



African Scholarship Program

"In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." Mr Baba Dioum ..Senegalese conservationist

Summary:

Initiated by the African Chelonian Institute, the inaugural African Scholarship Program (ASP), a training course for Africa's turtle biologists, will take place between November 25-December 5, 2021. This initiative is a vital response to the ongoing and unsustainable loss of turtle populations throughout the African continent due to severe bushmeat consumption, commercial exploitation and numerous other threats. Extirpation of many of Africa's turtle & tortoise populations and extinction of several species is inevitable unless concerted and efficient conservation measures are taken.

The movement of "African Turtle Conservation," as it has come to be called, has started to receive global attention and support from an ever-increasing number of conservation organizations. What makes the African Scholarship Program so wonderfully unique is that turtle conservationists from throughout West Africa will come to Senegal for an intensive program of research, workshops, and field trips to learn from the community-based chelonian conservation programs led by the African Chelonian Institute. This program is meant to promote local conservationists and will be led by local instructors (Tomas Diagne, Dr. Luca Luiselli, Pearson McGovern, Josea Dossou), creating a local collaborative and cohesive conservation coalition within West Africa.

Program objectives:

- 1. Develop scientific expertise for chelonian research in Africa:** Provide scientific and practical training in turtle and tortoise ecology, biology, conservation and monitoring techniques for African students, professionals, and wildlife managers who have already demonstrated an interest in their local chelonian fauna.

2. Build conservation leadership skills:

Develop the capability of enthusiastic individuals to enable them to establish and direct conservation education and awareness programs in their home nations.

3. Promote the formation of conservation networks:

Graduates of the program will be encouraged to form their own country networks, joining together to form an "**Association of Turtle Friends.**" Such a group, with mutual interests and relatable experiences, will be able to work cooperatively for the benefit of African Turtle Conservation. We will have the capacity -- both individually and collectively -- to conduct scientific research, establish conservation education and awareness programs, garner public support, and influence legislative change in our homelands.

The **African Scholarship Program** training course will be from 25 Nov. – 05 Dec. 2021

Course participants will have the opportunity to:

- Learn about the identification and conservation status of tortoises and turtles worldwide.
- Understand more about the biology, behavior and ecology and conservation techniques of tortoises and turtles in West Africa.
- Obtain new research skills for field work including surveying, proper handling techniques, and data collection on tortoise and turtle species.
- Learn the process of study design and scientific data collection
- Examine the fundraising opportunities to fund research and conservation and methods for maximizing fundraising success.

We aim to bring together turtle conservationists from Africa to create and foster the future of
"African Turtle Conservation."

Quotes from renowned herpetologists:

“Survivors of countless millennia, turtles on the brink of our new millennium face imminent demise at the hands of humans. We are facing a turtle survival crisis unprecedented in its severity and risk. Without intervention, countless species will be lost over the next few decades.

- **Anders G. J. Rhodin, Chelonian Research Foundation**

“We are on the brink of losing a group of animals that has managed to survive the upheavals of the last 200 million years, including the great extinction episode that eliminated the dinosaurs.”

- **Russell A. Mittermeier, Global Wildlife Conservation**

"There is no vertebrate group facing greater survival problems today. Turtles saw the great dinosaurs come and go and are now facing their own extinction crisis"

- **John L. Behler, Wildlife Conservation Society**