



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Wildlife Ecology

## SFS 3720

**Syllabus, Spring 2019**

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This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

## Course Overview

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The Wildlife Ecology course will provide students with in-depth understanding on the climate, ecology and dynamics of East Africa Savanna Ecosystems and their linkage to wildlife and natural resources conservation in the predominantly Maasai inhabited Kenya-Tanzania borderland of the Amboseli Ecosystem. Students will learn and apply in the field multiple approaches and techniques to studying wildlife, natural resources conservation and utilization, and ecological sampling techniques. They will also explore application of ecological concepts and principles in sustainable management of wildlife, water and other natural resources through lectures, field exercises and experiential hands-on learning. Aspects learned will be applied in the Faculty guided Directed Research (DR) at the end of the semester.

The course will be undertaken in the rapidly changing Maasai landscape of the Amboseli Ecosystem situated in the South eastern sector of Kenya, along the Kenya-Tanzania border. Field lectures, exercises and DR will be done in the Maasai Group Ranches, private and community owned conservancies including private land in the former Kimana Group Ranch. Field trips to protected areas will be undertaken to further student's experiential learning. Data collected by students in field exercises and DR will be synthesized and analyzed for acquisition of multiple skills such as; field sampling techniques, data management and synthesis, report writing and application of research in promoting sustainable management of wildlife and natural resources in general. At the end of the semester, students will present their DR work and findings to multiple stakeholders.

## Learning Objectives

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Through lectures, experiential and interactive learning, this course exposes students to the following aspects:

- 1) Climate, ecology and dynamics of East Africa Savanna Ecosystems with emphasis on the Amboseli Ecosystem
- 2) Climate change science and its effects on wildlife, natural resources (with emphasis on water) and local livelihoods
- 3) Techniques and approaches to studying wildlife ecology and natural resources use and sustainable conservation
- 4) Human-environment interactions and their effects on sustainable utilization of natural resources and harmonious co-existence between humans and the environment
- 5) Effects of uncontrolled land use changes on the environment, protected areas, wildlife populations and natural resources
- 6) Effects of overexploitation and uncontrolled utilization of natural resources on their conservation and local community socio-economic well-being

## Case Study

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### Overview

Globally, most natural resources face enormous pressure from multiple direct and indirect human activities, with deleterious consequences for humans and natural life. Further, most of the resources are limited, and thus easily prone to any disturbance by humans. In this regard, a lot of effort has gone to promote sustainable utilization of natural resources with emphasis on minimizing damaging human

activities and overexploitation. Most parts of East Africa, Kenya included are dominated by Savanna or rangeland environments which are naturally dry for most of the year due to scanty annual rainfall. However, these are the same landscapes where diverse biota endowments are found but which are currently under siege and near extermination by rapid human population growth and unregulated land-use changes.

The Amboseli Ecosystem is characterized by a semi-arid environment, and rainfall is received twice a year but it's scarce, unpredictable and low (300-800mm per year). This creates a water deficient landscape, and most of the water is found in scattered rivers, streams, springs and wetlands like swamps, all linked to the hydrology of the neighboring Mt. Kilimanjaro. These conditions tend to favor wildlife conservation and pastoralism, the latter being the historical key land use by the local pastoral Maasai people. However, immigration into the region by agricultural communities in the 1970s and 1980s saw introduction of farming as a new land use along the wet and arable slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro along the Kenya-Tanzania border. Thereafter, irrigated agriculture mostly for commercial purposes was introduced in the water systems of the Maasai Group Ranches where rain-fed farming is not possible. This lifestyle shift has seen pastoralism nearly replaced and dominated by agro-pastoralism among the Maasai.

Today, the dominant human activities, mostly irrigated farming and livestock keeping rely on the springs and rivers emanating from Mt. Kilimanjaro. The wildlife ecological dynamics in the ecosystem is also entirely dependent on these wetlands, which are the predominant dry season concentration areas as water and forage resources elsewhere diminish. Consequently management of water resources is a major conservation and livelihood issue. Often there are conflicts associated with water use among humans and between humans and wildlife, which is attributed to diminished availability of this vital resource. Resolving these conflicts and promoting wise use of available water resources is a major preoccupation of wildlife managers in the area, Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs) and the Water Resources Authority (WRA), the lead Kenya Government agency on water management.

The Amboseli Ecosystem lies contiguous to the Tsavo West and Chyulu Hills National Parks which are part of the Tsavo Conservation Area, the largest wildlife conservation landscape in Kenya. Chyulu Hills was gazetted as a protected area in 1983 to enhance protection of its wildlife resources and watershed services. It's recognized as one of the important water catchment areas situated in the dry lands of the country, and provides water to a vast landscape and diverse beneficiaries including Mombasa County. However, this service is threatened by destruction and general environmental degradation of the hills by livestock grazing, charcoal burning and accidental fires. Neighboring the Chyulu Hills N. Park is the expansive Tsavo West N. Park, which covers more than 7,000Km, and it's one of the important wildlife conservation areas in the country. Prior to its gazette as a protected area in 1948, the area was used by pastoral communities like the Maasai. Over the years, human population and land use changes especially farming adjust the park boundaries have increased significantly. This has led to escalation of human-wildlife conflicts and prevalence of illegal bush meat activities, which threatens the wildlife conservation agenda of the park.

SFS believes that the case study approach is a novel approach for studying such complex interrelated issues within landscapes. It presents students with an opportunity to analyze issues using a systematic, experiential and interactive approach. Thus, this case study will enable students to understand how development and natural resource conservation can be integrated for the overall well-being of humans and the environment. It is a process that requires a defined focus, and in these two cases studies, we have identified water as a most critical resource due to its paramount influence on humans and other

natural resources. The learning approach involves learning the issues through class room lectures, field exercises, and interactive sessions with field experts and by analysis of some of the data collected. This information will be used to answer the following case study question:

***How can changes in land use, natural resources utilization and availability in the Amboseli Ecosystem be managed to promote socio-economic well-being of local communities whilst safeguarding and promoting natural resources conservation?***

### **Case Study Background**

The basis for this case study is the Ecosystem approach, which appreciates the spatial-temporal nature of natural resource interrelationships, and their linkage to human needs. Most of the learning will be largely done in the Amboseli Ecosystem in the South eastern sector of Kenya. The ecosystem comprises of expansive Maasai Group Ranches, privately owned land along the Kenya-Tanzania border, protected areas, mainly, Amboseli, N. Park and several private wildlife sanctuaries/conservancies. It also neighbours the Chyulu Hills, Tsavo West and Mt. Kilimanjaro N. Parks, and has a mixed community made up of different ethnic groups; the Maasai, Kikuyu and Kamba among others. Of importance are the Maasai people, whose pastoral lifestyle has remained highly, tied to the environmental conditions of the landscape. Thus, the areas still has high wildlife abundance albeit in a rapidly human altered environment.

The biggest challenge in the Amboseli Ecosystem in regards to sustainable natural resource conservation is how to best manage existing natural resources amidst increasing rural development, land use changes and unregulated use of the resources. Water, wildlife, plant and range resources are some of the vital resource endowments found in the region, and whose future is of great concern. While water is uniquely scarce due to the semi-arid nature of the region, it is arguably the most important resource as it supports most life systems including humans. As mentioned earlier, the major sources of water in ecosystem are perennial and semi-perennial wetlands, rivers and springs linked to Mt. Kilimanjaro hydrological system. Unfortunately, these water systems have undergone immense pressure with negative effects on water quality and quantity due to combined direct human use and Climate change. This has had delirious effects on wildlife in the area, particularly the migratory species and the species directly dependent on water such the African elephant, common zebra and wildebeest. The current scenario on the state of water resources in region has created a lot of local and national concern. In particular, Amboseli National park is a Biosphere reserve, whose future depends on balancing the needs of wildlife and neighboring communities. This is the case as only a small fraction of the wildlife range is supported by the park. Migratory species such as the African elephant, wildebeest and common zebra make seasonal movement into and out of the core protected areas and these movements are often dictated by water availability.

The major issue in Tsavo West and Chyulu Hills is how to balance local community natural resource needs and conservation of wildlife and watershed services. Chyulu Hills were historically owned and used by the Kamba and Maasai people as a dry season grazing area and for extraction of herbal medicine and contraction materials for their houses. However, this access and resource extraction is prohibited due to designation of the hills as a protected area, which has created a lot of conflict between the park management and these communities. Illegal livestock grazing by the communities is rampant, and it's usually accompanied by burning the landscape to stimulate growth of rush and high nutritious forage for the livestock. Charcoal burning and illegal logging by the Kamba people are also prevalent, and are very destructive to the native vegetation. Collectively, the inappropriate human

activities in the hills are destructive to its environment and vegetation cover, thereby threatening the critical watershed services associated with the hills.

Tsavo West N. Park is an important elephant conservation area in the country, and it's endowed with many other wildlife species. In spite of its vastness, human-wildlife interactions have increased to the detriment of their historical harmonious co-existence. Communities living around the park incur a lot of economic losses and destruction of their property due to wildlife. Human deaths, injury and livestock depredation are also prevalent, and present a big challenge for sustainable wildlife conservation and co-existence between humans and wildlife. Overall, the negative human-wildlife interactions in the region have created a negative attitude towards the park, wildlife and its conservation. In spite of the collective efforts by the park management and other stakeholders, illegal bush meat activities are still prevalent inside and outside the park and present a major threat to wildlife survival and its long-term conservation.

## Assessment

	Assessment Item	Due Date	Value (%)
WE 06	Scientific field enquiry process: field observations & scientific write up		25
WE 10	Community perceptions on climate change and its impacts on water resources, pastoralism, food security and local livelihoods		20
WE 20	Species-habitat relationships in Tsavo West National Park		25
	Final exam		30
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

## Grading Scheme

A	95.00 – 100.00%	B+	86.00 – 89.99%	C+	76.00 – 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.00%
A-	90.00 – 94.99%	B	83.00 – 85.99%	C	73.00 – 75.99%	F	59.99 - 0.00%
		B-	80.00 – 82.99%	C-	70.00 – 72.99%		

## General Reminders

**Readings:** Assigned readings and hand outs (exercises/assignments) will be available prior to the scheduled activities. Course readings must be read and clarification on issues sought where necessary since ideas and concepts contained in them will be expected to be used and cited appropriately in assigned course essays and research papers.

**Plagiarism:** Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit – is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned for anyone caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat either actively or passively (e.g. allowing someone to look at your exam).

**Deadlines:** Deadlines for written field exercises and other assignments are posted to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments in good time. As such, deadlines are firm and extensions will only be considered under the most extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for each hour that they are late. This means an assignment that is five minutes late will have 10% removed an assignment that is one hour and five minutes late will have 20% of the grade deducted.

**Participation:** Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the program is mandatory because your actions can significantly affect the experience you and your classmates have while at CWWS. Therefore, it is important that you are prompt for all course activities.

## Course Content

**Instructors:** John W. Kiringe (JW), Moses Okello (MO)

**Type:** L: Classroom lecture, FL: Field lecture, FE: Field Exercise, D: Class discussions

\*Readings in **Bold** are required

	<i>Titles of Lectures &amp; Field Exercises</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Time (hrs)</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Instructor</i>
WE 01	<b>Case study introduction:</b> Provides a broad scope of the human dimensions and natural resources conservation issues(threats, challenges and opportunities) in the Amboseli Ecosystem	L	2	None	CD/All
WE 02	<b>The role of ecology in natural resource conservation:</b> The lecture demonstrates the linkage between the program’s case study question and Wildlife Ecology	L	2	None	JW
WE 03	<b>Nature interpretation. Theory:</b> Will provide an overview and insights on how to make field observations on nature and the environment. They will also learn how to apply these techniques in wildlife and natural resources	L	2	<b>Chris and Tilde Stuart (1994).</b>	JW
WE 04	<b>Nature interpretation: Field practice on wildlife signs:</b> In this field exercise, students will learn how to identify animal foot prints and track patterns, wildlife signs, and how these can be applied in wildlife conservation	FE	3.5	<b>Chris and Tilde Stuart (1994).</b>	JW

	and understanding the ecology local wildlife species. The skills acquired will also be useful in assessment of wildlife habitat occupancy, space use and their abundance. This exercise will not be graded				
WE 05	<b>Scientific field enquiry process: Theory:</b> Learn the process of scientific paper writing	L	2	<b>Michael Dernt. (2011).</b>  <b>Remsen, J. V., Jr. (1977).</b>	JW
WE 06	<b>Scientific field enquiry process: Field observations &amp; scientific write up:</b> The ultimate aim or goal of this exercise is to assist students to develop skills on scientific and logical way to interpret ecological and environmental phenomena through field observations and note taking. They will also learn how to design, apply a variety of techniques and approaches in conducting field observations on the environment, plants and wildlife. Each student will make four independent observations based on the guidelines provided by the Faculty, and use the observations to make a comprehensive scientific paper format write up for grading	FE	6	<b>Michael Dernt. (2011).</b>  <b>Remsen, J. V., Jr. (1977).</b>	JW
WE 07	<b>The ecology of the Amboseli Ecosystem and its influence on water resources, land-use and wildlife movement:</b> Lecture will examine the ecological characteristics of the ecosystem and their linkage to land use, water resources availability, wildlife movement and dispersal pattern	L	2	<b>Croze and Lindsay (2011).</b>  <b>Western et al. (2009).</b>  <b>Okello, M.M. and D'Amour, D.E. (2008).</b>	JW
WE 08	<b>Elephant conservation and movement pattern in the Amboseli region: insights from IFAW-KWS &amp; SFS elephant research:</b> An examination of historical and current elephant conservation in the ecosystem and findings of the IFAW-KWS-SFS elephant movement pattern research work	L	2	<b>Croze and Moss (2011).</b>	JW/MO
WE 09	<b>Climate change and impacts on water resources, pastoralism and food security: the case for the Amboseli region:</b> Lecture	L	2	<b>Australian Academy of Sciences</b>	JW/Guest

	will introduce students to the science of Climate change, concerns associated with this phenomenon and how it impacts natural resources, food security and livelihoods in the Amboseli Ecosystem			<b>(2015).</b>  Arab Water Council (No date).  <b>Mogaka et al. (2006)</b>	
WE 10	<b>Community perceptions on climate change and its impacts on water resources, pastoralism, food security and local livelihoods:</b> The exercise will assess community views on Climate change, associated indicators and impacts. It will impart the following skills; how to plan, design and implement a field based social survey; how to synthesis, analyze and interpret social survey data and information, and how to write a report using the data and information collected. Each student will write a report for grading. Faculty will guide and support the students to accomplish this academic activity	FE	5	<b>Campbell et al. (2016).</b>  <b>Taruvunga et al. (2013).</b>  Kimaro, E.G and Chibinga, O.C (2013).  Kiringe et al. (2009).	JW
WE 11	<b>Lion conservation and human-lion interactions in the Amboseli Ecosystem:</b> Examine human-lion interactions in the Maasai group ranches, their impacts on lion conservation and lion conservation efforts . The lecture will also explore the influence of Climate change in the ecosystem on lion ranging behavior	L	3	<b>Blackburn et al. (2016).</b>  <b>Tuqaa et al. (2014).</b>  Abell et al. (2013).	JW/Guest
WE 12	<b>Environmental changes in water systems in the Amboseli region and their impacts on local communities:</b> Field based observations and discussion on nature and drivers of environmental changes along rivers, springs and wetlands in the Maasai group ranches and their impacts on locals	FL	3	<b>Githaiga et al. (2003).</b>  <b>Howard and Bartram (2003).</b>  Okello, M.M. and D'Amour, D.E. (2008).	JW
WE 13	<b>Vegetation description and sampling techniques: Theory:</b> The lecture will provide students with an overview on different	L	2	<b>Kenneth F. Higgins et al. (1994).</b>	

	vegetation sampling methods/techniques and how the data collected can be used for wildlife management purposes. It will also familiarize students with some commonly assessed vegetation parameters and their relevance in wildlife ecology and wildlife management				JW
WE 14	<b>Vegetation description and sampling techniques: Field practice:</b> This exercise will provide students with an opportunity to use how to collected vegetation data using some of the commonly used sampling methods. In this process, they will; learn and develop skills on how to design and conduct vegetation surveys, develop ability to synthesis and interpret vegetation data as well as acquire knowledge on use and application of vegetation sampling methods and techniques. The exercise will not be graded	FE	3.5	<b>Kenneth F. Higgins et al. (1994).</b>	JW
WE 15	<b>Status and trends in range condition in the Amboseli Ecosystem and its implications to wildlife conservation:</b> Lecture will examine changes and trends in range condition in the Maasai group ranches, range condition indicators, drivers for the change and how it effects wildlife conservation	FL	4	<b>Milton et al. (1994).</b> <b>Macharia, P.M. and Ekaya, W.M. (2005).</b>	JW
WE 16	<b>Plant-herbivore interactions: impact of large mammals on vegetation: theory:</b> Will examine; how large herbivores like elephants interact and affect vegetation and the physical environment, why large herbivores have negative impacts on the vegetation and the physical environment, determinants of the magnitude and impacts by large herbivores, and, application of plant-herbivore interactions in wildlife conservation	L	3	<b>Antoni and Derek (2006).</b> <b>Western and Maitumo (2004).</b>	JW
WE 17	<b>Plant-herbivore interactions: impact of large mammals on vegetation: students symposium:</b> Students will evaluate journal articles on plant-herbivore interactions and do a 20mins presentation on the findings of the papers	D	3	Faculty will provide readings prior to the symposium	JW
WE	<b>Chyulu Hills watershed ecosystem services:</b>	FL	3	<b>Kiringe et al.</b>	

18	This lecture will introduce students to services and goods provided by watershed ecosystems including the Chyulu Hills. It will also examine the types and status of water sources associated with the hills, typology of watershed beneficiaries (water users), water economy, water discharge and abstraction, and threats to the hills hydrological services			<b>(2015).</b> <b>de Groot et al. (2002).</b> Constanza et al. (1997).	JW
WE 19	<b>Landscape ecology of Tsavo West N. Park and its influence on wildlife conservation.</b> The lecture will examine the landscape characteristics and heterogeneity in Tsavo West N.P and how it influences wildlife conservation. Factors influencing the landscape characteristics will also be examined	FL	4	None	JW/Guest
WE 20	<b>Species-habitat relationships in Tsavo West National Park:</b> The field exercise will expose students to techniques on how to assess wildlife-habitat relationships for effective management purposes. In the process, they will learn and develop skills on how to; conduct road transect surveys and classify wildlife habitats using vegetation structural appearance. Students will learn how to analyze the collected data using SPSS and interpret the results. Each student will do a report write up for grading using the data collected in the exercise	FE	3	<b>Valeria et al. (2005).</b> <b>Mwangi and Western (1998).</b>	JW
<b>Total Contact Hours</b>			<b>58</b>		

## Reading List

\*Readings in **Bold** are required

**Abell** et al. (2013). The long-term viability of current lion conservation strategies: a role for ex-situ reintroduction. Open Science Repository Natural Resources and Conservation.

Arab Water Council (n.d). Perspectives on water and climate change adaptation; Vulnerability of arid and semi-arid regions to climate change and adaptive strategies

**Antoni** and Derek (2006). Interactions between large African browsers and thorny Acacia on a wildlife ranch in Kenya. Afr. J. Ecol., 44: 515–522

**Australian** Academy of Sciences (2015). The science of climate change; questions and answers

**Blackburn** et al. (2016). Human–wildlife conflict, benefit sharing and the survival of lions in pastoralist

- community-based conservancies. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 53, 1195–1205
- Campbell et al.** (2016). Reducing risks to food security from climate change *Global Food Security*, 11:34–43
- Chris and Tilde Stuart** (1994). A field guide to the tracks and signs of Southern and East African Wildlife
- Constanza et al. (1997). The value of the world’s ecosystem services and natural capital. *Nature*, 387: 253-259
- Croze and Lindsay** (2011). Amboseli Ecosystem context: past and present; Chapter 2: pp11-28. In: *The Amboseli elephants; a long-term perspective on a long-lived mammal*.
- Croze and Moss** (2011). Patterns of occupancy in time and space; Chapter 7: pp89-105. In: *The Amboseli elephants; a long-term perspective on a long-lived mammal*
- Dernt, Michael.** (2011). *Basics of Research Paper Writing and Publishing?* RWTH Aachen University
- de Groot et al.** (2002). A typology for the classification, description and valuation of ecosystem functions, goods and services. *Ecological Economics* 41, 393–408
- Githaiga et al.** (2003). Survey of water quality changes with land use types in the Loitokitok area, Kajiado District, Kenya. *LUCID Working Paper Series*, 35, Pp1-28
- Howard and Bartram** (2003). Domestic water quantity, service level and health
- Kenneth F. Higgins et al.** (1994). Vegetation sampling and measurement. In: Theodore, A. Bookhout (ed), *Research and management techniques for wildlife and habitats*. The Wildlife Society, Inc., Allen Press, Inc. Lawrence, Kansas. Pp567-591
- Kimaro, E.G and Chibinga, O.C (2013). Potential impact of climate change on livestock production and health in East Africa: a review. *Livestock Research for Rural Development*, 25 (7)
- Kiringe et al.** (2015). Water management tools in the Chyulu Hills Watershed. Report prepared for the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) by Habitat Planners, Nairobi, Kenya
- Macharia, P.M. and Ekaya, W.M.** (2005). The impact of range condition and trend to the grazing resources of a semi-arid environment in Kenya. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 17(2): 143-147
- Milton et al.** (1994). A conceptual model of arid rangeland degradation. *Bioscience*, 44(2): 70-77
- Mogaka et al.** (2006) Climate variability and water resources degradation in Kenya: improving water resources development and management. *The World Bank Working Paper*, 69
- Mwangi and Western** (1998). Habitat selection by large herbivores in Lake Nakuru National Park, Kenya. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 7:1-8
- Okello, M.M. and D’Amour, D.E. 2008. Agricultural expansion within Kimana electric fences and their

implications to natural resources conservation around Amboseli. N. Park. *Journal of Arid Environments*. 72: 2179-2192

**Remsen**, J. V., Jr. (1977). On taking field notes. *Amer. Birds* 31: 946-953

**Tuqaa** et al. (2014). Impact of severe climate variability on lion home range and movement patterns in the Amboseli Ecosystem, Kenya. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 2: 1–10

**Taruvinga** et al. (2013). Climate change impacts and adaptations on small-scale livestock production. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 2 (2): 664-685

**Valeria** et al. (2005). Space and habitat use of the African elephant in the Tarangire–Manyara ecosystem, Tanzania: Implications for Conservation. *Mamm. biol.* 71 (2) 99–114

**Western** et al. (2009). The impact of subdivision and sedentarization of pastoral lands on wildlife in an African Savanna ecosystem. *Biological Conservation*, 142:2538-2546

**Western** and Maitumo (2004) Woodland loss and restoration in a savanna park: a 20-year experiment. *Afr. J. Ecol.*, 42: 111–121