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If you have a comment on something you have read in a recent issue of **arborvitae**, we'd love to hear from you. You can send a message to: jennifer.rietbergen@wanadoo.fr



ARKive – images of life on Earth
Wildscreen, a charity promoting conservation through wildlife imagery, has developed ARKive (www.arkive.org), a centralized digital library of films and photographs showing the world's threatened biodiversity. To date, ARKive has created multi-media profiles for more than 5,600 forest-dwelling species with still images and moving footage that were previously largely inaccessible to the public. ARKive's priority is now the completion of audio-visual profiles for the c.18,000 species on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Wildscreen is a formal Red List partner and has been an IUCN member since 2008.



DGIS is the Development Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Editorial

The story goes that a lecturer in forest science once polled his students on the reason for their career choice. He was somewhat taken aback when many responses boiled down to the same sentiment – “you don’t have to talk to anyone”! Nowadays, while fewer foresters may seek this self-imposed exile, we still don’t seem to be terribly comfortable or competent in communicating with wider audiences. Even when we deem to “talk” via our presentations, papers and reports, our messages are seldom accessible, let alone compelling, for anyone outside our immediate circle. Indeed, our efforts seem to reinforce George Bernard Shaw’s sage observation that “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”.

Given that the future of forests depends much more on the actions of non-foresters than the efforts of foresters, this communication gap is bound to have serious consequences. So where have we gone wrong and what can we do now?

To be fair to the forest profession, communicating any science-based concept to a general audience faces particular challenges, not least the need to translate complex ideas into clear, jargon-free messaging without dumbing-down to simplistic sound-bites. We’ve seen the difficulty of this in, for example, the media’s quick fix treatment of climate change and REDD. Forest-related communications today need to tackle misconceptions that have become ingrained after decades of

overly simplified messages that have emerged because foresters have been unwilling or unable to make their voice heard. The gloom-and-doom deforestation message has definitely hit home and left little space for nuanced narratives or discussions on forest economies and sustainable forest management. We need to bring these positive stories to the fore, to paint a more complete picture of forests and their values. As Baba Dioum said, “In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.”

To mark the International Year of Forests, and in editorial partnership with IUCN’s Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), this special full-colour issue of **arborvitae** takes a critical yet constructive look at how forest values are being communicated to non-foresters. One theme that runs through several articles is the need to recognize and respond to people’s emotional connections to forests; another is the powerful impact of photographs to inspire readers to act on written messages. With these points in mind, we invite you to try an exercise in ‘relating to your audience’ and look at the colour photos on the centre pages of this issue using your heart rather than your head, to see what they say to you.

Stewart Maginnis, Head of IUCN’s Forest Conservation Programme and Keith Wheeler, Chair of IUCN’s Commission on Education and Communication

news in brief

New news network for biodiversity: A new biodiversity communications network was launched in October at the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Nagoya, Japan. The Biodiversity Media Alliance (BMA), a collaboration between IUCN, IIED and Internews, aims to link journalists with biodiversity experts to improve media coverage of biodiversity issues. “Journalists generally consider biodiversity loss to be a less urgent issue than climate change or the economy,” says Alison Coleman, IUCN Regional Communications Officer. “The media needs to do a better job of explaining its importance to economies, livelihoods and people’s health. **For more information:** www.biodiversitymedia.ning.com

Winning words: The prize winners of the 2010 IUCN-Reuters-COMplus Media Award for Excellence in Environmental Reporting were also announced in Nagoya. The two winning articles are *Using the Internet to Save the Rainforest* by Juliane von Mittelstaedt, which is a feature article in Germany’s *Der Spiegel* about the Surui people of the Brazilian rainforest, and *How to save a forest* by Anjali Nayar for *Nature Magazine*, which looks at the impact of forest conservation and carbon trading projects on a rural area in Madagascar. This award was established in 1998 and aims to raise global awareness of environmental and sustainable development issues, by encouraging high standards in environmental reporting worldwide. **Both articles can be accessed at:** www.iucn.org/knowledge/news/?6337/Prize-Goes-to-Forests-in-Madagascar-and-Brazil

International Year of Forests 2011: good news on forest management

Mita Sen of the UNFF Secretariat discusses the need to get across positive messages during the International Year of Forests 2011.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS • 2011

It is undeniable that negative news sells. Coverage of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico which dominated international headlines for months this year tended to focus on perceived failures, both of the government and BP, and the perils to the fishing industry. Success stories of local communities bonding together in cleanup efforts were often buried under more negative 'newsworthy' reports.

In a context where pessimistic or tragic news stories seem to be the norm, communicating positive stories is challenging. In almost every news broadcast or front page, war, crime and economic woe dominate over uplifting tales of success.

When it comes to the particular challenge of communicating positive forest stories, public awareness of the importance of forests tends to be based primarily on environmental values. Decades of environmental activism have effectively conveyed the message that forests and trees are vital to our global environment. Dramatic images of vast tracts of deforested land, with the soundtrack of chainsaws playing in the background, are well engrained in the public psyche. Hence the conservation and preservation aspects of forests are embraced widely, whilst the notion that forest resources can be used sustainably is a more difficult message to convey.

The theme of the International Year of Forests 2011 is 'Forests for People', celebrating people's action towards sustainable forest management around the world. The overall focus of the year is to highlight the multiple values of forests: a 360° perspective. Some of the key messages embodied within this approach are that forests provide shelter to people and habitat for biodiversity, are a source of food, medicine and clean water, and play a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment. All of these elements taken together reinforce the positive message that forests are vital to improving the well-being of people everywhere, all seven billion of us. Until there is wider recognition that conservation and sustainable development are not just 'worthy chores' that come a distant second to the business of economic development or even carbon sequestration, but are about realizing the full potential of an important asset, sustainable forest management will not take its rightful place in planning for our green economies.

The Year can provide a platform that challenges the assumption that the only way to sustain the world's forests is by protecting them from people.

United Nations International Years offer an opportunity to raise public awareness of not only the challenges but also the opportunities around a specific issue. We hope to galvanize action to promote sustainable forest management to benefit the world's forests and the people who depend on them. Great success stories and valuable lessons already exist; the Year provides a means to bring these voices together and build momentum towards even greater public participation in forest activities around the world. Through positive stories, the Year can provide a platform that challenges the assumption that the only way to sustain the world's forests is by protecting them from people.

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What is a forest?

Peter Cairns reflects on what forests mean to the general public in the UK.



Poster for the 2020VISION conservation media initiative

During a recent presentation to an audience of conservation scientists, I introduced a chap called Steve. Steve's a plumber from Birmingham; his wife is a nurse and their teenage children do what teenage children do. Steve's busy at work and he's constantly trying to juggle this with the demands of his family. His only respite is Saturday night in front of the TV with a take-away.

A forest is much more than just trees; we just haven't told anyone yet!

I asked the audience whether it's likely that Steve understood the term *ecosystem services* or *ecological connectivity*, two pieces of jargon that are presently doing the rounds. What about *trophic cascades*? And even if he understands, is he really that interested, given his many other priorities? Steve is of course fictitious, and I'm not suggesting that every plumber is nature-averse, but he's nevertheless representative of the values of modern society, a society that the patronizing finger-wagging of traditional conservation-speak has failed to connect with.

For most people forests are at best something nice to look at, somewhere to walk their dog, a refuge from the hurly-burly of daily life. At worst, they are perceived as dark and dangerous and of little relevance.

That may be a sweeping generalization but the fact remains that for a significant proportion of society, forests (never mind less attractive habitats such as peat bogs) are low priority. But don't take my word for it: 42% of UK respondents in a recent Gallup poll had never heard of *biodiversity*. Only 27% knew what it meant.

Now either I'm missing something, or these are alarming statistics.

Now either I'm missing something, or these are alarming statistics. So is it time to reinvent how we communicate important conservation messages? Is it time to speak to Steve and his family in a language they can relate to? Is it time to avoid the temptation to burden people with technical persuasion, and to exploit their broader motivations?

Conservation communication needs a fresh approach. It needs to reach beyond scientific peer groups, beyond the middle-class, middle-aged. It needs to entertain as well as engage; it needs to trade in a common currency that has been used for decades to influence consumer patterns and social perspectives. It needs to better invest in visual and creative media. This doesn't mean dumbing down critical societal messages, it means recognizing that different audiences need different approaches based on different values.

So what is a forest?

It's a Mars bar for birds.
It's a Holiday Inn for squirrels.
It's a medical centre.
It's a playground
It's a power station.
It's a supermarket.
It's a tourist attraction.
It's a stress reducer.
It's a school classroom.

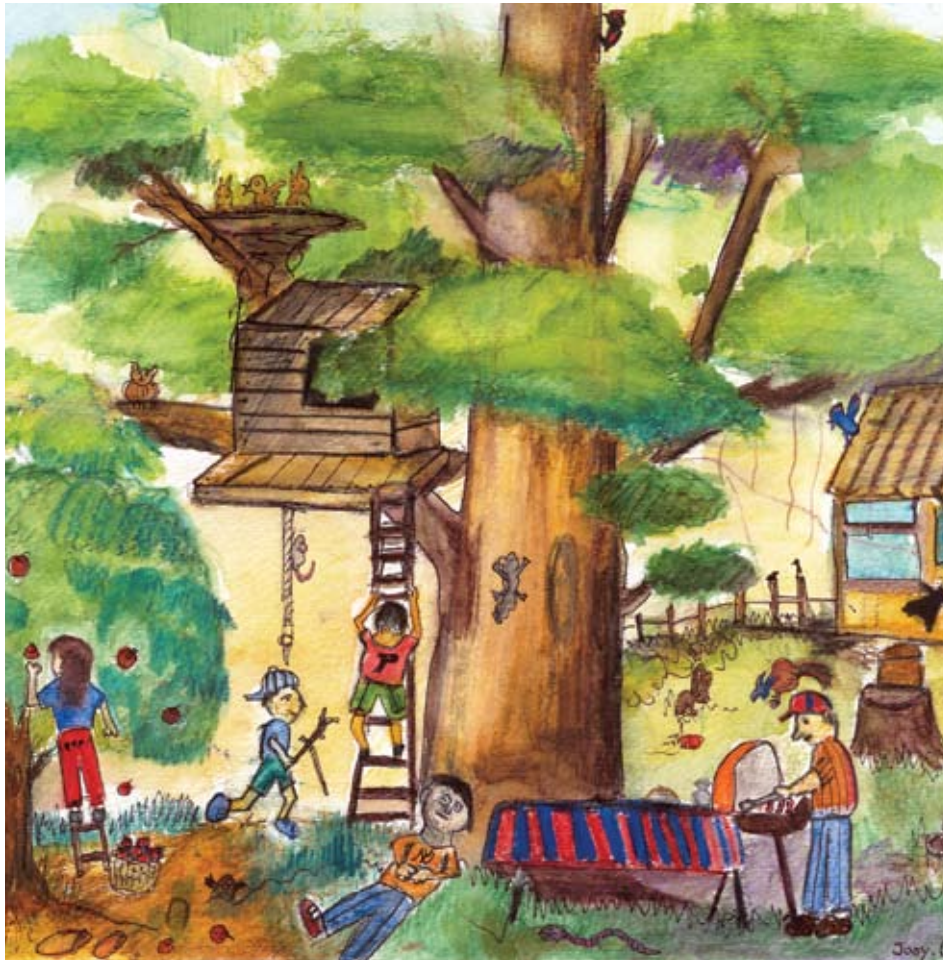
A forest is many things, but if we want to sell its value to a mainstream audience, it has to be relevant to that audience. It has to mean something. There has to be a benefit.

Many involved in the management and conservation of forests see themselves as drivers of policy, but it's people's attitudes, perceptions and yes, even emotions, which drive societal change and influence politicians. Never forget there will be more plumbers voting at the next election than conservation scientists. A forest is much more than just trees; we just haven't told anyone yet!

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How to get a child to love a forest?



Trees provide so much! by Joseph Le-en Chiu (primary school student in the US).

Cheryl Charles discusses how childhood experiences in nature are on the wane, and what this means for forests.

There is a disturbing worldwide trend that may impact the future of forests. The trend is what author Richard Louv named “nature-deficit disorder” in his best-selling book, *Last Child in the Woods*. Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical diagnosis. It is, however, a compelling description of a social change that is affecting children in both the developed and developing worlds. For many children, childhood is now dominated by time indoors. Worldwide, the most common activity for children when not in school is watching television.¹ Most children today don’t have the kind of childhood that many who have chosen forestry or other conservation and natural resource-related professions had as children – being told or encouraged to “go outside and play but get home before dark.”

My grandfather was a forester. Some of my earliest defining childhood experiences were spent on horseback with him. He was also a gifted communicator, using a combination of story and direct experience to seed in me the lifelong commitment to do what I can for children’s health and well-being, and the health of the Earth itself.

Why is this trend of children’s lack of direct experiences in nature important to foresters? Researcher Dr. Louise Chawla is among those whose work indicates that, nearly to a person, it is childhood experiences in nature that are the most significant contributors to growing up as adults with a deep commitment to the environment. For young children, this commitment is nourished by playing in wild and semi-wild places outdoors: turning over a rock and

It is childhood experiences in nature that are the most significant contributors to growing up as adults with a deep commitment to the environment.

feeling connected to all of life; climbing a tree and feeling a surge of confidence and exhilaration, peace and perspective; and having an adult share a place so special that the child feels valued and develops a lifelong connection to the power and beauty of the natural world.

Foresters, and those concerned about who will be foresters in the coming generations, should thoughtfully consider these changes in childhood and the potential implications for the profession and, by extension, for the health of forests in the future. We need to create nature-based experiences for children, youth and young adults and we need to advocate for policies that support the provision of nature-based experiences for young people. If your organization is not yet providing such opportunities, revisit your mission to make this a priority. Most of all, don’t assume that children today are playing outdoors and developing a deep connection to the natural world that will lead them to choose a career in forestry. In the face of these changes and challenges, I urge you to make it a priority to take a child outside in nature – for the child’s healthy development and to plant the seeds for a career and a lifestyle that cares for and respects the Earth.

¹ Singer, D.G. et al., 2009. Children’s Pastimes and Play in Sixteen Nations: Is Free-Play Declining? *American Journal of Play*, Winter 2009, pp. 283-312.

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How sexy are forests?

Frits Hesselink suggests how forest experts can better ‘arouse’ the general public about their subject.

“*Is your species sexy?*” asked Ricardo Carvalho of IUCN’s Commission on Education and Communication, while interviewing scientists of IUCN’s Species Survival Commission. After two plenary sessions of many rather boring PowerPoint presentations with no time for interaction, the atmosphere among participants suddenly lightened up. There was laughter and people started to sell their lifetime’s work in a different manner: “*My species is unusually sexy as they have both sexes in one organism*”. “*Of course my species – cats – are sexy: lions spend 10% of their time on it*”. “*What’s more sexy than insects? Oh yes, I forgot: my wife!*”

I had to think of that episode when reading the latest publication of marine biologist and film maker Randy Olsen, *Don’t be such a scientist: talking substance in an age of style*. In this book Olsen argues that scientists should pay more attention to how they communicate their work. They should focus not only on substance or content, but much more on the style of communication: “*....communication is not just one element in the struggle to make science relevant. It is the central element. Because if you gather scientific knowledge but are unable to convey it to others in a correct and compelling form, you might as well not even have bothered to gather the information.*”

As a professor in marine biology, Olsen had gained a reputation on a range of conservation issues. But only as a film maker he learned that information, facts and figures do not speak for themselves, unless you are teaching students or talking to your peers. To get people – non-experts – to listen to your research or project findings, you have to first stimulate curiosity in them. You do that not through content but through style: humour, spontaneity, personal messages. Only after you have ‘aroused’ your audience are they open for the content. Or in Olsen’s



Domain	Driver of	Characteristics
Head	Logic, analysis	‘Think before you act’, facts, figures, scientific content of message
Heart	Emotion, passion	Spirituality, sentimental, artistic values, love, faith, beauty
Gut	Humour, intuition	‘Just do it’, ‘Rely on your gut feeling’, spontaneity, instinct, fun
Loins	Sex	Basic universal dynamic, sex appeal, excitement

words: “*When it comes to connecting with the entire audience you have four bodily organs that are important: your head, your heart, your gut, and your sex organs. The object is to move the process down out of your head, into your heart with sincerity, into your gut with humour, and, ideally if you’re sexy enough, into your lower organs with sex appeal.*”

In the matrix above I present my personal summary of Olsen’s explanation of how human psychology basically works.



The same psychology is at work when we are confronted with words. Words have not only their literal or dictionary meaning; they also have strong associative connotations. A word invokes feelings, images, memories and values. People in the disciplines of journalism or advertizing know how much words matter. Choose the wrong words in your headline or tagline and no one will read your article or buy your product. To illustrate how this works for the word forest, I did a little experiment with **arborvitae** readers, CEC members and people for whom forests or forest conservation is not of immediate concern. All were asked their first associations with the word ‘forest’. In the matrix below I summarize the associations and ordered them according to the four domains.

Domain	Associations with the word ‘forest’
Head	Resources, carbon, biomass, timber, ecosystem, income, wildlife, people, web of life, natural richness, habitat, soil, goods and services, oxygen, lianas, mushrooms, medicine, people, trees, deforestation, birds, communities, culture, wellbeing, beauty, commercial good
Heart	Awe, rustling leaves, tranquility, fresh and nicely cold, childhood play, climbing trees, shade, bird songs, silence, folklore, home, bounty, peace, softness, fairies, folk songs, collecting blueberries, loneliness, solitude, calm, peacefulness, sacredness, walking in the forest, concerns and problems, green and quiet
Gut	Freedom, forest fires, demons, spooky, spirits, fear, rituals, magic, fun, joy, security
Loins	First girlfriend, sex, making love

The associations of most forest experts were in the domain of the brain. Some really tried to be ‘without a mistake’ in their answer, e.g. *“Forest is a land which is dominantly covered by trees of different dimensions, in association with grasses, herbaceous plant, lianas and other flora such as epiphytes.”* Only a few forest experts had some associations in the domain of the heart, one in the domain of the guts. The answers of CEC members were spread over the domains of brain, heart and guts. The great majority of the associations of the non experts were only in the lower three domains.

I hope this illustrates that if you – as a forest expert – want your information to be taken into account in decision-making, you have to realize that most people take decisions not based on the head, but on the heart, guts and sex. You have to arouse their interest by ‘communicating’ to those organs before they are open and willing to listen to the substance of your information.

The good news is that a few forest experts did come up with a personal story touching the heart and guts, such as this one: *“My first association to forest is as a child – having been born and raised in a forest area in Africa – the first impression that I had of forests is an undeveloped*

When it comes to connecting with the entire audience you have four bodily organs that are important: your head, your heart, your gut, and your sex organs.

area full of demons and spirits. I am always afraid of entering the forest due to fear, and the many stories told by elders of encounters with wild animals....” Here we have the beginning of a way to arouse and connect with non-experts. If you are not a born communicator, this is where professional communicators can help to get attention for your science and project-based information: with style, storytelling, messaging, and tone of voice that appeals to the audience you want to reach.

This experiment was made possible through the kind cooperation of a number of forest experts. CEC members also asked the question to a number of ‘non-experts’ in their personal networks, e.g. adolescents, maids, gardeners, handymen, shop-keepers, farmers, corporate managers, engineers, artists, professors, politicians.

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“Every picture tells a story,” and “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but which story and which words?”

asks conservation psychologist Gene Myers in his paper *The Psychology of Photographic Imagery in Communicating Conservation*.¹

Photographs are widely used in forest conservation publications, campaigns and other communications efforts, yet their impacts on viewers can be hard to predict.

According to Myers, still photographs can be effective in evoking conservation-relevant emotional responses, both positive (e.g. love, wonder, respect, connection towards nature) and negative (e.g. anger, sorrow, sympathy, concern). He cautions though that disturbing images (such as dead animals or scenes of dramatic disorder) can make viewers ‘switch off’ or become desensitized to such stimuli. Photographs showing people in nature can also provoke emotional responses other than those intended by the communicator. Myers says “...research hints that it may be more psychologically loaded and complex to view pictures of people in any setting than to view nature alone. Humans will quickly scrutinize and appraise the attractiveness, facial and bodily nonverbal expressions, clothing and appearance, social group, other personal traits, and the implications of the actions of other people for the viewer’s values. This suggests the need to be very careful about picking images with people for conservation messages.”

The best impact for communicators comes when images and text are combined so that the picture relates strongly to the words. The emotive pictures motivate viewers to respond to the written message and create a more lasting impression than words alone, while the text can help channel viewers’ responses towards the communication objective.

How do the photographs on these pages make you feel? Do they speak to you at all, and what do they say? Do you find yourself instinctively appraising the people in the photographs, as Myers says happens? Imagine the same images without the people in them – would they have the same visual impact?



¹Gene Myers’ paper can be read in full at: www.ilinc.us/articles/Myers-PsychologyofConservationPhotography.pdf

This article is part of an occasional series of invited 'opinion pieces', the content of which does not necessarily reflect the view of IUCN.

Love not loss

Laurie Bennett argues that doom and gloom messages on biodiversity aren't working and should be replaced by positive messages that inspire action.



For decades we have heard about the plight of accelerating deforestation and the loss of pristine and bountiful ecosystems. In fact, it's rare that forests and the plants and animals they support are mentioned by campaigners, policy-makers, and the media without an 'under threat' disclaimer.

Clearly, if this deforestation message was working to inspire the global public to take action, deforestation itself would be happening a lot less, and a lot slower. Something isn't right.

It's time to kill the extinction message.

Think about it from the audience's point of view. It's true that for 'biocentric' people, who value nature for its own sake, the deforestation message is strong imperative for action. But the hard truth is that, for the majority of people, biodiversity doesn't play an active role in daily decision-making. These people have a more utilitarian way of looking at nature – it's about how it makes them feel rather than its intrinsic right to exist. And it's easy to feel powerless in the face of a global deforestation crisis.

What if instead we bottled up the incredible experiences people have of forests, into an inspiring positive message?

Love of forests for most people is about awe and wonder, senses and sights, not ecosystem services and extinction

What if we bottled up the incredible experiences people have of forests, into an inspiring positive message?

stories. It is about childhood experiences, awe-inspiring nature documentaries, and our instinctive fascination with the workings of the natural world.

The 'Love' message trumps the 'Loss' message for grabbing the public's attention. Inspiring people towards opportunity is a more powerful driver for action than scaring them away from the consequences.

But it's not as simple as Love vs. Loss, there is also Need. With the recent publication of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) report, we also now have the means to calculate the enormous economic value of forests. From clean air and water to fuel and medicine, we can put a tangible number against our dependence on forests. And the figure is a mind-blowing US\$4 trillion per year.

The seemingly clear choice of message for communicators is to combine the Love and Need messages; inspire people and prove how valuable forests can be. But it's not that simple. Whilst policy and decision-makers require a rational economic argument to take action, the public do not. People don't act rationally, and there is a real danger of undermining the Love message by assigning a financial value to things people care about.

So what's the formula for success? First, we need to lose the Loss message. For the public, the Love message can quite literally conquer all. Paired with a relevant call to action, it has the power to drive mass public change. To engage policy-makers, pair the call to action with the Need message, but teach them how to engage the public on a positive vision.

Forests are the key to solving global challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and development. You don't need to prove it to the world, you need to inspire them about the possibilities.

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Web-based learning for forestry professionals

Andy Alm and **Jack Byrne** outline some Internet resources for knowledge sharing among the forest community.

While forestry researchers have long used the Internet to share their learning, other forest professionals including policymakers and managers are also increasingly turning to the Internet to update their knowledge about new trends, emerging issues, policy options and the management practices used to implement them.

What do the online learning strategies of an effective forest conservation leader look like? For California-based forest climate policy consultant Andrea Tuttle, the answers are mobile. She carries her Smartphone and laptop computer traveling in North America and Asia, subscribes to a number of email lists and participates in ‘webinars’. Her reading list includes Climate-L, run by the International Institute for Sustainable Development www.climate-l.org; Environment & Energy Publishing’s daily news and video paid-subscription wires www.eenews.net; Forest Trends’ “Trendlines” www.forest-trends.org/newsletters.php; plus blogs such as Climate Progress www.climateprogress.org and REDD Monitor www.redd-monitor.org.

Online learning for forest policymakers and managers can range from casual searching to formal courses of instruction. Information repositories, journals and news sites provide references and perspectives from different stakeholder groups. Online social networks may supplement the conventional face-to-face professional networks and meetings where forest policy and management are discussed.

Online repositories abound for forest data, documents and news, at varying levels of reliability and accuracy.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s “Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010” website includes a portal that makes thematic maps of forest cover instantly accessible, along with links to high-resolution satellite imagery from its global remote sensing survey of forests <http://geonetwork4.fao.org/geonetwork/srv/en/fra.home>.

A search for “forest policy” on YouTube.com returns more than 500 videos. Several Twitter feeds of short news items focus on forests, such as www.twitter.com/EI_Forest.

Online courses range from structured curricula, to less formal opportunities to interact with experts. The IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) World Conservation Learning Network soon will provide a catalogue of informal learning resources recommended by commission members, along with accredited online programs for advanced degrees and certificates in various conservation disciplines. www.iucn.org/cec.

What do the online learning strategies of an effective forest conservation leader look like?

The Nature Conservancy offers a free, public online Introductory Course on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Conserving and Enhancing Forest Carbon Stocks (REDD+) www.conservationtraining.org.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) launched an e-learning site that uses a taxonomy of forest and climate-related terms as the entry point for learning, combined with articles on key topics and self-paced tests <http://elearning.iufro.org/e-learning>.

Similarly, the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration www.forestlandscaperestoration.org organizes learning resources including videos, slideshows and documents together with discussion forums and online courses from Wageningen University and Research Centre.

The U.S. Forest Service uses recorded expert presentations to make up-to-date scientific knowledge available to forest managers, via its Climate Change Resource Center www.fs.fed.us/ccrc. These are also available as “portable presentations” that can be run from a disk without an Internet connection.

Online social networks provide venues for discussion, links to resources, shared calendars, and professional lag connections based on trusted “friend-of-a-friend” introductions. The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) created a social network space it calls “The Global Network for Forest Science Cooperation” that is linked to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and a WordPress blog www.iufro.org/iufro. It aims to be a one-stop venue for policy news, publications and experts.

If you are designing your own online learning strategy, identify the three or four most important areas for you to gain knowledge, then select sources that focus in these areas. The rest of the Internet can wait. Based on your available time and when you have online access, select resources that fit.

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Communicating biodiversity to forest owners in Estonia



Machinery operators were a key focus of the communication strategy

Frits Hesselink reports on how a biodiversity communication strategy moved from one of informing forest owners to one of supporting specific changes in forest management.

In combating forest biodiversity loss, it is not always necessary to educate forest owners about all the 'ins and outs' of biodiversity. Greater success can be achieved by identifying the most strategic behaviour change needed and focusing communication efforts on bringing about this change.

This was the case in Estonia. Forest legislation here stipulates that commercial logging operations must leave a certain amount of biomass in the felled area to help maintain biodiversity levels. However implementation of this regulation has been weak and clear-cutting operations generally leave no biomass behind. The

Estonian authorities recognized the need for awareness-raising efforts to encourage forest owners to change their management practices, and contacted the Union of Estonian Private Forest Associations (UEPFA) for help.

After some time UEPFA realized that its efforts to inform and train land owners about biodiversity and the law were not leading to changes in logging practices. With communication advice from IUCN and management advice from the Swedish Environment Institute, UEPFA switched tactics and began a consultative process to identify key stakeholders, hear their views

and learn about the motivation behind their current forest management practices.

From an initial consultation, it became clear that the main loss of biodiversity occurs on holdings where logging operations are outsourced to foreign harvesting companies, and much would be gained by focusing on the attitude of operators of harvesting and skidding equipment. So UEPFA brought together representatives from the forest school that trains forest managers, the large foreign machinery supplier and a large forest management company to discuss what needed to be done to encourage this attitude shift. UEPFA then partnered with these and other stakeholders to conduct a pilot training programme for the machinery operators on biodiversity-sensitive logging (i.e. reducing the environmental impact of logging and leaving sufficient biomass in place). The results of this pilot scheme served as the basis for developing a new element in the curriculum of the forest school. The foreign supplier of equipment also committed to promoting these forest management changes in its regular training courses for operators. As a first step, the training and awareness-raising efforts are focusing on the large logging operations (1000 of Estonia's 60,000 forest owners own more than 100 hectares) as these are the ones employing outside contractors.

The consultations with forest owners also revealed some important gaps and contradictions in the current legislation, and this led UEPFA to organize a short seminar for the Ministry of Environment to address these issues. Thus the initial communication strategy has grown into an integrated effort to tackle policy and practical issues as well as raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity in commercial forests.

This article is based on a paper *Communicating Biodiversity to Private Forest Owners in Estonia*, by Ants Varblane, Kaja Peterson and Frits Hesselink, published in: *Communicating Biodiversity to Private Forest Owners*, edited by Piotr Tyszko, IUCN 2004 (p. 58-68).

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Calling attention to Africa's bright side

Haroldo Castro reflects on the importance – and abundance – of conservation success stories from Africa.

Despite being the cradle of humankind, Africa is still mistreated by the international media. As hundreds of millions of people focused their attention on the continent in 2010 (thanks to the football World Cup in South Africa), I envisioned a window of opportunity to rework the mindset of the media and the public opinion.

In November 2009, I landed in Cape Town with my 26-year-old son Mikael Castro, an anthropologist and expert in sustainable tourism, to start an 8-month media expedition throughout Southern and Eastern Africa. The objective of “Lights of Africa” was to bring to the Brazilian audience, who mostly fed a very negative image of Africa by the international media, some good news. The first step was to convince editors in Brazil to present a different perspective of Africa. I was able to get them onboard with a basic rule: no stories on hunger, crime, Aids or civil conflicts.

During our 25,000-mile journey across 18 countries, we produced and published more than 50 short online articles on our blog Lights of Africa and for my travel and conservation weekly column Viajologia. We had five features published on Época magazine and ten television news stories were broadcast on Futura, an educational arm of Globo TV. Most of the stories took a conservation or sustainability angle, but all showed that there is an audience for positive news from Africa.

The great dunes of the Namib-Naukluft National Park and the Communal Conservancies in Namibia were the first to catch our eye. During our 23-day stay in the country, zigzagging between natural areas, we focused on the efforts of NGOs, governmental agencies, local communities and tourism operators to sustainably manage natural resources. Government authorities have designated that almost the entire stretch of the 1570-km long Atlantic coastline should be protected. Combining the existing protected areas with the



Female mountain gorilla from Bwindi National Park

In Bwindi National Park, the number of primates has jumped from 320 in 2003 to more than 360 in 2010. What's more, all eight females in the Nshongi group gave birth successfully this year!

107,540 km² of the soon-to-be Namib-Skeleton Coast National Park, will make the sixth largest terrestrial reserve in the planet.

We found a wonderful story in the semiarid lands of Namibia. In 1996, the government granted local communities the right to create and manage their own protected areas. With the support of NGOs, the concept of Communal Conservancies has blossomed. “Today, there are 59 legalized conservancies, totaling more than 130,000 km². The area protects 16% of the national territory”, says Keith Sproule, from WWF-Namibia. “The 29 joint ventures with tourism operators created almost 1,000 full-time jobs in the region and have been key to alleviate poverty.” It was a good start for “Lights of Africa.” As a result, we published a major feature story, titled “Namibia, a desert with a green conscience”.

The overland journey took us all the way to Northern Sudan, where we were conquered by the hospitality and respect of the Sudanese people. The lines we had read a few months before, at the Department of State website, seemed almost unreal: “The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Sudan, and recommends that all travel to Sudan be deferred due to uncertain security conditions and the possibility of violence and harassment targeting westerners. Travel anywhere in Sudan, including Khartoum and the adjacent town of Omdurman, is potentially dangerous.” Well, we had a completely different experience! In Khartoum, we were invited to participate in a wedding, a party for a newborn, a wrestling competition and even a religious Sufi ritual. We were free to photograph and film every moment. We felt so safe in Northern Sudan

(Continued on page 17)

When a spotlight is needed



A photograph from the exhibition

Juliane Zeidler looks at some of the strengths and weaknesses of visual communication for conservation.

“If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn’t need to lug around a camera,” legendary photojournalist Lewis Hines is imagined to have said. Hines, a pioneer in capturing images as evidence of social progress and/or deterioration, would most likely also endorse photography as a means to convey messages about conservation and sustainable development.

A few years ago Louisa Nakanuku, then the head of the Environmental Education and Information Unit at the Environment Ministry in Namibia, designed a photographic exhibition on how environment contributes to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For this exhibition, Louisa organized a launch event and invited cabinet ministers and other dignitaries. She produced an attractive brochure to brief such high-level decision-makers. Louisa says *“The event was really well visited and I received very positive feedback from Ministers and other key leaders from the country. Journalists from all media asked for more information about the MDGs and the relevant activities by the Ministry. And the Environment Minister found it important that the spotlight of the*

exhibition on Environment for Development and Development for Environment should also benefit people outside of the capital. So he made it possible to take the exhibition as a road show to our major regional towns. The exhibition was also followed up with radio discussions on the links between the MDGs and the environment.

Louisa is a biologist and professional photographer, and a strong advocate for visual communication: *“It is extremely powerful. It is directional and offers an objective perspective on a particular issue. Better yet, people who cannot read or write can relate to photography - images therefore can become a two-way communication tool. Letting people take their own pictures, through participatory photography or videoing, can be really appealing learning tools”.*

However, she also cautions about the potentially “dangerous” effects of the power: *“People sometimes think that just placing a pretty picture is doing a fine job. Underestimating the importance of placing the ‘right’ image, ‘wrong’ messages are*

being transmitted. For example, when we speak about sustainable use of forests or try to relate a message about the negative impacts of excessive deforestation, we must ensure that it is clear that we do not promote the callous cutting of trees”. *“Just placing a picture of tree stumps will not necessarily do the trick,”* says Louisa. *“The viewer might think that we want to cut trees!”* She suggests that photographs can be used in association with appropriate text. The combination of photography and text helps to find a balance for the intended message, especially for a photographic documentary on a particular issue. *“And it is always important to actually test your message and the effect on the viewers. Sometimes we only realize much later that our image had exactly the contrary effect in its communication power – and it takes a huge effort to reverse the impact”.*

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Juliane is Director of Integrated Environmental Consultants Namibia and the Regional Vice-Chair of IUCN’s Commission on Education and Communication for Eastern and Southern Africa. Louisa is a CEC member. The author would like to thank Louisa Nakanuku, Kim Awbrey and Frits Hesselink for their constructive inputs into this piece.

A communications success story from the International Year of Biodiversity

Anna Knee and **Ewa Magiera** of IUCN explain the strategy behind IUCN's International Year of Biodiversity web portal.



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) presented an ideal opportunity for IUCN's communications unit to 'push the boat out' in terms of outreach and attract new people to the cause of biodiversity conservation. Knowing that the internet offers ease of access unlike any other medium, an IYB web portal within the IUCN website was an obvious choice. However, one of the fundamental rules of communication is to know your audience. Thanks to previous research done on IUCN's website, we had a clear idea of what type of person is already using the site: mostly conservation scientists and practitioners and the academic community. We wanted to reach beyond these groups to a wider and potentially vast pool of people – those who have some knowledge about biodiversity and/or conservation but would like to know more. In other words, the 'informed and interested'.

Peddling messages of environmental doom and gloom only make people feel depressed and powerless.

To capitalize on this potential, we developed a variety of products to talk about biodiversity from a wide range of perspectives: on-the-ground stories of conservation action and results, expert opinion articles on controversial issues, conservation facts and figures, curious information about specific species, and scientists' profiles, to name a few.

With so much information available on the web, we wanted to be sure that our biodiversity messages would stand out from the crowd. In terms of the language we used, there was no doubt that we had to move away from the technical jargon and acronyms that clutter the IUCN website and prove a turn-off to potential new audiences. We placed an emphasis on remaining positive; peddling messages of

environmental doom and gloom only make people feel depressed and powerless. But there is a risk of 'dumbing down' too far. We aimed to present complex information concisely in a language that can be understood by anyone with a high school education yet is not patronizing to an expert.

Throughout the portal we tried to let the stories speak for themselves. The world of biodiversity conservation offers a wealth of interesting, often surprising information and IUCN is involved in some fascinating work, so in many respects, our job was easy.

Knowing your audience is one thing, but you also must know how they interact with the medium in question. Website visitors have a short attention span so we tried to keep our stories short, using tables and fact boxes, and varying the material with quotes from our experts, a 'personal perspective' on conservation from the scientists, and 'Q and A' sections for some of the more complex issues. We needed to get our messages across quickly and in a visually appealing way. As images are a powerful and crucial way to communicate conservation issues, we used plenty of photo galleries and short videos to profile IUCN's work.

The results were pleasing, the IYB portal becoming the second most popular in IUCN's extensive web pages, with, to date 110 000 hits from 20 000 different visitors. . Material produced for the portal is ideal for distribution to potential new followers via social media. We've posted daily stories on Facebook and Twitter and are slowly building a relationship with thousands of new people. All this we hope is generating more interest in our products, IUCN's work and conservation in general. But with the biodiversity crisis continuing to unfold, we face the ongoing challenge of making sure that our words trigger action.

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arborvitae

The next issue of **arborvitae** will be produced in Spring 2011 and will look at forests and gender. If you have any material to send or comments please contact:

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Back issues of **arborvitae** can be found on: www.iucn.org/forest/av

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Whilst working for IUCN's Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy (LLS) **Janaka de Silva** was responsible for initiating a complex forest restoration programme amongst the diverse communities and stakeholders of the tsunami-affected Andaman coast of Thailand. He spoke to **arborvitae** about the role of communication in this work.

What approach did you take to this work, and how did it begin to take shape?

The main thrust of our work on the Andaman coast was to demonstrate an ecosystem approach to coastal rehabilitation and management. While the ecosystem approach is logical in concept, translating it into action amongst multiple stakeholders requires substantial effort.

This was addressed in two phases: (1) Enabling stakeholders to gain understanding of the approach and its value so that they could identify the key issues for developing a joint plan and taking action; and (2) sharing the knowledge and learning that emerged so that it would influence change among the relevant stakeholders.

So I guess good communication was at the heart of this?

Good communication was essential in order to facilitate change and our approach reinforced the value of listening, facilitating and building consensus as essential elements for achieving this. Communication is not just about producing and disseminating documents or populating websites with information; it also involves creating an environment for dialogue and action in a broader sense. This is an essential element when working in a multi-stakeholder environment.

And how did you begin to build shared understanding and consensus?

The most basic step was taking time to build relationships and trust between field staff and other stakeholders, by providing opportunities to learn jointly, by sharing information in a collaborative way, and by creating an environment for one-to-one mentoring. We had to map the key stakeholders and understand how each of them interacted with each other. A major feature was ensuring that stakeholders recognized that they owned the process and its results.

And what tools did you use to assist the flow of learning?

Study tours, site visits and workshops were used to facilitate communication and learning in a participatory manner. We also used learning sites (to share information in public spaces) and produced materials (posters, fact sheets, videos) to enhance communication both among the stakeholders and to our target audiences beyond the landscape. Linking groups with common interests was a practical way to promote exchange.

What would you say are the main lessons you learned?

At the beginning of the project the importance of integrating a communication and knowledge management strategy into our work was recognized but not fully incorporated into our planning.

Communication played an important role in getting stakeholders to recognize the inter-linkages between habitats and between themselves and the need to work collaboratively. Getting that message to our various audiences was a challenge.

For future work, I would promote a much closer integration of these elements into the project proposal design and planning to ensure that learning and results are used to the greatest advantage. This is particularly important when dealing with processes that involve multiple dimensions and complex inter-related issues.

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13. Calling attention to Africa's bright side

that we even did bush-camping in the desert for several nights. To reveal this different face of the country, our major feature story was “There is a Sudan of Peace”.

Our trip through Eastern Africa would not have been complete without a stop in Uganda to track mountain gorillas. Although IUCN Red List states that mountain gorillas “are estimated to have experienced a significant population reduction in the past 20-30 years and it is suspected that this reduction will continue for the next 30-40 years”, the last censuses have demonstrated that the numbers of individuals in Uganda (as well as in Rwanda) have increased steadily during this decade. In Bwindi National Park, where we were able to see more than a dozen gorillas (part of the 34-member Nshongi group), the number of primates has jumped from 320 in 2003 to more than 360 in 2010. What’s more, all eight females in the Nshongi group gave birth successfully this year – great news and another feature story!

We met wonderful people throughout our trip, all working hard to develop a sustainable and conservation-oriented Africa. In almost every country we were able to produce stories with the spirit of “Lights of Africa”. However, our effort was very modest as the international media continues to stress Africa’s gloom and sorrows. If everyone concerned with spreading the Lights of Africa does his or her part, we can reverse this trend and help promote hope, peace and prosperity in the region.

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Haroldo is an award-winning video director and producer, an environmental journalist, and a photographer. He is a member of IUCN's Commission on Education and Communications. More at www.haroldocastro.com and www.LightsOfAfrica.com
