body coordinates research activities in Tanzania, including the issuing of permits to national and foreign researchers. It encourages foreign researchers to take on Tanzanian graduates as field assistants so they can gain fieldwork experience, pick up research skills and improve their chances for further academic study.

In late 2006 I worked as a field assistant with Andrew Bowkett from the Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust's Department of



Victoria Shayo

Field Conservation and Research. The project, funded by Paignton Zoo, concerned the endangered Abbott's duiker and other forest antelope.

We had to find and collect dung samples from different areas within the national park. The aim was to extract DNA in order to identify which species of forest antelope are found where within the Udzungwas. It was tough and adventurous work, as we had to trek across many different terrains and through different vegetations.

Victoria Shayo

Field Assistant,
Udzungwa Mountains Duiker Project

I undertook genetic analysis of the dung samples at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. DNA analysis showed that our initial identification of samples in the field was not very accurate. These are important findings, because antelope surveys often count dung piles as they are easier to find than the actual animals. If these surveys are inaccurate it has serious consequences for protecting and managing wild populations.

We will be working with other research teams in west and central Africa to build a

reference library for forest antelope DNA. Once published, this library will allow the identification of samples of dung or bushmeat and will be an extremely valuable conservation tool.

Andrew Bowkett
Researcher



Kulthumu Ally (Uummy)

Bitten by the conservation bug

I worked in the Udzungwa Mountains for six months in 2005 studying the habitat requirements of threatened forest antelope. I am currently studying for a master's degree in Conservation Biology at Wellington University, New Zealand. Working in the field as an assistant was very rewarding; you learn a lot about data collection techniques, data entry and more. But it can be very costly when you get bitten by ants and tiny ticks in the process. On just one day I was bitten by around 150 ticks! To make matters worse, grooming to get rid of them was difficult as I was the only girl in the team. I still have marks on my back!

Kulthumu Ally

Field Assistant,
Udzungwa Mountains Duiker Project