

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Teacher Trainings
Back on Track
- Fish Farming Up-
date
- SAVA Team Ex-
pands

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SAVA CONSERVATION
M a d a g a s c a r

Conservation news from the Sambava-Andapa-Vohemar-Antalaha region of NE Madagascar

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Exciting News for DLC-SC Funding!

At about the same time that the previous SAVA Conservation newsletter came out in March, we received some fantastic news concerning project support. The **Helmsley Charitable Trust** notified us that after approval by their board, our application to their foundation had been accepted. The Helmsley grant will cover a variety of project expenses ranging from salaries to teacher training activities, so will be critical to basic project operation and will allow us to move more rapidly towards our conservation objectives in the



SAVA region. It is a very exciting moment for SAVA Conservation, and puts us on the most secure financial foundation that we have yet enjoyed, and for the next three years!

The SAVA Conservation project operates on grants and donations, so this is a particularly important moment in the project's history and development. A heartfelt thanks to the Helmsley Charitable Trust and their staff, who over the two years between first contact and making the award, worked patiently with us to get the submission into peak form. And thanks also to the newest member of the DLC Management Team, grant writer Valorie Sterling Cook, for her part in assembling the submission.

To our faithful donors who have so generously brought the SAVA Conservation project to where we are today, I would also like to offer a heartfelt THANK YOU. Without your loyal support, we would never have achieved the success that demonstrated to Helmsley our ability to put conservation actions on the ground. That said, your support remains crucial for the project to move forward as rapidly as possible, to address the environmental needs of Madagascar and the SAVA region. There is much work to do, and the unique forests of the SAVA region continue to contract at an alarming rate.

Teacher Trainings Back on Track

by Charlie Welch and Dr. Erik Patel

It has been a frustrating year of not being able to move forward with the teacher trainings in environmental education for a variety of organizational reasons. But finally, the trainings are back on track, with a teacher training carried out this past April, over the Easter holidays, in the Andapa CISCO (school district). The trainings were funded by

Teacher Trainings Back on Track *Continued*



School district officials on the left and right. Middle three, from left — Ms. Mamy Rajaonarisoa, Symrise/GIZ representative, Mr. Gimod and Mr. André Ratsimbazafy, both MFG teacher trainers.



Symrise Vanilla/GIZ, whom we are very pleased to welcome as a collaborator in the realm of environmental education in the SAVA region. The Easter training was the most ambitious to date, with 200 teachers participating, along with 33 other CISCO trainees. As in the past, the trainings were led by Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group (MFG) training specialists, Mr. André Ratsimbazafy, and Mr. Gimod. The next training will take place during the main school vacation period, in August.

As a reminder, the first SAVA Conservation activity was actually teacher trainings in environmental education, which began in August of 2011. At that time, the first trainings were not yet with teachers but with Chef ZAPs (education administrators who supervise the school directors). The trainings are a collaboration with the CISCOs of Sambava and Andapa and are a transfer of the teacher training program as used by the MFG for 15+ years in the Tamatave region. Experienced MFG teacher trainers were brought in to conduct the teacher trainings, and eventually to train trainers for the SAVA region. The weeklong trainings familiarize the teachers with use of a 64-page teacher's guide which was developed by MFG educators, and has been authorized by the Madagascar Ministry of Education. The guide integrates environmental education into the existing curriculum at the primary school level.

In the first step of the cascade-type training, 325 SAVA region school directors and school district personnel have been trained in three separate training events. Now that all of the school directors of the two school districts have completed the training, we have begun the actual training of the teachers, which the directors participate in and reinforce.

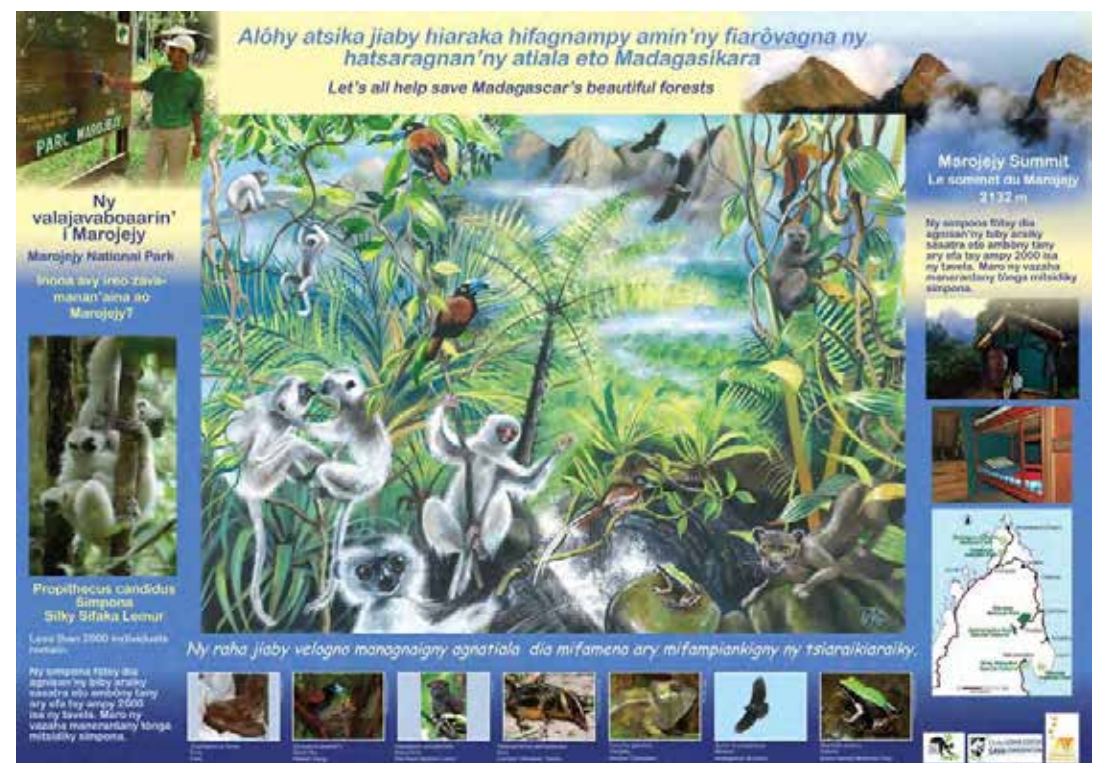


New Marojejy Poster Completed

by Dr. Erik Patel

Educational posters can serve as a low-cost and eye-catching means to gain student interest and attention. In many developing countries such as Madagascar, local schools seldom have much displayed on the walls and for many local businesses the only available posters are corporate advertisements for Coca Cola or foreign pop-stars such as Britney Spears and wrestler John Cena (hugely popular in Sambava actually!).

One of SAVA Conservation's environmental education goals is to develop and distribute posters with environmental messages such as the bushmeat poster we created last year (see SAVA Newsletter July 2013). A new Marojejy National Park poster has recently been completed by renowned UK natural history artist Janet Mary Robinson (her blog: <http://jmr.org.uk/blog/>) with the guidance of Erik Patel. The poster features the biodiversity and ecotourism potential of Marojejy National Park. The heart of the design is an absolutely gorgeous original painting by Janet surrounded by professional photographs (courtesy of Nick Garbutt, Kurt Baumgartner, and Jeff Gibbs). With text primarily in the local Tsimihety dialect (with some English translation) the poster is intended for rural schools where it is being distributed. Similar posters for other protected areas in Madagascar have already been created by Janet and are viewable online in her Natural History Gallery: <http://jmr.org.uk/gallery-2/natural-history-illustration/>. SAVA Conservation thanks Madagascar National Parks and the McCrae Conservation and Education Fund for their collaboration on this poster.



SAVA Conservation Team to Expand!

Although our SAVA Conservation team has many collaborators, we only have two permanent project personnel on the ground in Madagascar, Erik and Lanto. But that is about to change! I am pleased to announce that Dr. Marina Blanco will soon be joining the Madagascar team as research scientist. Marina has been working in a DLC post-doctoral position under director Dr. Anne Yoder, studying the fat-tailed dwarf lemurs (*Cheirogaleus* sp.) at various sites in Madagascar, including Marojejy (see previous newsletter). With the expansion of SAVA Conservation collaborative research programs, along with the expanded activities coincident with the recently received Helmsley grant, Marina will join the SAVA team to continue her explorations of primate diversity within the Marojejy Park, as well as to help coordinate our research objectives. She will most especially work to promote collaborative research activities with our colleagues at the Association Vahatra.

A very warm welcome to Dr. Marina Blanco, and we look forward to SAVA Conservation moving to the next level in terms of research!



New MNP Director of Marojejy/Anjanaharibe Sud



New MNP Marojejy/Anjanaharibe Sud director, Mr. Jean André Mboly, with Charlie Welch.

We are pleased to announce that Madagascar National Parks (MNP) has selected a new director for Marojejy National Park and Anjanaharibe Sud Special Reserve, Mr. Jean André Mboly. Mr. Mboly replaces the former director Mr. Hervé Bakarizafy, who has been transferred to the MNP main office in Antananarivo. We miss the excellent collaboration that we had with Mr. Hervé, but we are already working together with Mr. Mboly on various conservation and research projects for the two protected areas of the SAVA region. We look forward to a long and productive collaboration with Mr. Mboly and the SAVA MNP office.



SAVA Conservation Has Wheels!

One problem with taking on an entire region in a conservation project is that it requires frequently moving around within the region. Fortunately, the roads of the SAVA are in excellent condition compared to the rest of Madagascar, but constantly renting vehicles/drivers is a drain on project funds. And of course there is the uncertainty of always having to locate and rely on rentals. Those problems are behind us now, thanks to generous donations by **Virgin Unite/Sir Richard Branson**, and **Alexandra and Bill Anlyan**, which have allowed us to purchase a project vehicle! DLC-SAVA Conservation is now the proud owner of Toyota Hi-lux, 4x4, double cab, pick-up truck (see photos).



Many, many thanks to Virgin Unite and the Anlyans for making the vehicle purchase possible.



New project vehicle with newly-hired driver Esilyn Rabenaivo.

Fish Farming Update

by Charlie Welch, Lanto Andrianandrasana, and Dr. Erik Patel

The fish farming component of SAVA Conservation is moving ahead at full steam in three new villages bordering the southern limit of Marojejy, thanks to our collaboration with local specialist Guy Tam Hyock and his assistant Fidele. With their expertise and enthusiasm, Guy and Fidele have been able to advise villagers on the intricacies of pond installation and fish care, and to guide that process to successful completion. This project is somewhat unique since a locally endemic freshwater fish *Paratilapia polleni* (called fony locally) is being raised for consumption, sale, and reintroduction in local waterways. Demand for fresh fish is very high in this region as it is far from the coast and dried fish is almost exclusively sold in local markets.

The first step of setting up each village fish pond is to organize a local 'fish association'. The organization and subsequent training are carried out by Guy and Fidele. In addition, an official contract, locally known as a 'dina' is drawn up by the association, outlining various points of agreement on issues such as the release of 25% of the fish from each pond harvest into local rivers, respecting local laws on fishing season, fish net hole size, etc. The dina is legalized locally, with the involvement of various government authorities, including those of enforcement. This gives the agreement a strength that it would not otherwise possess. Local people are universally enthusiastic about receiving help in starting fish ponds that can provide them with a future food and revenue source.

The ponds are constructed by the members of each association, using shovels and wheelbarrows provided by DLC-SAVA Conservation. Once the pond is finished, a small nearby stream is diverted to provide pond flow-through, which is essential to fish survival and reproductive success. Once the fony fry are introduced, they are regularly fed a mixture of rice hulls and dried tiny crustaceans, which are both readily available locally. No antibiotics or chemicals of any sort are used in the fish farming process.

The project-supported village fish ponds, and their status as of June '14, are listed below:

Ambodivohitra demonstration pond

- Sept. '12 – 400 fony fish fry introduced into just completed pond.
- July '13 – 1704 fish harvested – 573 sold/eaten, 531 released into nearby Matsobe River, 600 returned to pond.
- Nov. '13 – Follow-up harvest (July harvest not thorough due to too many boulder hiding places) yielded – 2102 fish harvested (mostly small-sized) – 1502 released into Matsobe River, 600 returned to pond.
- June '14 – 3808 fish harvested – 377 sold/eaten, 3121 released into Matsobe River, 310 returned to pond.

Antongodriha ponds #1 and #2

- Both associations formed with 28 members in #1, and 32 members in #2.

Fish Farming Update *Continued*

- Both dinas have been legally authorized by justice officials.
- Ponds completed, and 400 fish fry introduced into each pond.
- First fish harvest expected from the ponds in Dec. '14.

Ambodivohitra #1 and #2

- One association with 20 members, for both ponds.
- Dina has been agreed upon by the commune and the gendarmerie, but is not yet legally authorized by justice officials.
- Ponds completed and 300 fish fry introduced into larger pond and 250 into other pond.

Sarahandrano

- Association is formed with 22 members.
- Dina has been agreed upon by commune and gendarmerie, but not yet legally authorized by justice officials.
- Pond is completed and 195 fish fry have been introduced.

Matsobe

- Association formed with 19 members.
- Dina has been agreed upon by commune and gendarmerie, but not yet legally authorized by justice officials.
- Pond completed and 250 fish fry introduced.
- Support for a second pond has been requested by villagers.

DLC-SAVA Conservation would like to thank the **Sea World/Busch Gardens Conservation Fund** for making possible the fish farming component of our conservation work in the SAVA region. Such community-based activities are essential in achieving successful and sustainable conservation.



Fish Farming Update Continued



Antanetiambo Nature Reserve Expands and New Native Bamboo Nursery Installed

by Dr. Erik Patel



Antanetiambo Reserve, within the red border, surrounded by rice fields of the Andapa basin. New parcel is in white.

SAVA Conservation collaborator and renowned Marojejy Guide Desiré Rabary has added yet another parcel of land to his nature reserve Antanetiambo (http://antanetiambo.marojejy.com/Intro_e.htm). Antanetiambo is 6km from Andapa, in the SAVA region, and is a glowing example of forest protection on private land by a Malagasy national. As the opportunities arise to purchase adjoining land, Desiré has been adding to his 15.5 hectare (38 acre) reserve, piece by piece. The most recent addition is a .4 hectare piece, and will help to fill a gap that presently exists in the northern part of the reserve (see photo).

Antanetiambo has two species of lemurs that inhabit the secondary forests of the reserve, the northern bamboo lemur (*Hapalemur occidentalis*) and mouse lemurs (*Microcebus* sp.) Both last year and at present, Duke Engage volunteers have focused their work on the bamboo lemurs that live there, and on various other aspects of the reserve. For example, this year a new flagged trail

system was developed which will help with forest monitoring, research, and tourism. Currently Duke students are assisting a professional botanist from Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG) who is working with us to conduct the first dietary study of this species. 44 different plant foods have already been identified including several plants also enjoyed by local people such rice (leaves/seeds), coffee (fruit), banana (fruit), lychee (fruit), mango (fruit), and jackfruit (leaves). Indeed bamboo lemurs have been labeled as one of the few “crop-raiding” lemurs.

In order to reduce their dependence on domestic cash crops which are not part of their natural diet in primary forests like Marojejy National Park (camp 1), a new bamboo nursery has successfully set up. The species being cultivated is *Valiha diffusa*, a bamboo species endemic to Madagascar and presumed to be the primary diet of northern bamboo lemurs in Marojejy. Roots of 70 young *Valiha diffusa* have already been transplanted in Antanetiambo and dozens of seedlings have been grown from seed. Efforts are underway to obtain more seeds, to expand the newly built tree nursery.

Antanetiambo Nature Reserve Expands *Continued*



A smiling Désiré with the contract for the newly purchased land parcel (note ink thumbprints on contract).



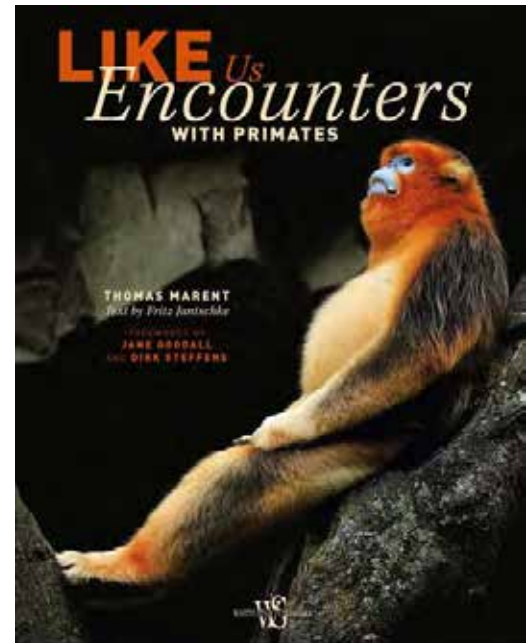
Reserve guard Mr. Ramichel watering native bamboo, *Valiha diffusa*, that was planted as part of the ongoing reforestation efforts at Antanetiambo.



Restoring the forest at Antanetiambo Reserve.

New Wildlife Photography Book To Be Released by SAVA Collaborator Thomas Marent

In December of last year, SAVA Conservation had the sincere pleasure of hosting renowned Swiss wildlife photographer Thomas Marent, who is a member of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) and has already published a number of books (see <http://www.thomasmarent.com/>). Thomas was hosted in Marojejy National Park by SAVA Project Manager Lanto Andrianandrasana for nearly ten days. The spectacular photos he obtained will be used in his newest book called "Like Us: Encounters With Primates", which includes a foreword by Jane Goodall and will be released in October of this year. The book cover is displayed to the right and some of our favorite lemur photos are below and on the next page. Many thanks to Thomas for giving Marojejy the time and effort it deserves!



Indri

Photo by Thomas Marent

New Wildlife Photography Book To Be Released by SAVA Collaborator Thomas Marent Continued



Mouse lemurs

Photo by Thomas Marent



Silky sifakas

Photo by Thomas Marent

SAVA Conservation Hosts Dr. Anne Millhollen and US Embassy Staff

In early May, SAVA Conservation was delighted to host [Dr. Anne Millhollen](#) and US Embassy staff Luke Zahner (the new communication and cultural officer) and public affairs officer Eric Atkins. The interest and support in environmental issues shown by the US Embassy has been extremely helpful to SAVA Conservation. Dr. Millhollen was kind enough to deliver a very well attended lecture on ring-tailed lemur ecology and behavior from her many years of work at Berenty Reserve. When researchers take the time to report the results of their research to the Malagasy community, it represents another valuable form of environmental education and validates the efforts of the guides and park staff who assisted with data collection. We truly had a “dream team” for our Marojejy visit which included many thoughtful discussions of conservation, sustainable development, and tourism in Madagascar.



Project visitors in the DLC-SC office: (from left to right) environmental educator Daniella Rabino, Luke Zahner and Eric Atkins of the US Embassy, Dr. Anne Millhollen, and Manantsoa Andriatahina of WWF-Andapa.

DUKE CONNECTIONS

DukeEngage '14 in the SAVA

We are pleased to continue our collaboration with the DukeEngage program, for the second consecutive year, by having two students working with SAVA Conservation. Duke undergrads Kyle Smith and Faye Goodwin have already started their 8-week service project period, which will run to the end of July. Both Kyle and Faye are quite familiar with our Madagascar conservation work, as during the academic year they work as DLC tour guides through Duke work/study. Continue reading to learn about their Madagascar and SAVA experiences to date.

An Aspiring Primatologist's Conservation Work in Madagascar

By Kyle Smith

I have wanted to study primates for almost as long as I can remember. When I was in elementary school, I read about Jane Goodall's research on chimpanzees and decided that I wanted to do something similar. It was my passion for primates that led me to Duke University, which I applied to mainly because of the unique opportunity to study lemurs at the Duke Lemur Center (DLC). In my first two years at the DLC, I have worked as a tour guide, taken a primate field biology class, and even helped conduct research. Needless to say, I was thrilled when the DukeEngage program granted me funding to go to Madagascar and volunteer with the Duke Lemur Center SAVA Conservation Initiative.



Kyle and Faye flagging and mapping trails at Antanetiambo Reserve.

Dr. Erik Patel (Director of SAVA Conservation) and Lanto Andrianandrasana (Project Manager of SAVA Conservation) were both very welcoming from the moment my plane landed. With their help and support, my friend Faye and I were able to get settled and learn more about the various conservation projects performed by SAVA Conservation. The main focus of our work is Antanetiambo Nature Reserve, which is not far from the town of Andapa in northeastern Madagascar. Unlike most nature reserves in Madagascar, Antanetiambo was created primarily through the efforts of a local man: Desiré Rabary. The reserve is a green hill that rises like an island out of a sea of golden rice fields, but it was not always that way. The land has been cleared for agriculture in the past; now it is primarily covered in rejuvenating secondary forest with patches of primary forest. With the returning forest, various native animals have returned as well: birds, chameleons, snakes, insects, and my personal favorites, mouse lemurs (*Microcebus* sp.) and northern bamboo lemurs (*Hapalemur occidentalis*).

Our first project was to develop a marked trail system, which will facilitate ecotourism as well as monitoring by the

An Aspiring Primatologist's Conservation Work in Madagascar Continued

ranger. We measured out and flagged every 25m and also made a GPS map. The two main trails, both just over 1km, are named “Tsidy” (mouse lemur) and “Bokombolo” (bamboo lemur). We also marked 28 smaller side trails named after other local plants and animals. Once Faye and I had finished with the trails, we proceeded to our next task, which was to create nine 10m by 50m botanical plots in preparation for a professional botanist from the Missouri Botanical Garden who will be arriving in Antanetiambo soon. This important legwork will speed his immense task of combing through 4500m² of forest to identify every plant in the plots. More recently, we have GPS-mapped the different habitats and areas of human disturbance so that we can understand more about the various parts of the reserve. This will particularly be useful when we move on to observing the reserve's bamboo lemurs to see where they spend their time so that we can assess their habitat and ranging preferences.

In addition to working at Antanetiambo, Faye and I have been able to participate in other SAVA Conservation activities. We have been able to see several tree nurseries supported in part by SAVA Conservation, and we also helped with the annual fish harvest from the SAVA Conservation-funded fish farm. Almost 4000 locally endemic *Paratilapia polleni* were caught from the pond by hand. Some were sold at market to help mitigate demand for bushmeat, while others were reintroduced into the local river system. Faye and I were able to help with the fish release in the river near where we live.

I have really enjoyed contributing to these projects, but by far my favorite part of my Madagascar experience has been my visit to Marojejy National Park, a mountainous park full of lush primary rainforest. I saw many fascinating plants, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Of course, I was most excited to see five species of lemur, including the silky sifaka (*Propithecus candidus*). This critically endangered primate has soft, white fur all over its body except on its black or pink face. As I watched them bound through the trees as if they were flying (sometimes only two meters above my head), it really impressed upon me the importance of the work we are doing. If the silky sifaka and the many other endemic plants and animals disappear from Madagascar, they are gone from the world for good. As Rabary always says, “The loss of a single species is a loss for all people.” I am happy to be part of SAVA Conservation's efforts to preserve Madagascar's unique biodiversity.



Kyle and Faye spotting lemurs at camp #1 in Marojejy NP.

The Roots of Conservation: Learning and Growing

By Faye Goodwin

Our first month in Madagascar has flown by, though not without taking us along for the ride! In the time we've been here, Kyle and I have been able to help with many different SAVA Conservation activities while working on northern bamboo lemur (*Haplemur occidentalis*) research in Antanetiambo forest. Our first week was spent flagging trails in Antanetiambo Nature Reserve, which means "little hill." The forest is owned by Mr. Desiré Rabary, an award-winning conservationist and wonderful host. By flagging and GPS-marking the many trails in Antanetiambo, Kyle and I were able to create a complete trail map of the reserve while learning GPS and map-making skills, as well as getting to know our way around the reserve. Becoming familiar with the trails, habitats and plant species of Antanetiambo with the knowledge and experience of Rabary and our other team member Jackson, has been very valuable to understanding the ecology of the reserve's resident bamboo lemurs and mouse lemurs. The new trail system will surely facilitate tourism and forest monitoring of the reserve.

Our understanding of the nutritional ecology of the bamboo lemurs will be greatly benefited by the arrival of Richard Randrianaivo, an experienced botanist from Missouri Botanical Garden, who will identify the scientific names of most of the plants in Antanetiambo. We have already established botanical plots for his work in many of the different habitats in the reserve. Our current project of creating a map of the different habitats in Antanetiambo will illuminate the habitat preferences of these lemurs and document their ranging, using GPS, in relation to the myriad of



Faye with a *Brookesia* chameleon.

The Roots of Conservation: Learning and Growing Continued

habitats within the reserve.

Kyle and I have been able to learn field research skills and just what it takes to run a conservation organization in a place like Madagascar. More SAVA team members like ranger Ramichel, local botanist Jean Chrys and the librarian Nadege have been working hard on the replanting of *Valiha diffusa*, a native species which is believed to be the primary diet of northern bamboo lemurs in primary forests like Marojejy National Park. Until recently, none was found in Antanetiambo. The SAVA Conservation team has planted over 70 young *Valiha diffusa* roots and have just finished building a new nursery for this species.

But the lemurs of “the little hill” are not the only ones benefitting from SAVA Conservation’s work—and we were lucky enough to get a chance to see the result of that work in Marojejy National Park! In five days we climbed 2132 meters, saw five species of lemur, and countless other amazing animals including *Brookesia minima*, the smallest chameleon in the world! We had valuable practice tracking the habituated lemurs in Marojejy, getting film and photos, and identifying individuals, all while basking in the ethereal glory of *Propithecus candidus* (<http://lemur.duke.edu/angels-and-fish-summer-adventures-with-duke-engage-continued/>). Silky sifaka conservation and behavioral ecology in Marojejy is apparent in the visibility and viability of the three groups we saw in less than 24 hours. Seeing those white angels in the morning sun is enough to make anyone a conservationist, and gives hope to young biologists like Kyle and me that this kind of work means something.

But the successes of SAVA does not stop with the silkies. On our return from Marojejy, Kyle and I were able to attend the harvest of the fish ponds that SAVA Conservation has been working on. Many people have started their own fish ponds, stocked with native *Paratilapia polleni* which was only recently thought to be extinct. The fresh fish is extremely popular as an alternate source of protein; Rabary sold his whole adult harvest (about 300 individuals) on the first day for the high price of 7000AR per kilogram! The total catch was over 3000 and 25% of the catch (sub-adults) was re-released into a local river. We are excited at the success of the harvest and the local turnout for the fish release and harvesting!

It seems that everywhere we turn we are meeting dedicated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable people committed to the conservation of lemurs in Madagascar. It is encouraging to be surrounded by both local residents and SAVA team members that are so invested in this beautiful place and excited to welcome us into their homes and project sites. In a few days Kyle and I will return to Marojejy briefly to check the function of radio collars on several dwarf lemurs (*Cheirogaleus* sp.) being studied by Duke Lemur Center Post-Doctoral Researcher Dr. Marina Blanco. Then it is back to Antanetiambo to continue bamboo lemur tracking, and improve our understanding of their diet. As an undergraduate ecology student, I have already learned some of the field skills necessary to gather precise data on a species of interest, but also that wildlife conservation is so much more than data collection alone.



Closing Comments

As you have probably noticed in this issue of the newsletter, time and again, various supporting foundations, organizations, and donors are mentioned. We are extremely grateful for all the support, and also the confidence that all of these entities have placed in us. SAVA Conservation is most assuredly a team effort, and we would have no chance of achieving conservation success without the collaboration and support. Getting a project of this sort started is the most difficult part, and I believe that we are over the proverbial hump and now gaining momentum. We have learned from past experience that sustainable conservation is a long term undertaking and side by side with our supporters and collaborators, DLC looks forward to working in the SAVA region of Madagascar for many years to come.

Charlie



Dr. Erik Patel with DLC-SC collaborators Jackson and Desiré Rabary.

Photo by Jennifer Crick



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Miaro atiala, mamboly fiainana
"Protect the forest, and life will grow"