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Article:

Lovett, JC orcid.org/0000-0002-5839-3770 (2018) International Primatological Society Meeting in Nairobi 19–25 August. *African Journal of Ecology*, 56 (2). p. 159. ISSN 0141-6707

<https://doi.org/10.1111/aje.12525>

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Policy Piece for AJE 56-2

International Primatological Society meeting in Nairobi 19-25 August

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The 27th biennial meeting of the International Primatological Society (IPS) will be held for the second time in Nairobi, Kenya on 19-25 August this year. The first meeting in Nairobi was in 1984, and after that the Society came again to Africa with a meeting in Entebbe in 2006.

To celebrate the Entebbe meeting, the African Journal of Ecology published a review (Chapman, Lawes & Eeley, 2006) and Policy Piece (Lovett & Marshall, 2006). The review has now been cited 105 times; and the Policy Piece went through a period of being downloaded hundreds of times a week from ResearchGate, we assume as reading assignment in a massive open online course, though we never found out which one.

Both of these data demonstrate the huge interest in African primates, and justifiably so. Ranging in size from gorillas to minute bushbabies, in habitat from deserts to forests and from the coast to high mountains, African primates demonstrate an extraordinary variety of ecologies.

African primates have also attracted some extraordinary researchers. Diane Fossey gave her life for the gorillas of Rwanda; and Jane Goodall continues to dedicate her life to putting communities at the heart of conservation. Jane's pioneering research on chimpanzees led to fundamental changes in our understanding of the abilities of primates to use tools and organise complex societies. Her work now recognises the connectedness between people and nature, and mobilises the collective power of individual action.

Land use change away from biodiverse traditional extensive agriculture and pastoralism, loss of primary habitat and hunting for bush meat have all contributed to declines in primate populations; and some species are in desperate straits (Schwitzer et al., 2015). But the stories are complex. A recent survey found that there are around 360,000 western lowland gorillas in the wild, up by a third from previous estimates (Strindberg et al., 2018); and a ban on bushmeat hunting, in an attempt to reduce Ebola transmission, resulted in distrust of enforcement agencies and an increase in tensions (Bonwitt et al., 2018).

The IPS meeting will bring together primatologists from all over the world. The scientific programme consists of featured speakers, symposia, workshops, roundtables, paper and poster sessions; and the conference also features field trips to the Colobus monitoring project in Kipipiri and the Uaso Ngiro baboon research project. But the most important part, as any primate will tell you, is getting together and talking "Kukutana na kuzungumza pamoja".

Bonwitt, J., Dawson, M. Kande, M., Ansumana, R., Sahr, F., Brown, H. & Kelly, A.H. (2018) Unintended consequences of the 'bushmeat ban' in West Africa during the 2013–2016 Ebola virus disease epidemic. *Social Science & Medicine* 200, 166-173.

Chapman, C.A., Lawes, M.J. & Eeley, H.A.C. (2006) What hope for African primate diversity? *Afr. J. Ecol.* 44, 116–133.

Lovett, J.C. & Marshall, A.R. (2006) Why should we conserve primates? *Afr. J. Ecol.* 44, 113–115.

Schwitzer, C., Mittermeier, R.A., Rylands, A.B., Chiozza, F., Williamson, E.A., Wallis, J. and Cotton, A. (eds.). (2015). *Primates in Peril: The World's 25 Most Endangered Primates 2014–2016*. IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, International Primatological Society, Conservation International, and Bristol Zoological Society, Arlington, VA. iv+93pp.

Strindberg, S., Maisels, F., Williamson, E.A. et al. (2018) Guns, germs, and trees determine density and distribution of gorillas and chimpanzees in Western Equatorial Africa. *Sci. Adv.* 4, eaar2964