



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION



Credit: Hadija Mchelu

Ecology & Conservation Field Course

Kibale Forest, Uganda 2025



LAUNCHING CONSERVATION CAREERS

TBA's month-long courses place young people at the heart of biodiversity conservation. We provide expert-led, practical teaching in the very habitats that need conserving, equipping students with relevant skills they can apply afterwards.

These courses help young people at a critical juncture: after they've completed their undergraduate studies but before they've chosen a professional path. This is a moment of asking questions, seeking connections, and exploring options. We provide the training, field experience, and guidance needed to embark on a career in conservation.

Our courses deliver results. TBA alumni are bringing species back from the brink of extinction, conserving habitats, training others and improving the livelihoods of local communities.



Credit: Tim Raaphorst

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Our 2025 field course brought together 24 early-career scientists from 18 countries. For a month we lived in Kibale Forest, finding inspiration in the multitude of ecological interactions it supports and seeing first-hand how it is managed.

The course was immersive, interactive, and collaborative: we framed questions together, tested ideas in the field, and learned from the varied perspectives of a truly international cohort.

“The TBA course didn’t just teach me about tropical ecology; it reminded me why I chose this path in the first place and showed me that I have a voice in the bigger conservation story.” **Faith Achieng – Kenya**

“One of the most enriching aspects of the course was the social dimension. Living and working with people from all over the world taught me how to adapt, collaborate, and step out of my comfort zone.” **Mihajatiana Ravololoniana – Madagascar**



AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Kibale's rainforest was our classroom: a living, complex system where participants learned to turn their observations and curiosity into testable questions, and to identify the right tools to answer them.

Hands-on sessions explored the role of seed dispersal in forest regeneration, examined the ecology of insects and birds, and introduced new field techniques.

The skills are transferable, helping students apply critical thinking and practical know-how to whichever ecosystems they work in next.



"I learned different survey methods, how to recognize forest types, and how plant communities shape an ecosystem. Suddenly, the forest floor wasn't just green, it was full of meaning." **Faith Achieng – Kenya**

INSPIRATIONAL ROLE MODELS



Teachers join us from across Africa and Europe, and are often themselves alumni of our courses.

"Learning directly from researchers who have done fantastic work in Africa provided insights into how science can inform real-world solutions to biodiversity challenges."

Motsatsi Thosago – South Africa

"From my teachers I got to hear stories about how their studies and careers have taken shape over the years. I learned that there was no "right" way to do it - that it's okay to take time away and come back to studies, that it's okay to not have it all quite worked out yet. I felt at ease and at peace among some truly brilliant, excited, passionate people, and I felt like I belonged." **Patrick Armstrong – UK**

We invited teachers who are influential researchers and practitioners at different career stages, so students could see the many ways to build a life in conservation and ecology. Most sessions were more like conversations than lectures, with open discussion of how questions are chosen, projects are structured, and results are presented.

Many of our tutors are TBA course alumni, returning to pass on practical tips, honest reflections, and the energy that comes from doing work that matters.

THE TEACHERS



DR PERPETRA AKITE

Makerere University, Uganda
TBA Alumna from 2006, Perpetra has been the lead entomologist for several development projects in Uganda. She has worked with NGOs, private and public sectors to enhance knowledge in management of natural habitats.



DR OLIVIER BOISSIER
Paris Museum of Natural History, France

Olivier is a tropical biologist with extensive experience across Africa. His research has focused on the effects of bushmeat hunting, both on animal populations and seed dispersal.



PROF SALLY ARCHIBALD
Wits University, South Africa

TBA alumna from 2000, Sally is a savanna ecologist whose research explores how fire, herbivory, and climate interact to shape African ecosystems. She is a core contributor to the SEOSAW woodland-plot network across Africa.



DR PATRICK OMEJA
Makerere University, Uganda

Patrick is a conservation scientist with over 20 years of experience working in Kibale National Park, conducting research on forest restoration, elephant biology and leading a number of training efforts.



DR VIOLA CLAUSNITZER
Senckenberg Museum of Natural History, Germany

A specialist in dragonfly ecology, Viola contributes to global IUCN Red List assessments and trains early-career scientists in using the Red List for conservation action.



JOSHUA BENJAMIN
University of Florida, USA
Joshua is a Kenyan freshwater ecologist whose PhD research examines macroinvertebrate and fish communities in the Mara River, Kenya. He is the founder of the Freshwater Guardians Organization.



DOROTHY KIMURA
Uganda Wildlife Authority
Dorothy is a Research and Monitoring Manager at the Uganda Wildlife Authority. Her work supports evidence-based management and conservation planning within Uganda's national parks.



PROF ERIC SANDE
Makerere University, Uganda
Co-Director of the Makerere University Biological Field Station. Eric is an experienced ornithologist and a passionate ambassador for bird conservation in Uganda



DR DAVID TUMUSIIME
Makerere University, Uganda
TBA Alumnus from 2004, David is Co-Director of the Makerere University Biological Field Station and has a strong interest in the social development issues associated with natural resource management.



DR EMILY OTALI
Kibale Chimpanzee Project, Uganda
TBA Alumna from 1997, Emily has been the Field Director of the Kibale Chimpanzee Project since 2005, directing long-term data collection on chimpanzee behaviour.



DR FRAZER SINCLAIR
TBA, UK
A member of the TBA team since 2024, Frazer is an experienced tropical ecologist and conservationist with particular interest in plant-insect interactions and applied statistics.



GREGORY MAINA
TBA, Kenya
Greg has coordinated TBA field courses and alumni activities for over a decade. He combines logistical expertise with a strong commitment to nurturing the careers of emerging conservationists.

COLLABORATION IS KEY



Credit: Perpetra Akite

From day one, the course was built around collaboration. Group work and field exercises created space for everyone to contribute and to learn how their strengths complement those of others.

These habits carried through into the project phase, where students formed teams of 2-3 to identify and tackle a question that grabbed their imagination. Student projects are a valuable opportunity to conduct independent field research, devising methods, generating data, and presenting their findings in a paper and seminar.

The results were impressive, with 10 strong projects on themes that ranged from stream invertebrates, caterpillar colouration, rodent parasite load, and chimpanzee nesting behaviour.

"I loved the smaller group discussions which made learning more personal and helped us connect better." **Umbule Mador – Nigeria**

"I learned how to communicate my ideas more clearly, how to compromise, and how to respect different approaches to solving ecological questions. These teamwork skills are something I know will be essential throughout my career as an ecologist." **Leon Lunow – Germany**

A NEW COHORT OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

One of the enduring strengths of TBA courses is the diversity of their participants. This year's group brought together 24 students from 18 countries.

Africa: Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda (2), Zimbabwe.

Europe: Denmark (2), Germany (2), Hungary, Ireland (2), Netherlands (2), Poland, Romania, United Kingdom.



Credit: Rockson Acolatse

CREATING A LASTING IMPACT



Completing the TBA course marks just the start of these young scientists' journeys in conservation. Over the past month they have gained skills, confidence, and a sense of purpose that will carry into their future work. They now join a worldwide community of more than 2,600 alumni from 90 countries - graduates who are applying their skills to real challenges: restoring habitats, safeguarding species, advancing research, and shaping policy.

"I have learned to reason scientifically, and to transform ideas into projects. The course has increased my confidence as a scientist and I now have the ability to develop projects that have impact in conservation." **Hadija Mchelu – Tanzania**

"Designing a project from start to finish was something I have never done before. It was a very challenging, but a rewarding learning experience nonetheless, as we got to experience first-hand how every decision we took impacted the project." **Alexandra Mortu - Romania**

"The guidance on scientific writing and research design was transformative, as I now feel better prepared to communicate my research to both academic and conservation audiences." **Rockson Acolatse – Ghana**

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to the A. G. Leventis Foundation for generously supporting this field course.



As part of a new co-financing initiative, we also acknowledge with appreciation two generous donors who contributed £10,000 in scholarships for African participants.

We remain deeply appreciative of the continued support from our [academic member institutions](#).



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