



Kenya Newsletter March 2013



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<u>Editor's Note</u>	

Despite 2007 violent general elections, the March 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 general elections and the long wait for the results that followed was a very peaceful event. Every one of our placements is up and running again after the short break. In Our March Newsletter we look at two exciting stories of medical volunteer Kevin Wüst and Conservation Volunteer Koen Buysse. We also have a look at a walk to work in the conservation project as well as an Introduction to the new addition in Projects Abroad Partners Blessing Children's Learning Centre placement.



## **Dutch high school graduate gains useful experience for his future career in Medicine while volunteering in Kenya**



18-year-old Kevin Wüst, a recent graduate from Keizer Karel College in the Netherlands, had always had dreams of becoming a doctor. He travelled to Kenya to volunteer for two months with Projects Abroad where he could gain some real experience in the field before starting his university career.

Kevin was placed at the Langa Langa Health Facility in Nakuru, a small medical centre dealing with free HIV/AIDS testing, counselling, tuberculosis treatment, antenatal and postnatal care. "The clinic is hugely understaffed, with every department having only one member of staff who caters for a large number of patients each day. My presence here was much needed and appreciated; and I was happy to offer an extra hand." says Kevin.

Kevin's tasks at the clinic included assisting the doctor with injections, taking the patients' blood pressure and weight as well as providing counselling on family planning methods. After the first few weeks Kevin's confidence in the job had grown so much that he was able to undertake more responsibility; allowing him to manage his own department in the absence of the other members of staff. "This experience will be beneficial for me in the future and it has also given me the opportunity to contribute positively to the local society through my input with counselling; that was my favourite part." says Kevin.

Outside of work Kevin has had the opportunity to learn more about the Kenyan culture by living with a local family and experiencing African food; his favourite being Chapatti. On the weekends Kevin had the chance to visit other parts of the country with the other volunteers; "It is totally different here with everything being so green, Maasai Mara was really great, seeing all the exotic wildlife so close and for the first time was an amazing experience, Mombasa was also a highlight."

On his return home Kevin plans on taking a medical school access test with the hopes of being accepted. After his graduation, he plans to come back to Kenya, this time as fully fledged doctor.

To future volunteers he has this piece of advice: “It is better to travel as a volunteer than as a tourist since the former has the opportunity of getting to know the people and you feel more productive when you get to help and induce some positive change in people’s lives.”

### **HZ University graduate Koen Buysse experiences the wild side while volunteering in Kenya**



23-year-old Koen Buysse from Aardenberg in South-Western Holland, travelled to Kenya's Nakuru region to fulfill his lifetime dream of travel, adventure and philanthropy. After graduating from HZ University of Applied Sciences in Vlissingen, with a degree in International Business and Management, Koen wanted to do something completely different. He chose to volunteer for 4 months with the Projects Abroad Conservation Project where he could not only live out this dream, but also do something worthwhile at the same time.

Koen was placed at the Kigio Wildlife Conservancy, a small reserve renowned for the endangered Rothschild giraffe. The reserve also provides sanctuary for buffalos, gazelles, waterbucks, warthogs, hyenas, leopards amongst the many other wild animals native to the region. “It is an amazing opportunity to work in the wild, walking among the animals unlike in national parks where you sit in a car all day long,” says Koen.





Amongst Koen's many responsibilities at the reserve, he was involved in fence patrols, monitoring animal population, checking camera traps and maintaining road construction. "It is a very enriching experience for volunteers to work here, I could never have imagined doing this, the rangers really appreciate working with us and they are always very helpful. We also get along with them quite well and for me it is like living in a second family."

When not walking and working among the wildlife, Koen took time to explore the rest of the country. He has been to the Aberdares, Maasai Mara and he also planned to climb the highest mountain in Africa. "No one should skip on visiting Maasai Mara, it is really beautiful there." says Koen.

Koen also appreciates the kind nature of the Kenyan people, how easily they chat with strangers on the streets and they are very helpful. "I plan to visit Madagascar and see another parts of Africa; I hope it is as nice as Kenya!" says Koen. To future volunteers he had this piece of advice to give: "If you have the time and opportunity go for it; you will never want to miss this!"

We hope great stories like these inspire others to help Projects Abroad to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

## Sun, rocks and thorns



It is 7.00am and the sun has already risen, everyone gets into his/her group, with the groups divided according to the tasks to be undertaken for the day. Being a regular visitor of the conservation project I'm surprised to my unpreparedness for the task ahead of me. Later I came to realize despite having been involved in all the labour tasking activities this place has to offer like road construction, fence survey, invasive plants control, giraffe capture exercise, etc., this is the only single activity that I was doing for the first time and I had highly underestimated it.

The camera trap data collection may sound simple but soon my Tanzanian counterpart, Kanette and I discovered otherwise. We were accompanied by Tonny the research scientist, Koen and Takanouri both volunteers at the conservation project. For Tonny and Koen they really seemed at home, always moving up the rough terrain at an alarming speed, leaving a huge gap between them and us. Takanouri was a bit overtaken by fatigue since he had just recently arrived in the country. It was a totally different case for Kanette and I since we were breathing so hard that we could not hear any other sound other than heavy heart beats as we panted all through the whole walk. Despite the steep and rocky climbing, very tiny ticks that kept clinging on the clothes or skin, thorny plants stinging from the feet to the knees and lack of proper walking tracks, there was the hanging danger of animal attacks especially from a buffalo which is known to hide in shrubs as it patiently waits to attack ignorant approaching prey. Well this was a setting in the jungle and anyone with the expectations of a walk in the park must be quite delusional. It must be that the life in the city overtook my active upcountry upbringing or I'm just too unfit for such an activity, blame it on the barbecued red meat on every weekend. With each camera about 1 kilometer apart from the other and with 10 cameras to collect data

from we had a lot to see on the way coming across warthogs(Pumbas), gazelles, zebras among other animals. There were also good photos of different animals that the cameras had taken and to crown it all the body exercise that my body was craving for.

### **Placement introduction.-Blessings Children's Home**



Tucked in edge of Ponda Mali slums Blessings is a small care center catering for a number of the unfortunate children from this poverty stricken area of Nakuru. It might seem like a drop in the ocean once one looks at the living conditions in this area, but the little this center do goes far in changing the lives of 45 children in the institution. Projects Abroad volunteers Amalie Børresen and Alberte Mikkelsen have made a major addition to the orphanage. Being the first volunteers, Blessings director Magret Ogol reckons the importance of the presence of the volunteers, “ thing are getting better in this place we have the introduction of a different way of teaching through the introduction of creative arts in the learning process. The children are more attentive in class leading to better results in the class.” We look forward to along work relationship with Blessing Children's Learning Centre ☺

