

Demonstrating ecosystem service values in Africa

Title

Despite growing awareness of the importance of ecosystem services in supporting human well-being, conservationists are rarely able to provide policy-makers with robust information about the overall consequences of land use decisions. Existing locally-relevant data are too patchy and the methods, skills and resources needed to collect new information are typically unavailable. Starting in January, an 18-month project will train African conservationists to conduct ecosystem services assessments and use the results to promote better policy decisions and build institutional capacity. Participants will be trained to use an ecosystem services 'toolkit' that measures multiple services delivered by a site. The toolkit, developed by a consortium of organisations under the umbrella of the [Cambridge Conservation Initiative](#), can demonstrate the 'added value' that high biodiversity sites often provide in terms of human well-being benefits. These benefits may occur at the local, national or global scale. It therefore promotes a better understanding of the social, political and economic factors related to site conservation and what could be done to achieve better outcomes for both biodiversity and human livelihoods.

Selected participants will attend a practical training workshop in April 2013 prior to implementing the ecosystem services toolkit at several threatened high biodiversity sites in the region. A follow up workshop in the second year will provide support in analysing and interpreting their results for a policy audience. Capacity building through this project will enable practitioners to work at the science-policy interface, to better inform real-world decision making. The project will generate greater awareness of the ecosystem services approach across Africa and will engage local practitioners in using this approach for site-based conservation. It will also generate novel data for future global analysis of site-scale ecosystem service values and participants will provide useful feedback to help modify and improve the toolkit for wider use. This project is funded by the CCI Collaborative Fund for Conservation and is a collaboration between the Tropical Biology Association, BirdLife International, RSPB, Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Related links: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/sowbpubs#EStoolkit>