

MENTOR-Manatee Fellows, 2015-2018



The MENTOR-Manatee Fellows. Credit: Lucy Keith Diagne / African Aquatic Conservation Fund

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) MENTOR Programs bring together teams of emerging conservation leaders and combine rigorous academic and field-based training, long-term mentoring, learning through experience, and project design and implementation to address major threats facing wildlife populations. These fellowship programs help strengthen capacity in-country – a fundamental objective of the USFWS in Africa.

In 2015, the USFWS launched the MENTOR-Manatee program under the leadership of Dr. Lucy Keith Diagne of the African Aquatic Conservation Fund. This three-year program addresses the need for capacity building, threat assessment, and action in African manatee research and conservation in Central Africa. Each of the eight Fellows work on individual manatee projects in their home countries, as well as two team projects documenting manatee hunting and the bushmeat trade, and manatee education programs for schools and the public. The MENTOR-Manatee program is building a network of Central African wildlife professionals who can lead research and conservation efforts, reduce illegal manatee bushmeat exploitation at local and regional levels, and run educational campaigns focused on the manatee throughout Central Africa.

Please see below for information on the Fellows and their projects through MENTOR-Manatee.



Aristide Kamla Takoukam (Cameroon)

After completing his Bachelor and Master's degrees at the University of Dschang, Cameroon, Aristide is working on his PhD at the University of Florida. He received a Fulbright Scholarship towards his doctorate and Dr. Keith Diagne serves on his academic committee. Aristide is also the founder and director of the non-profit African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization (AMMCO). Aristide's MENTOR-Manatee project is "Enhancing the local perception of the African manatee in Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve, Cameroon through education programs".



Bridget Eduke (Cameroon)

As part of her MENTOR-Manatee Fellowship, Bridget is conducting the first African manatee surveys and threat assessment of the newly created Campo Ma'an National Park in southern Cameroon. She is the first person to study manatees there. Bridget completed her Master's degree in Forestry Science at the University of Yaoundé in spring 2016, and is now working as a high school teacher.



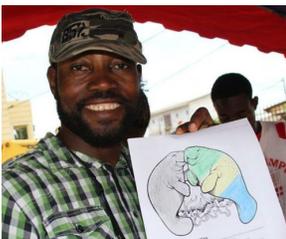
Christy-Achtone Nkollo Kema Kema (Gabon)

Christy has been studying the African manatee in her home country of Gabon for four years. She is employed by a Gabonese non-profit research organization, Ibonga, and her MENTOR-Manatee project is entitled “Study of potential impacts between fisheries and manatees in N’dogo Lagoon, Gabon”. Christy also received a Russell Train Fellowship from the World Wildlife Fund in 2015, and she graduated with a Masters in Geography from the Université Omar Bongo de Libreville. Her thesis focused on mapping manatee habitat use in N’dogo Lagoon.



Constant Ndjassi Ndjeunda (Cameroon)

Constant has a fisheries background and for his MENTOR-Manatee project, he is focusing on fish species in African manatee diet and the impacts to manatees from fisheries in Lake Ossa and the lower Sanaga River, Cameroon. Constant completed his Master’s degree at the Institute of Fishery Sciences, University of Douala in 2015 and he is now employed by the Zoological Society of London at their field station at Lake Ossa, Cameroon.



Cyrille Mvele (Gabon)

Cyrille is the co-founder of *Organisation Ecotouristique du Lac Oguemoué* (OELO), a non-profit research and conservation organization in central Gabon. His MENTOR-Manatee project, “The impact of manatee hunting and the bushmeat trade in the Ogooué region of Gabon”, is investigating where illegal hunting and trade are taking place, and looking for ways to stop it. Cyrille also has a similar project focused on the slender-snouted crocodile, for which he received a Conservation Leadership Program Award in 2015. Cyrille and his organization also run an ecotourism site, Tsam Tsam.



Jean-Pascal Koh Dimbot (Cameroon)

Working in southwestern Cameroon, Pascal’s MENTOR-Manatee study, “Conservation of the African manatee in the southern periphery of Korup National Park: human-manatee conflict and institutional weaknesses” has identified several new fish species consumed by manatees, and he is documenting net destruction by manatees, as well as hunting. Pascal graduated from the University of Dschang with his Master’s degree in Fall 2016 and he plans to pursue a PhD. In 2016 Pascal was also awarded a free two year membership to the Society for Conservation Biology.



Rebecca Djanivenda (Gabon)

Rebecca works as the Education Coordinator for OELO (*Organisation Ecotouristique de Lac Oguemoué*) and her MENTOR-Manatee project centers on manatee education programs in central Gabon. Rebecca is working with 15 elementary and high schools throughout the region and her interactive programs reach 4000 students annually. She also created Nature Clubs that have 400 student members, and she leads several environmental festivals annually. Her MENTOR-Manatee project is entitled “Conservation of the manatee in the middle Ogooué region, Gabon: bringing environmental education into community awareness programs”.



Samuel Mbungu (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Samuel, our MENTOR-Manatee fellow from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is studying manatees in the Congo River Estuary and Parc Marin des Mangroves at the mouth of the Congo River. He conducts surveys for manatees, documents illegal hunting, and conducts education programs throughout the region. Samuel is the Program Coordinator for the non-profit organization *Action Communautaire de Développement et d’Encadrement Communautaire* (ACODES) and he is also secretary-general of the Institute of Navigation and Fisheries at the University of Muanda, DRC.

To learn more about the USFWS MENTOR program, please see <http://www.fws.gov/international/pdf/factsheet-mentor.pdf>

