

Conservation in Rwanda: a first-hand view 7-day study tour for 5 postgraduate students from University of Rwanda in a collaboration with Yale School of the Environment Study Tour

A collaboration between the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, University of Rwanda and Yale University School of the Environment

Dates: Monday 12 – Monday 19 May 2025

Led by Drs. Amy Vedder and Bill Weber

Application deadline: 7 March 2024

Yale's School of the Environment is widely recognized for its ability to link graduate students with real-world applications of their academic studies. This study tour offers students a unique opportunity to observe and critically examine conservation strategies and initiatives being undertaken in Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda – a country rich in the history and practice of conservation of wildlife and wild places, within a crucible of great human pressures. Open to both men and women, Rwandan masters or PhD students will join with those from Yale University to visit Nyungwe National Park, confer with conservationists from park managers, engage with communities surrounding them, and delve deeply into intensive discussion throughout. They are continually challenged by the objective of saving outstanding biological richness in a most challenging context, and draw lessons from direct observation of site-based solutions.

Scope

Various conservation issues and approaches are seen in practice, discussed in depth, and assessed as a consequence, including:

- The effectiveness of protected areas
- Ecotourism implementation, benefits and challenges
- Public/Private management of parks
- Buffer zone creation and management
- Natural forest restoration
- Landscape level initiatives
- Revenue-sharing from parks with local communities
- Human/wildlife conflict; compensation for wildlife-inflicted damages
- Enterprise development to link conservation and development
- Comparison of national and local interests/benefits from conservation

To directly examine issues of conservation and development, the group spends several days in a community bordering Nyungwe National Park: a site in which development efforts are aimed at integrating rural health, education, farming, and natural resource management - allowing observation of progress and challenges.

Outline of daily activities:

May 12: pick-up in Huye and transport to Gisakura, meeting up with the Yale students (lodge in guesthouse in Gisakura for the next 4 nights)

May 13: full-day guided hike in Nyungwe National Park

May 14 & 15: treks to see chimpanzees and colobus monkeys, with afternoon briefings by park management staff

May 16 & 17: hike to Banda village (just north of the park), observing rural development programs and the relationship of local people to the park (lodge in guest houses in Banda)

May 18: hike from Banda to the road (a difficult 3-hr hike up steep hills), visit in-forest restoration site, arrive in Huye by evening

May 19: morning post trip panel discussion at the Huye office of the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, University of Rwanda.

Relevant readings and general lectures on tropical forest ecology will be shared to deepen student understanding and experience prior to the study tour.

Cost coverage

Travel, lodging and park permits will be covered by funds from Yale School of the Environment.

Application Process

Note that this study tour is open to both men and women. Selection of 5 UR students for the study tour will be competitive, based on submission of a letter of interest and c.v. to Dr. Amy Vedder

(amy.vedder@yale.edu) and Dr. Bill Weber (bill.weber@yale.edu) by **5pm CAT on Friday 7 March 2024**.

The letter of interest (1-2pp maximum) should include information on:

- Reasons for your interest
- What you hope to gain from the study tour
- More specifically, how this study tour will complement your postgraduate training, thesis research, and/or better inform your career goals
- How you plan to share your experiences and learning with the CoEB and University of Rwanda community

Announcement of students selected to participate will be made by March 17, via email.