

6TH NEWSLETTER



We are sorry for the long silence, but we have a lot of exiting news to share.

Noga and Nina are currently in Africa.

Noga has been in Uganda since April this year, setting up Aniye, an inclusive grassroots movement of refugees and international volunteers. Our traveling school project works from the grassroots level, visiting every community that invites us, sharing our knowledge and expertise and encouraging refugees to organize, initiate and improve their lives. Together with a dream team of wonderful African activists, we have started the process of registering Aniye as an environmental-human rights NGO. This NGO will work hand in hand with Reclaim Conservation to apply our unique socio-environmental and political worldviews throughout East Africa.

Nina has recently arrived and is currently in Uganda helping to set up the projects, soon she will travel to Kenya to join the great work of Patrick Kilonzo, a man who has dedicated his life to bringing water to the animals of Tsavo National Park and finding sustainable water management solutions in an area facing major problems with drought due to climate change. Noga met Patrick at a conference in September (see below) and had a chance to interview him about his project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0520Ti-6M4&t=19s>

African Animal Welfare Conference

In the beginning of September, we participated in the African Animal Welfare Conference in Nairobi, where we met hundreds of activists from all over Africa. It is great to see that issues of animal welfare and animal rights are becoming a growing part of the African discourse and decision making processes. However, a view that was repeatedly expressed in the conference by many of the participants was that the animal welfare is an idea of the Global North, and by treating animals right, Africans are becoming more like “westerners”. It is very important to remember that many of the greatest cruelties to animals, such as intensive farming, cruel sports involving animal fighting, animal circuses and trophy hunting are all atrocities which originated in the Global North. These and other abusive practices were not part of the traditional African cultures and were introduced to the continent through colonialism and capitalist systems. In addition to that, animal welfare does not have to be based on western ideologies and can reflect the culture and values of African people.

It was great to meet so many people working to revive ideas and practices that promote compassion to animals. We established a lot of new connections in many different countries and are planning many collaborations with some of Africa’s greatest animal rights activists.

Academic event about conservation and occupation

On the 4th of October we had our first public event in Uganda, ‘Positive Conservation and Coexistence Actions in Times of Colonization, Apartheid and Poverty’. The keynote speakers, Prof. Mazin Qumsiyeh of the Palestine Museum of Natural History and Reclaim Conservation’s Noga Shanee, raised the controversial issues of Neoliberalism, occupation, racism, as well as human and resource exploitation. Resistance, strong grassroots organization and local conservation initiatives were the suggested solutions. The audience was very diverse, including academics, decision makers, conservation practitioners, law students, African refugees, the press, and human rights activists.

These issues were received enthusiastically and were the base of a very lively and vital open discussion held after the lecture. The acceptance of these ideas and the issues and examples raised by the audience once again proved the importance of Reclaim Conservation’s messages and the urgency of shifting mainstream conservation towards inclusive, companionate and efficient activism.

There are many people to thank for the organization of this event, most of all to Olinga Gilbert and the amazing team of Cavendish University School of Law. We are extremely grateful for everyone involved!

A visit to Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda

Despite its unfortunate name, Queen Elizabeth is a beautiful protected area in the West of Uganda. We participated in a two-day workshop organized by the Ugandan Wildlife Authority to set up national investigation priorities. This was a great opportunity to understand Uganda’s conservation challenges and some of the dynamics of conservation and society. Even from this short exposure to the issues, it was clear that many of the socio-environmental problems that are related to top-down conservation systems exist in Uganda. These include exclusion of local people, disappearance of wildlife from protected areas, aggressive promotion of trophy hunting by outside interest groups, and many more. During the workshop we promoted political ecology as a good optional methodology to investigate wildlife issues to obtain a more realistic knowledge of issues such as human-wildlife conflicts, wildlife trafficking, protected areas effectiveness, etc. This was also an opportunity to make contacts with many of the country’s authorities and local NGOs and we have made very exiting plans for joint conservation programs and research.