

ABCP NEWSLETTER

Red Rock, Texas

African Blackwood Conservation Project

Annual Report No. 7—Fall 2004

One Million Trees!

The school and community tree planting groups around Kilimanjaro that have been organized under Sebastian's supervision reached a milestone in 2004. Through their combined efforts during the past 12 years they have planted one million trees. Working together, they have educated their communities about conservation and initiated many programs to safeguard the environment. They have also been instrumental in spreading the word in their communities about mpingo conservation.

The trees they have planted are of many species, and serve to provide the



Ready to plant a tree!

people with subsistence products, protect the biodiversity of Mt. Kilimanjaro and its soils, and improve the mountains' role as a vital water catchment area for northern Tanzania.

The 2004 Kilimanjaro Environmental Day ceremonies celebrated this community achievement. 2200 people attended, including government officials and community leaders who addressed the crowd. School children gave educational talks, read poetry, and sang songs



Two 5-year old boys of Chekereni Moshi, Babu and Pendo, planting Mpingo seedling.

about conserving the earth.

There was an exhibit of local medicinal plants to educate people about their use. A demonstration about raising coffee trees showed local farmers methods of protecting this important agricultural crop from disease. Awards were given to individuals, families, and institutions that have excelled in planting trees and

taking action to protect the environment.

As shown in these photographs, citizens of a wide range of ages in the Kilimanjaro area have been encouraged to participate in the act of hope and faith in the future that is represented by planting trees.

Cottonwood Builds New Structure at Moshi Mpingo Plot

In April the ABCP was a recipient of funding from the Cottonwood Foundation, a long time supporter of our work. The funds received were designated for the construction of a brick building at



Mzee Orot, 71 years old, planting Mpingo at his farm boundary at Chekereni Moshi.



We have not inherited the world
from our forefathers –
we have borrowed it from our children.
-Kashmiri proverb





Masonry building funded by the Cottonwood Foundation under construction at Moshi Mpingo Plot. It will serve as a permanent shelter and storage facility for the project.

the Moshi Mpingo Plot.

Since the nursery has been recently expanded and the number of ABCP volunteers continues to increase, Sebastian has long been hoping for funding to build a permanent structure that would house gardening equipment and accommodate himself and other workers for meals or an overnight stay.

The building is nearing completion. It has a bedroom, living room, storeroom and bathroom. It will have plumbing and electricity and will be completed in the coming year.

The Cottonwood Foundation has been instrumental in funding important projects that have allowed the Moshi Mpingo Plot to become the heart of our project. Through its support we have been able to install a water tower and pumping system, thereby establish the infrastructure for a permanent watering system at the Plot. This has allowed us to expand our nursery efforts and build liaisons with various groups who help us in distributing tree seedlings.

New England Biolabs Funds Mpingo Women's Group

In 2002 New England Biolabs Foundation (NEBF) funded a grant proposal to provide money for the construction of

a tree nursery, a bee keeping operation and several educational trips for the Kikavu Chini Mpingo Women's Group. Elizabeth Chuwa is the trustee for this group and she and Sebastian offer guidance and support for their activities.



Sebastian and British Petroleum workers plant mpingo seedling at BP Tanzania Moshi Depot on landscaped grounds where the trees will receive excellent care. Partnering with Sebastian and the ABCP in highlighting the National Tree of Tanzania in this way, BP hopes to draw attention to conservation and encourage environmental awareness.

Last year NEBF funded a second grant to this group to establish a poultry raising operation. With their funding the women constructed a building to house their poultry and purchased chicks. Their intent is to sell eggs as well as fryers for meat. Since there is a large influx of tourists to the area around Kikavu chini, they have a ready market for their products during tourist season.

The women are raising mpingo seedlings in their tree nursery and helping to raise awareness in their area about the species. They say that the poultry operation will provide fertilizer for their tree nursery and much needed income to enable them to plant more trees.

NEBF is a private foundation that funds grassroots organizations working for self empowerment in developing countries. It supports programs for the environment, social change, the arts, elementary education, and science. The funding it has given to the Mpingo Women's Group has been a powerful incentive to increase their own economic empowerment as well as provide the means by which they can help implement conservation measures in their

local community.

British Petroleum

British Petroleum has supported the work of mpingo conservation for many years, including supplying fuel for Sebastian's projects in Kilimanjaro Region. In 2001 they published an article about his tree planting work in their international magazine *Horizon*.

They also support Steve Ball's work in southern Tanzania. (See related article "Mpingo Conservation Project.")

During the past year Sebastian met with Fred Kibodya, Corporate Affairs Manager for BP Tanzania, Dar es Salaam. Mr. Kibodya proposed an initiative to plant African blackwood trees at a number of BP petrol stations along the Arusha to Dar es Salaam road. This initiative will directly spotlight the cause of mpingo conservation along the busy thoroughfare.

British Petroleum has once again provided Sebastian with a fuel allotment for the coming year. Their ongoing support is greatly appreciated by the ABCP.

The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit. ~Nelson Henderson

40th Anniversary at Mweka

In December of 2003, Sebastian addressed a symposium celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of Mweka College of African Wildlife Management, one of the most prestigious institutes for the training of conservationists in Africa. The conference theme was "Conservation in Crisis: Experiences and Prospects for Saving Africa's Natural Resources."

Sebastian spoke on the topic: "To Utilize or To Conserve? — Establishing Sustainable Community Conservation Practices on Mt. Kilimanjaro." He said that he received many questions about his Malihai work and the ABCP because his was the only paper presented about grassroots action in one of Africa's protected areas.

On the last day he was allotted extra time to talk because many participants were interested in his ideas about practi-

cal ways to establish environmental activities in their local areas. Many people asked how they could obtain mpingo seeds. Sebastian comments that, "The work of the ABCP is spreading to many people in different areas now."

Mpingo Conservation Project

Steve Ball is a British mpingo researcher who has led several scientific expeditions to Lindi Region in southern Tanzania in an attempt to estimate remaining stocks of the tree. Steve's Mpingo Conservation Project recently received a grant from British Petroleum to institute programs for sustainable use practices for the species in Lindi Region.

This area of Tanzania was relatively isolated until the recent completion of a bridge across the Rufiji River which has opened the region to new immigration. Unfortunately trafficking in illegally felled timber is already beginning and widespread deforestation is likely in the coming years.

Steve's project will establish liaisons with several villages in instituting Participatory Forest Management practices in the extraction of mpingo and other valuable timber species. Sustainable utilization of important commercial spe-

cies will generate income for the local people and at the same time preserve natural resources for future generations.

The project also includes educational initiatives to raise public awareness about mpingo as well as funding for cooperative research projects for mpingo with students from the University of Dar es Salaam. The website of the Mpingo Conservation Project has more information at www.sbcomp.demon.co.uk/.

Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.
-Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac, 1949.

Moshi Makonde Carvers

In 2001 the United Nations Development Program, in association with the United Nations Fund, launched a major initiative called COMPACT (Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Project). The aim of the initiative is to promote the involvement of the communities who live and derive their livelihood around Mt. Kilimanjaro in conserving the mountain, improving livelihood for its one million inhabitants and establishing sustainable practices for the utilization of its natural



Makonde carver at Makuyuni near Lake Manyara carving mpingo log which was cut in the Great Rift Valley.

resources.

A group of Makonde Carvers from Moshi received a grant through this program and have used the funding for several initiatives. They sponsored a seminar at Makuyuni to teach about the use of softwood trees, as well as alternative materials such as leather, shells, cement, and used paper, all of which can be used as substitutes for mpingo in the production of artwork for the tourist trade.

Trees give peace to the souls of men.
-Nora Waln

They have purchased mpingo seedlings from the ABCP nursery to begin a planting project for an estimated 40,000 trees of mixed species. Sebastian is collaborating with this group to plant a mixture of mpingo and softwood trees on 20 acres of land he has been granted by the Moshi Council. Last April 19,000 trees were planted on the acreage in a cooperative effort between Sebastian, his volunteers, and the Makonde carvers.

Excellent Development

Joshua Mukusya of Kenya and Simon Maddrell of Great Britain have

been working together since 1985 building small water tanks and dams for water security and planting trees to protect the environment in the Machakos District of Kenya. Their organization is called *Excellent Development*. Like Sebastian, they have mobilized thousands of volunteers to help in the work of living sustainably on the land.

Last year, through the ABCP website, Simon contacted us because he was interested in our work. Sebastian traveled to Kenya to meet Joshua and donated mpingo seedlings for his reforestation efforts from the ABCP nursery. Joshua and Simon in turn visited Sebastian's projects in Kili-



Joshua Mukusya (l) and Sebastian Chuwa (r) plant mpingo seedlings, brought by Sebastian from the ABCP nurseries in Tanzania, near Joshua's home in Kenya.

manjaro, donating seedling bags, wheelbarrows, and watering cans to some of the affiliated local community groups. Joshua is planning to return to help the Makonde carvers make a rain water terrace for their tree planting projects.

(For further information, see www.excellentdevelopment.com)

"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty."
- Albert Einstein

Green Garden Women's Group

Like the Makonde carvers, the Green Garden Women's Group (GGWG) also received funding from COMPACT. This enabled them to expand their original nursery in Moshi and establish new facilities at Machame and Marangu, villages at a higher altitude on Mt. Kilimanjaro. The GGWG was founded in 1998, at Sebastian's suggestion, by 16 women who opened a commercial tree nursery in Moshi. The group now numbers 250 members.



Sebastian and Masai environmental leaders hold meeting to organize environmental actions at Terat village on the Simanjiro Plain. Simanjiro, southwest of Kilimanjaro, is home to many mpingo trees. It is one of the areas where Sebastian wishes to expand his efforts under a long term program of education and formation of tree nurseries by the ABCP.

In Memoriam—Eleanor Newton

In 2000 Sebastian was the recipient of a grant from the Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh Foundation. This grant gave Sebastian a major infusion of funding to begin his educational projects with children. The money was donated to the Lindbergh Foundation by Eleanor Newton, who chose to fund our project in memory of her late husband, James.

Ellie Newton died last year at the age of 104. She and James had spent a long lifetime of being involved in work dedicated to human advancement. They were personal friends of Anne and Charles Lindbergh and James' book *Uncommon Friends*, describes this experience. For over 40 years Ellie was a staff member of Initiatives of Change: www.iofc.org/, a program to foster national revitalization through personal renewal. She dedicated her energy to education, conservation and drug abuse programs. She was a poet and an adventurer and well known for her exuberance and love of life.

The ABCP extends its condolences to the family and friends of Ellie and is thankful for the part she has played in our efforts.

To date they have distributed over 100,000 seedlings of various species, which are helping to reforest the mountain and supplying communities with much-needed trees for economic and conservation purposes. Their intent is to continue to establish new nurseries on and around the mountain.

This group has been instrumental in educating the public about the ecological and economic importance of African blackwood and are providing mpingo seedlings to many people in the area who are concerned about the future of the tree. Around Moshi there has been a high demand for mpingo seedlings because of the work of the ABCP and the combined efforts of all the groups that Sebastian has established.

The GGWG is also combating deforestation by the manufacture of energy efficient stoves and cooking pots, made from locally available clay. They estimate a saving of 50-75% of normal firewood or charcoal use with these stoves and pots. Women who use them reduce the time they spend collecting firewood,

**I listen and hear the Silence
I listen and see the Silence
I listen and taste the Silence
I listen and smell the Silence
I listen and embrace the Silence.**

—Native American Prayer from Funeral Oration
for Ellie Newton by Clare Hallward, 2004

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**In the silence of the woods,
a man can hear himself think.
The trees give solace and renewal
when, as the poet said, the world is
too much with us, late and soon.
—Anon**

thus liberating more time to pursue other activities for their families.

The Green Garden Women regularly hold classes to teach about environmental topics, such as horticultural techniques and the construction and use of the energy saving stoves.

Social issues are also of great concern to the group members, and they have organized fundraising events and seminars in their area to raise community awareness about HIV/AIDS, poverty issues, gender discrimination, fe-

male genital mutilation and child labor.

Kenyan Environmental Activist Wins Nobel Peace Prize

Wangari Maathai is the first woman from Africa to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She is known as "The Tree Woman" in Kenya because she inspired the Green Belt Movement to plant millions of trees across Africa to slow deforestation. She is a scientist, a political activist, and an environmental crusader who has continued to work for her causes despite government oppression. In 1991 she was awarded the Goldman Prize and is the recipient of numerous other environmental awards.

Mrs. Maathai said that she was delighted that the environment is receiving increasing recognition, "The environment is very important in the aspects of peace because when we destroy our resources and our resources become scarce, we fight over that." She celebrated the award by planting a Nandi flame tree in her home town of Nyeri, in the shadow of Mount Kenya.

History of the ABCP

The ABCP is a US non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 1996 by James Harris and Sebastian Chuwa for the purpose of instituting replanting and educational programs related to the conservation of *Dalbergia melanoxylon*, also known as African blackwood or mpingo. Mpingo is a primary wood used in the manufacture of woodwind instruments. It is also used by African carvers and wood artisans and is generally considered threatened. Although it is being rapidly depleted in its primary habitat of eastern Africa, there have been few attempts to replant the trees or to institute sustainable conservation practices for its use.

Sebastian Chuwa is spearheading replanting and educational programs for mpingo in northern Tanzania, near Mt. Kilimanjaro where he lives, working with community and school groups in the effort to save the species for future generations. James Harris and Bette Stockbauer sponsor fundraising efforts in the US, personally covering all administrative costs, including printing, postage, website expenses, and some equipment purchases. All donations collected go directly to support the work in Africa.

Now Available—The "Tree of Music" Video or a Film by the ABCP Showing Sebastian's Conservation Work in Tanzania

The video "The Conservation and Environmental Education Work of Sebastian Chuwa" was produced by James Harris on his home computer to profile Sebastian's work in Tanzania. In compiling this presentation James utilized the many hours of video footage that Sebastian has taken in Africa to record the conservation work of commu-

**Mpingo—
The Tree
That
Makes
Music
A BBC-TV
VIDEO**

The mpingo tree is prized by musicians and woodworkers around the world. The future of the species, however, is under threat. Over harvesting of the wood and its habitat destruction are causing scientists to predict that it will soon be a threatened species. In this video, users of the wood, who consider it irreplaceable, express their apprehension that the precious resource may some day no longer be available for their use. Michael Gunton's exquisite documentary, the first of its kind, has brought the problem of mpingo extinction to world attention. Included is a profile of the work of Sebastian Chuwa who is sponsoring replanting campaigns for mpingo in Tanzania in hope of ensuring its future sustainability. This film was originally broadcast in 1992 on the US PBS *Nature* series and was the inspiration for the founding of the ABCP.

nity groups around Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Also included is original wildlife footage of African savannah animals taken at national parks and reserves such as Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara and the Serengeti Plain during safaris that Sebastian conducts to these areas.

Subject areas covered in the video are: Malihai Clubs, mpingo tree-planting at the Moshi Mpingo Plot, Environmental Day activities, the Kibosho East Environmental Choir, and a student field trip to wildlife parks.

This video and "Mpingo—The Tree That Makes Music" can be purchased from the ABCP. They are available only in NTSC format for US viewers. See the enclosed donation form for pricing and details of ordering. Proceeds will support the work of the ABCP in Tanzania.

• SEE THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE AT BLACKWOODCONSERVATION.ORG •

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So that
the song
of the
Tree of Music
will not go
silent...