

Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Presents



The Wildlife of Rwanda

With Graeme Patterson, Ph.D

March 13, 2013

7pm



Despite a decade of war and environmental devastation, Rwanda has a long, proud conservation history. Rwanda's environment is a rich tapestry of habitats and its government is striving to build a post-conflict ecotourism industry. WCS staff maintained a presence throughout the country's most tumultuous period, from 1990 to 1994, and began assisting in the reconstruction of facilities the following year.

Known affectionately as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," Rwanda has a mountainous landscape that includes the volcanic Virunga range in the northwest, home to what is estimated to be a third of the world's remaining 750 mountain gorillas. About seven million people squeeze within Rwanda's borders, making it one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. Forests, once extensive, are now concentrated in the western mountains and the Lake Kivu area, and include habitat for golden monkeys, hippos, giraffes, zebras, leopards, crocodiles, and nearly 600 species of birds. The most biologically diverse habitats lie within three protected areas: Volcanoes National Park, Akagera National Park, and Nyungwe National Park. Nyungwe includes the largest mountain rainforest in Africa and covers around 400 square miles of rugged terrain, ranging in elevation from 5,200–9,680 feet, including tall, closed-canopy forests, bamboo thickets, and open, flower-filled marshes.

Tonight we will hear something of the history of conservation and of current efforts to secure the protection of the rich wildlife estate of Rwanda.

Graeme Patterson is a Deputy Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society Africa Program based at the Bronx Zoo, New York. Graeme studied Marine Botany at the University of Wales, UK, and completed a Ph.D. on the impact of heavy metal pollution on the ecology of upland streams from the University of Durham, UK. In 1987 Graeme moved to Kenya to take up a lectureship in the Botany Department at Kenyatta University, Nairobi which included teaching and research on the Rift lakes. In 1991, Graeme got the job of limnologist/plankton ecologist on a 4-year program supported by the UK Government to study the pelagic ecology of Lake Malawi/Nyasa. After this he made his base in UK to work for the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) as technical manager on the 5 year UNDP-funded GEF Lake Tanganyika Biodiversity Project – this was his major shift from pure science and teaching to conservation management. It also meant that he would spend time living in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Zambia. During this period Graeme also acted as a consultant on a number of other projects in Indonesia, Egypt and the Maldives; he has published widely on the work he has conducted – particularly on the African lakes. Graeme moved to WCS in January 2001 as Deputy Director of an ever-growing WCS program across Africa.

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