Title

BirdLife International in partnership with the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL) and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) has secured a two year grant from the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation under the title "*The Gola National Park: realiszing its vast potential*". The project builds on the foundations laid by the "*Across the River - Trans-boundary Peace Park Project for Sierra Leone and Liberia*". On Tuesday 19th March 2013 the Jensen project was formally launched at the BirLife International Liberia office in Monrovia. The goal of the project is to facilitate the establishment of the Gola National Park in Liberia and support local communities to sustainably manage forest resources to maximize benefits for them whilst protecting globally threatened endemic wildlife.

The BirdLife International Project Manager, Mr. Albert Schenk, stated that it is crucial for any protected area to receive ample support and resources to be a real success, rather than just being a 'park on paper'. The Jensen project will be able to contribute to this through field training and operational support for the forest guards based in the Gola National Park, by setting up a participative biodiversity and threat monitoring program jointly implemented by FDA, SCNL and the local communities, plus by supporting forest edge communities with alternative sustainable livelihood strategies.

Also speaking at the launch of the project was Michael F. Garbo, Executive Director of SCNL and civil society representative. He said he is impressed with the level of funding received under the Jensen project and called on the government and other stakeholders, including the communities, to work in collaboration for the success of the park establishment and maintenance.

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Speaking on behalf of the Government of Liberia was Mr. Edward Gbeintor - Wildlife Manager of the FDA; he expressed the Government of Liberia's gratitude for the grant and gave assurance that his institution as the government arm responsible for conservation and protected area management will continue to collaborate with both local and international partners in the establishment of the Liberia Gola National Park and the expansion of protected areas network in the country. The FDA has appointed Madam Evangeline S. Nyantee - FDA License and Permit Officer as the FDA focal point for the Jensen project. The Jensen grant will help in the establishment of the Gola National Park in Liberia, and equip stakeholders, including local communities, with the relevant technical skills, tools and basic resources to ensure the wise use, conservation and sustainable management of the natural resources of the forest. It is anticipated that the Gola National Park in Liberia, with a surface area of 98,000 hectares, will be established before the end of 2013. The upgrade of the Gola National Forest in Liberia to a National Park would enable its linkage to the Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone resulting in the establishment of the Greater Gola Trans-boundary Peace Park; a major conservation and political achievement and milestone which would be the first in the West Africa region.