



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

Tropical Ecology & Conservation Field Course



Credit: J  ssica Manuel

Kibale National Park, Uganda

28th July – 27th August 2026



LAUNCHING CAREERS

Field research skills are fundamental to a career in ecology and conservation, yet opportunities to develop them are increasingly limited within university education. TBA's month-long field courses address this gap. Through hands-on learning alongside leading researchers and conservation practitioners, students develop the skills, critical thinking and confidence to become successful research scientists.

This training comes at an important stage in a young scientist's career, when they are building their experience and considering the different paths they might take. This is a moment of asking questions, seeking connections, and exploring options. We provide the foundational skills, experience, and guidance needed to embark on a career in ecology and 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.



A LIFE CHANGING COURSE

Our 2026 field course brought together early-career scientists from 17 countries to the incredible rainforest of Kibale National Park in Uganda. Over the course of a month, students explored Kibale's rich biodiversity and gained first-hand insights into the challenges of managing and conserving tropical ecosystems.

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

"This was more than just a field course for me. It was an experience that has added something to the person and conservationist I am becoming." **Stephen Ssemwaka, Uganda**

"It has been a very valuable experience for me, and I am certain this will shape the rest of my professional life." **Mikkel Egelund Ejlersen, Denmark**



A LIVING LABORATORY

A hands-on, practical approach is at the heart of TBA field courses, providing students with skills and experience that cannot be gained in the classroom. Kibale's rainforest was our living laboratory, where students learned to turn their observations and curiosity into testable ecological questions and identify appropriate methods to answer them.

Importantly, these skills are transferable to other ecosystems, providing a foundation that students can apply in their own research and conservation work and build on throughout their careers.



"The teaching was very practical. It is much more likely that I will remember everything I learned and keep the skills I gained because of this hands-on approach." **Melissa Einsele, Germany**

"I learned so much in 4 weeks that I couldn't have learned in my MSc year."
Bethel Clement, Nigeria

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration was central to the course from the outset. Through group work and practical field exercises, students shared ideas, learned from one another and discovered how their different strengths and experiences could complement each other.

This collaborative approach continued into the second half of the course, when students worked in small teams to develop and carry out their own research projects. Each team identified an ecological question, designed appropriate methods, collected and analysed data, and presented their findings in a scientific paper and seminar.

The students produced ten impressive projects, investigating topics ranging from the effects of forest edges on bird and butterfly communities, to frog ecology, animal behaviour, and herbivory.



“There is an African proverb that says, ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together’. During the course I really experienced the meaning of these words by sharing ideas and working together with people from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds.” **Jéssica Manuel, Mozambique**

“I learned how valuable it is to collaborate with people who approach the same questions from different perspectives, and how these differences can strengthen teamwork rather than limit it.” **Sophie Krid, Switzerland**

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Edge effect of a main trail on fruit-feeding butterflies

Finoana Randriamananivo (Madagascar) & Melissa Einsele (Germany)

Responses of forest-dependent bird assemblages to anthropogenic forest edges

Chrispin Odhiambo (Kenya) & Bram Janssen (Netherlands)

Edge effect on bird community composition and functional composition

Mikkel Egelund Ejlersen (Denmark) & Moses Thembo (Uganda)

Impact of environmental factors on calling intensity of frogs

Maxwell Essel Mensah (Ghana), Marc Aurel Kamdem Simo (Cameroon), & Leif Lefherz (Germany)

Influence of microhabitat characteristics on the distribution and composition of anuran communities in a pond ecosystem

Lateefat Adewumi Balogun (Nigeria), Felesta Komuhangi (Uganda), & Sarah Mshanga (Tanzania)

The influence of substrate colour and predator presence on space use by three tadpole morphospecies

Sophie Krid (Switzerland) & Tea Zulčić (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Avoidance of primate vocalisation playback by birds in tropical rainforest

Agnieszka Mankiewicz (Poland), Jéssica da Carolina Antónia Manuel (Mozambique), & Max Sharman (United Kingdom)

Behavioral responses of habituated baboons to anthropogenic and natural threat sounds

Stephen Ssemwaka (Uganda) & Yvette Kagabirwa (Rwanda)

Variation in fungal morphotype richness between forest types

Jessica Vallance (United Kingdom) & Bethel Chinedu Clement (Nigeria)

Patterns of seedling herbivory in five tree species across two regenerating forest sites

Nonjabulo Macu (South Africa) & Julie Møller Kamper (Denmark)



INSPIRATIONAL ROLE MODELS



“The opportunity to discuss questions directly with experts and learn in such an open and personal environment greatly enriched the experience. It is something I had never experienced before in this form.” **Leif Lefherz, Germany**

“The lecturers never behaved like lecturers, they treated us more like colleagues. Their lectures were not authoritative. Instead, they encouraged us to think beyond what they taught us.” **Stephen Ssemwaka, Uganda**

Our teachers brought a wealth of experience in ecological research and conservation practice, giving students insights into different career paths and opportunities.

Teaching was student-centered and interactive, with plenty of opportunities to ask questions, exchange ideas and discuss the practicalities of conducting research.

Several of our tutors were themselves TBA alumni, returning to share their experiences, offer advice and inspire the next generation of conservation scientists.

THE TEACHERS



DR PERPETRA AKITE

Makerere University, Uganda

A proud TBA alumna from 2006, Perpetra is an entomologist whose research focuses on insect biodiversity and the impacts of land-use change. She has also frequently worked with NGOs and government agencies on biodiversity conservation and natural habitat management in Uganda.



DR ALEXANDER KIRSCHHEL

University of Cyprus

Alex has over 20 years of experience researching the ecology, behaviour and evolution of African birds. His work focuses on bioacoustics, particularly the vocal behaviour of tinkerbirds, and the evolution of plumage colouration.



DR ROBERT JEHLÉ

University of Salford, UK

A TBA alumnus, Robert studies amphibian ecology and population biology, combining field research with genetic approaches. His research also extends to other vertebrates, including crocodiles and eels.



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



MARGARET KOBUSINGYE

Kibale Chimpanzee Project, Uganda

Maggy is Field Manager of the Kibale Chimpanzee Project. Her masters research at Makerere University focused on the spatial distribution of poachers' snares in Kanyawara.



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 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.

SPOTLIGHTS ON SUCCESS

The success of TBA's field courses is reflected in the achievements of our alumni, who go on to build successful careers and make important contributions to conservation. Here are just a few examples of how our training is helping alumni achieve their ambitions and make a difference.



A CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP

Allen Munaro's 2025 field course experience shaped the research interests that have now taken him to the University of Cambridge. Exploring how biodiversity responds to human-driven environmental change inspired him, and he has since won a Mastercard Foundation Scholarship to study for an MPhil at Cambridge. He will use a 200-year museum archive to investigate spatial and morphological shifts in insects. This is an important milestone in a promising research career.

"In an era where ecological balance and diversity are being rewritten by our actions, hope lies not only in technology but in people equipped with skills, insight, and conviction to restore what's been lost and protect what remains. This is precisely what the Tropical Biology Association achieves by investing in people for conservation." **Allen Munaro, Zimbabwe**

A NEW KEY BIODIVERSITY AREA

Loy Natukunda's career has taken off since attending the 2024 field course. Building on the skills and confidence gained through TBA, she completed a master's degree at Kabale University on papyrus swamps, established a new Key Biodiversity Area as a result of her research, won third prize for her presentation at the Student Conference on Conservation Science in Cambridge, has a new job at Nature Uganda supporting women in conservation, and also returns to teach several conservation modules at Kabale University.

"The TBA course strengthened my critical thinking and gave me the research skills to ask good questions, design fieldwork and draw meaningful conclusions." **Loy Natukunda, Uganda**



GIVING GUITARFISH A CHANCE

Since attending a TBA field course in 2016, Dr Issah Seidu has established *AquaLife Conservancy* to protect critically endangered guitarfish in Ghana. Building on the scientific training and confidence gained through TBA, he has worked with local fishing communities to encourage more than 200 fishers to stop harvesting guitarfish. In 2026, his achievements were recognised with a prestigious Whitley Award, supporting his ambition to establish Ghana's first locally managed marine conservation area.

"TBA training came at just the right moment for me. Please keep doing what you are doing – it's essential that the next generation of African conservationists also have this opportunity." **Dr Issah Seidu, Ghana**

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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Global Vistas
Foundation



We also acknowledge with appreciation the generous donors who contributed £20,000 in scholarships for African participants.

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



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