

Project Update: June 2015

Mambo vipi from Kenya!

Last I wrote to you I had finally received my research permit from the Nairobi Kenyan Wildlife Service office. In traditional Kenyan style, the "launch" of the research project was followed by much pomp and circumstance. You will see in an attached photograph a large kundi (group) of KWS wardens from nearby parks, relevant KWS research scientists, KWS animal keepers from Impala Sanctuary, and university students. The group was very interested to learn about the project and to become introduced to the new field equipment. Following this meeting we had the official "blessing" to conduct the research within the park boundaries.

My initial site assessment determined point-source pollution problems. As an example, you will see in a picture attached of cracked sewage lines that follow the fence boundary of the park. Even in dry periods, raw sewage can be seen leaking into the park from faulty septic systems. The first round of water quality analysis confirmed contamination from these sources with extreme levels of faecal coliform, nitrates, and phosphates. Upon hearing of these results, the senior park warden immediately fenced off a main watering hole used by the impala. It has been agreed that this temporary fix will need to be followed by long term solutions including community awareness, infrastructure repair, and habitat reconstruction.

In addition to completing the first round of water sampling, I was also able to engage the KWS research scientist at Impala Sanctuary (Stanley Munji) and senior park warden (Christine Boit). In the attached pictures you will see me training them how to operate and calibrate the field equipment used in water quality analysis. This education is a major part of the proposal as they will continue the monitoring after my departure. I have prepared a step-by-step field manual to assist in this training. In the subsequent weeks we will practice until expertise in monitoring has been met. Concurrently, I am teaching them how to use the computer software package Excel, so that we will be able to share data back and forth from abroad.

The goals of the upcoming week are three-fold: to continue the water quality sampling/analysis, to continue to educate park staff on how to use/calibrate field equipment, and to meet with the Impala Sanctuary animal keepers about their perceptions of impala habitat and health. Additionally, I am scheduled to host a water sustainability workshop for the youth at the nearby Wildlife Clubs of Kenya and one for university students in Kisumu who are studying conservation and wildlife management.