

Trip Report for Field Monitoring of Rothschild's Giraffes in Soysambu Conservancy, Kenya
By Shea Flanagan '14, written Sept. 2014

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I just returned from two months in Kenya, volunteering at Soysambu Conservancy. Soysambu Conservancy is a 48,000 acre farm that has gained a conservation lease to protect its wildlife resources. The Conservancy currently supports approximately 90 endangered Rothschild's giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis rothschildii*), as well as countless other wildlife species. During my time there, I primarily worked at the Field Study Center to enhance their giraffe monitoring program to ensure the effectiveness of the long-term monitoring for the giraffe population there. I continued the biweekly monitoring of giraffes in the Conservancy and completely overhauled the identification database to ensure it was up to date and accurate regarding the current giraffe population size and structure. I trained the staff how to manage and catalog images taken during the monitoring sessions, and how to update the identification database after each monitoring session. I designed methods and research protocol to ensure consistency of data collection, and designated a clear schedule to ensure regular reporting. I also set up data spreadsheets and trained staff how to enter data. Additionally, I implemented the use of a photo recognition software program (Wild-ID) that was developed at Dartmouth to make the monitoring program more efficient. Lastly, I wrote a comprehensive User Guide to instruct staff how to conduct the giraffe monitoring program and to use the Wild-ID software.



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My experience at Soysambu Conservancy has allowed me to develop many invaluable skills. Primarily, I enhanced my ability to communicate scientific information effectively and clearly by discussing the best practices for the giraffe monitoring program. I also improved my educational outreach by giving presentations to the staff and visiting groups about the giraffe monitoring program.

This experience was the most collaborative office environment I have experienced, so I improved my multi-tasking capabilities and felt constantly stimulated by the variety of tasks going on. Furthermore, I gained an even greater appreciation for the importance of conserving wildlife, and I have a better of understanding of the complexities involved in wildlife management. Overall, I feel that my time at the Conservancy was well spent, and that I accomplished my goals.

