



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Saving Kenya's Black Rhinos. **Name:** Torrey Lau
Other Team Members: Anna Beal
Program: Minneapolis Program
Trip Dates: 07/21/2012 - 08/10/2011 **Location Visited:** OI Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya
Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 02

Project Summary: Although we had both experienced ample field research in our native state of Minnesota and in a previous FFT award we spent time in Nicaragua doing rainforest ecology research, we had come to that place in teacher where we needed a bit of inspiration.

Anna arrived ahead of time to take in a Kenyan and Tanzanian safari. After the safari we met up at a hotel in Nairobi where our other fellow travelers. We were very excited to arrive at OI Pejeta Conservancy where we would embark on a two week field research project on Kenya's Black Rhino. After a long, bumpy, dusty and semi-scary ride we had arrived at the research station. We settled in and took in the view of all of the animals and this new ecosystem. We received a briefing from staff and guards about the work we would be doing to monitor the rhino populations in the conservancy.

This is a snapshot of our days in the field. We got up early, ate breakfast, programmed our GPS and gathered our field equipment. While in the field, we traveled to different established plots where we measured location of tagged acacia trees, tree height, diameter, seedling counts, type of ants living on the tree, and browsing damage by animals like giraffe, rhino, impala, and elephants. We also went lion tracking one day, and walked a 7.5 Km transect looking for different types of dung. Completing this work allowed us to understand the impact the rhinos have on the environment and if it can sustain the population of rhinos being protected at the conservancy.

We had two days off while working. One one of our days off we traveled to the neighboring Aberdare National Park. This region is known for it's rainforest environment rich with forest animals. High densities of buffalo and wild hogs. We visited two large waterfalls in the park and stopped for many pictures. On our second day off we visited the community. We started off at a high school. We visited classrooms and got a tour of the new science lab. The chemical room was quite impressive and well organized. Students were taking their state exams but still took the time to talk to us. We quizzed them on science facts and talked to them about their test. Next we visited a primary school. Students sang " You are my friend yes I know" and danced with the group. Both groups of students were very happy and seemed to enjoy visitors.

We left Africa realizing no matter where we are we want to learn new things, and students across the world are no different.

Career Impact: *We were able to see plants and animals we had never seen before. We saw white and black rhinos, hartebeest, elephants, giraffe, common and gravis zebras, lions, cheetahs, warthogs. Our highlight animal experience was to see a pack of wild dogs chasing a gazelle.

*We became very skilled in using the metric system. We really were able to get a true sense of distance in kilometers by the end of our stay. Our field research required the use of a compass, we learned to use bearings and distant to find tagged trees. This was done with zero technology- just a compass and perfect strides. One of us was better than the other, so much that a deep hole did not stop her!

* We learned more about East African culture and traditions. We picked up a little Swahili, even though English is spoken in Kenya. We found students to be fun, energetic and charismatic.

*We learned how to create and update a blog, a first first for both of us. This allowed others to keep in touch with us while we were far away. <http://annatorrey.wordpress.com>.

Classroom/Community Impact:* Our blog was posted on our school website and will be linked to our teacher page.

* We both created displays in our classrooms highlighting our experiences and plan to use these to discuss how conservation takes place even on the other side of the Earth.

*We collected video with animals running and our physics colleague plans on using it to calculate data on velocity.

Open Response: *We plan on creating a unit that will take our students outside so they can do field research. In the unit we will focus on field equipment use and data collection.

*Future collaboration with art teacher. The art teacher has a pattern unit where Massai are part of the discussion. We can bring our artifacts from our trip to discuss our journey during the unit.

We have not begun our school year yet, but we know that our discussion of our trip, sharing of our blog, and looking at pictures will surely bring up topics that we can nurture and develop in to a unit for students surrounding not only Kenya but other parts of Africa.

Quote: Our time in Kenya gave us the opportunity to act as real scientists while contributing to conservation efforts half way around the world.

Photos:



Blind elephants are safer than a charging rhino!



Mother and baby black rhino in the field.



Torrey gathering gear before a day in the field.



Anna with the compass ready to locate a tagged acacia tree.



Protected white rhinos at the rhino conservancy.



Taking a break from field work.



Getting ready to take measurement of the acacia tree.



Soloman at his beloved rhino Morani's grave site..."Carry on".