

Project Update: May 2015

Mambo vipi from Kenya!

I have had a great week establishing myself at the Impala Sanctuary in Kisumu, Kenya. There has been some employee turnover since I was here in 2014. However, I have been introduced and welcomed by the new senior park warden and new park warden. They have helped me to officially acquire my Kenyan Wildlife Service Research permit and I can begin water sampling next week. This week I have also concluded my initial site assessment. I have delineated the important open source drinking water holes for the sitatunga antelope which will be sampling points when the data collection begins. It is a perfect time to begin this analysis as it is the start of the rainy season. As a hydrologist, this allows me to have a good understanding of surface water flow. From my site assessment it is visually obvious that the contamination problems at the park have worsened since my last visit in June 2014. The rate of growth in Kisumu continues to grow at a rate of 3% per year without regulations that support conservation or sustainability. Moreover, in December 2014 a fire took part of the papyrus swamp that acts as crucial habitat to the sitatunga antelope and a pollution buffer to Lake Victoria.

In my discussions with the animal keepers I have learned that the sitatunga antelope heard appears to be healthy. There is currently four bachelors and 22 females. However, there has not been any births since June 2014. The animal keepers have expressed concern that as the pollution in the park continues, and drinking water sources are continually contaminated, the antelope are forced to move their habitat towards Lake Victoria. This is problematic because of the threat to the antelope population by crocodiles.

I am looking forward to starting my field work next week. I will begin by teaching KWS scientists and wardens how to use the water quality equipment that will be left with them when I depart. This is a crucial component in the success and continual monitoring of the water in months to come.

