

# ***A SUMMER IMMERSED IN GABONESE WILDLIFE AND CULTURE***

***BY ARIANA CHEDRAUI  
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY  
SUMMER 2014 INTERN  
GABON BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE***

# *What to expect as an intern...*

## *#1 Full days on the field*

- ❖ Early morning to late afternoon field adventures



Crocodile nest hunting. Normally we go out Fridays on our Smithsonian boat and ride along the lagoons, visiting different locations each week. We leave early morning and at times don't make it back home until 5pm.

## *#2 Lack of Internet*

- ❖ Pro: Less time on the internet
- ❖ Con: Less time on the internet



At Vembo, there is often lagging internet. We always update each other when there is/isn't internet access. Once we have it, we quickly take action and try to complete whatever it was we needed to see on the internet. "Quick, send that email!"

### *#3 Spending time in the Smithsonian Lab*

- ❖ Learning about the collections and utilizing resources



Writing. Referencing posters, books, collections. The lab is a great resource. It's also nice to change the scene a bit and sit on the ground instead of the usual desk. Outside is always the best too, often hear the hippos!



## #4 *Speaking French*

- ❖ Use your French/English dictionary multiple times a day



If I didn't have my handy pocket dictionary, I would have not understood this sign and I would have been found swimming with a predator!

## *#5 Having Fun*

- ❖ Lots of laughter and chatting with awesome co-workers



# Projects!

## #1 Monitoring crocodile nests



Going out once a week to look for Nile crocodile nests. We look for sandy parts and look for potential paths female crocs would take. Then look for clean patches of sand- females then lay eggs there. Each time being out on the lagoon and seeing all the birds and wildlife has been more than a pleasure.





**Female crocodiles lay their eggs underneath the sand, so we search for areas that are free of leaf litter and debris**

Monitor lizard trails, predator of crocodile eggs. Difference between croc trail= size of track thin, meaning thin tail of lizard. Important to learn how to identify tracks while out on the field.





Learned how to prepare for a boat outing: dry sac, water, flashlights (head lamp), mosquito repellent, water proof camera, batteries, GPS, Rite in the Rain paper and pen paddles





# Projects!

## #2 Elephant Camera Traps & Database

- ❖ Each week, we check 9 camera traps that are set up around Yenzi camp



Sort through photos to check for elephant activity. Identifying group sizes and eventually familiarize with individuals in the database.

# Elephant Camera Traps

2014-09-15 6:29:19 AM M 3/3

22°C



GABON

RECONYX



2013-07-19 2:38:05 PM M 1/3

31°C



GABON

RECONYX

Elephants just as curious as we are!

❖ Have had the cameras out in various locations since 2011



Production road. Learning the behavior of the elephants. Never thought I'd see this.



Posing for the camera.

2014-07-04 8:44:05 PM M 3/3

21°C

GABON

RECONYX





learning more about their behaviors within groups.

2013-11-27 5:52:06 AM M 3/3

26°C



GABON

RECONYX

## ❖ Currently have over 90,000 images

Getting an idea of how many elephants are present in the area.

2013-02-22 6:44:02 PM M 2/3

28°C



GABON53

RECONYX





❖ In database, we identify group sizes and familiarize with individuals

# *Elephant Database!*

**PRESS PLAY BELOW**



# *Other critters!*





# *Smile at the camera!*

2013-08-28 10:48:08 AM M 3/3

28°C



GABON

RECONYX



2013-09-10 1:49:27 PM M 2/3

80°F



RC55 RAPIDFIRE

RECONYX



# Projects!



In Kenya, there was research done on effective ways to deter elephants. Here, we could potentially use beehives on the perimeter of plantations and deter elephants from crop raiding. We are seeing the frequency of elephants that visit certain locations where there are a lot of fruits. The trend is that they still show up, but the frequency of appearance is much lower. The inside of an elephant's trunk is sensitive to bee stings.



**Write a report about observations and making sure to report any presence of predators or unusual activity**







# Projects!

## #4 Lab Tours- An educational experience!

- ❖ Created a lab manual that will essentially be a guide for future interns to reference



Become more aware of the different animals that can be found in Gabon. Plus, Tobi has very interesting stories to share!



# *Projects!*

## **#5 Mangrove research in Sette-Cama**

### **❖SWAMP- Sustainable Wetlands Adaptations and Mitigation Project**



Mangroves: provide ecosystem services such as biological diversity, water quality, forest production, prevent floods, ecotourism, etc. 32-75% of local species spend part of their lives in mangroves



# ❖ Working on a global project to determine carbon stocks and emissions





## ❖ First year working in Africa









# ***Days in the village!***



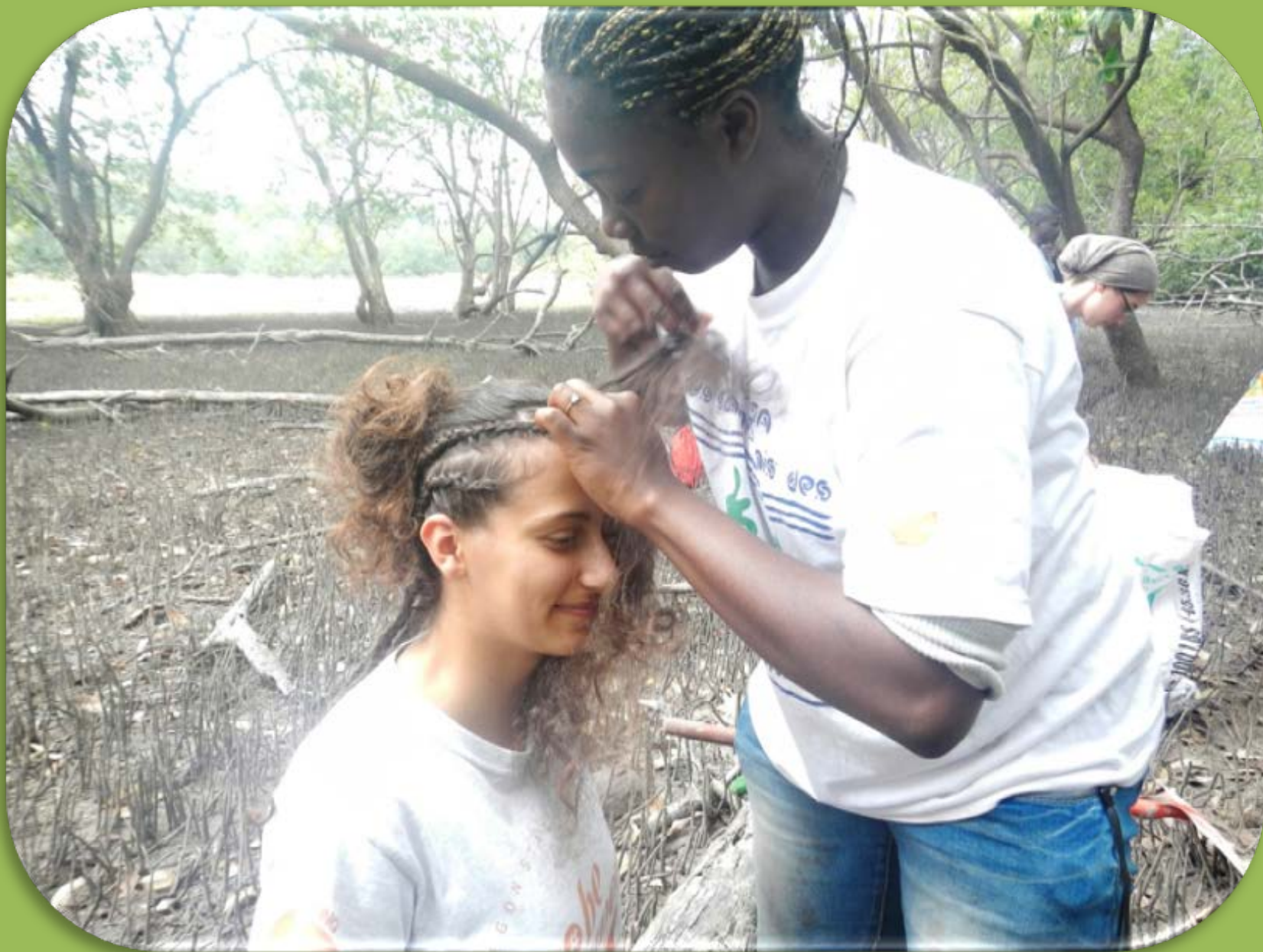
Elephant left with a sac of rice.





# *Sounga Village!*







# ***Additional Work!***



***Presentations about  
Wildlife Safety***





# *Foyer Stagiaire-Plein 3*



# *Lifetime Friends & Memories!*





## Gabon Independence Day Parade - August 17<sup>th</sup>







Fellow Interns!



# ***Additional Adventures!***





# *Nature Walks!*

**Loango National Park!**





## *Some things I will miss...*

❖ Watching something futbol related at dinner...everyday...





Winners!

Foyer Stagiaire  
Futbol Team!





# *Some things I will miss...*

- ❖ Eating together as a family every night



# *Some things I will miss...*

❖ Hearing hippo calls at Vembo





# *Some things I will miss...*

- ❖ Saying “bonjour” to everyone on the bus and then getting a unison “bonjour” back



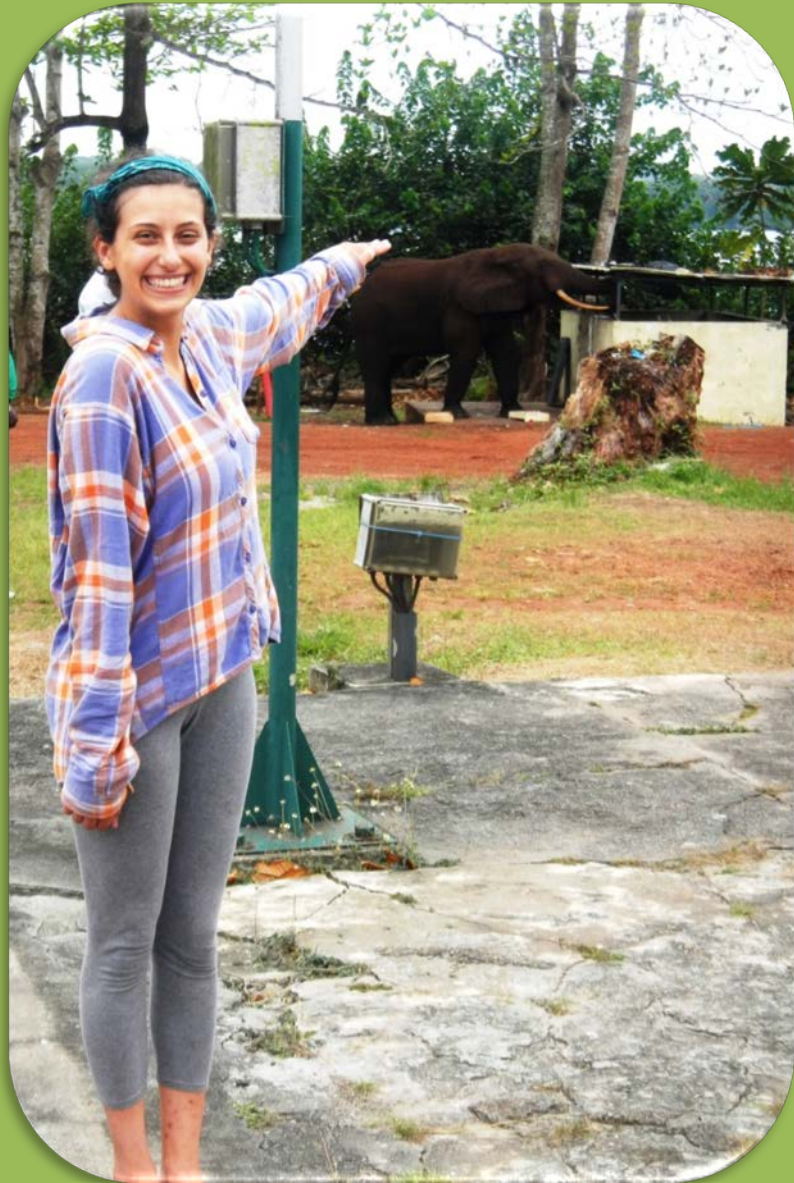
# *Some things I will miss...*

❖ Birds flying in and out of my bathroom at home





# Wildlife♥













# Thank you for coming!

