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2025



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KENYA ECOLOGY PROGRAM DATES

26 MAY TO 10 JUNE 2025

PROGRAM COST

\$3 590 - US Dollar

€3 250 - Euro

There are only **8 spaces available** in each group, to give you the best experience possible! We work on a first come first served basis, so book early to avoid disappointment!

PLEASE COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

ABOUT THE KENYA ECOLOGY PROGRAM

The Discover Eden Kenya Ecology program is specifically designed for those who are either studying or working in the conservation ecology field. With a wide range of field-based components, interspersed with topical theoretical discussions and workshops, this short course gives you the hands-on experience you have been looking for to see what being a biologist is all about. Set in the magnificent biodiverse country of Kenya and rubbing shoulders with some of the country's top conservation experts, this course gives you exposure to an unprecedented range of species within a short space of time.

This activity packed program in a global biodiversity hotspot addresses topics such as forest ecology and research, ornithology, butterfly farming, reptile biology, marine biology, working with endangered species, animal rehabilitation and care, eco-tourism, community conservation, and so much more! Importantly, you get to start developing your own professional network in valuable conservation circles. Food, accommodation, and ground transport are all included in this package.

Please note: Due to the unpredictability of nature and the weather, the days and activities stated below may be switched around or substituted to give you the best experience possible.

COURSE OUTLINE

DAY 1 ARRIVE & ORIENTATION

Your friendly Guide will pick you up at Moi International Airport in Mombasa, Kenya. We will then make our way to Watamu, on the Kenya Coast, where we will be based for the first part of the course. You will be able to have a swim and freshen up before dinner and a chat, getting to know your fellow students that are on the tour with you. Finish off the day with a brief orientation where we will explain everything that lies ahead.

DAY 2 WATAMU MARINE NATIONAL PARK

We kick off with a day of Marine Biology! After a brief theory introduction to the work being done, you will get underwater to conduct a timed shark survey. We will also assist with coral transplants in the reef nursery. After lunch, conduct some seagrass assessments, and explore abundance of the biodiversity in the inter-tidal zone. While exploring the area underwater, we will keep our eye out for ghost fishing gear that gets entangled on the reef, and remove any items found.

DAY 3 TURTLES AND MARINE COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

We kick off the morning with a session with a local turtle conservation NPO, learning about the important work they do. This includes local turtle rehabilitation, rescues from bycatch, and nest monitoring efforts. We will endeavour to cover as many aspects of the turtle work as possible depending on what is happening at the time. After lunch, we will join some Community Scouts to learn what role they play in Marine Protected Area (MPA) management and how they engage with community members.

DAY 4 MICROPLASTICS AND REPTILES

Today starts by examining microplastics on the beaches in the MPA, getting a better understanding of the impacts of one of the biggest eco-threats currently facing our oceans and coastal areas. Afterwards we will visit a local reptile centre, a hands-on research and education centre dealing with reptiles. Learn about snake ecology and conservation, husbandry, and handling, and experience almost 50 Kenyan snake species.



DAY 5 MIDA CREEK

Today we head to an amazing local biodiversity hotspot. Mida Creek is indeed seen as one of the most important areas for migratory birds in East Africa! We will conduct surveys for a bird atlas project, complete a tidal bird count and do a canoe trip to explore and learn about mangrove forests. We will also examine community conservation efforts here, including a visit to a boardwalk, the income from which feeds into a local community school eco-bursary scheme.

DAY 6 BIRD RINGING AND TRAIL MAINTENANCE

An early start today sees us using mist nets to trap and ring (band) birds as part of a long-term study. Learn the history, why's and how's of this valuable research tool, and get up close and personal with some feathered friends. Learn about moult in birds, and how we can learn so much about birds through studying their moulting process. We will also use existing ringing biometric data for a data analysis exercise exploring sexual dimorphism in select species. The rest of the day will include some important nature trail maintenance.

DAY 7 ARABUKO-SOKOKE FOREST

Today we explore tropical forest at Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. It is one of the last remaining accessible forest remnants found in this region and is a conservation hotspot. We will try find the rare and elusive Sokoke Scops Owl, and assess elephant damage in the forest, discussing how this impacts local communities and forest conservation. We spend the day hiking and exploring the biodiversity here.

DAY 8 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is an essential part of conservation efforts, especially in local communities surrounding protected areas. Today we spend time with EE experts from A Rocha Kenya learning skills and techniques they use to engage local youth. After a session of learning, you will get hands-on, assisting to run a program to share your new skills. This will take place around the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve (a 2-hour drive from Watamu) meeting teachers and students in rural schools within one of Kenya's most important Key Biodiversity Areas.



DAY 9 WHALE ISLAND, GEDE RUINS AND BUTTERFLIES

Visit Whale Island by boat to assess the important tern colony. Walking back along the headland, explore some local reefs while snorkelling and completing a beach shark survey. After lunch, a visit to Kipepeo Butterfly farm introduces you to the concept of sustainable livelihood conservation. Here, local community members collect butterfly pupae, wild honey and silk on a sustainable basis from the forest for local markets and export. In return, community members have a vested interest to conserve the forest. The butterfly farm is within the compound of the famous Gede Ruins, a medieval Swahili coastal settlement so we shall finish the day with exploring the ruins and surrounding forest (an Important Bird Area).

DAY 10 ECO WORLD AND RAPTORS

Plastics in the ocean are an increasing problem. Watamu has several organisations working to keep the beaches clean of plastic washed up by the tide each day. Spend the morning at one of the few plastic recycling centres in Kenya, Eco-world, learning about the challenges of plastic recycling in a developing world, try your hand at working some of the machinery and interact with the Eco-world staff. After lunch we will visit the Watamu Raptor Rehabilitation Centre for a talk and discussion about threats facing raptors in today's world and particularly in Africa. There will be a chance for some hands-on work cleaning raptor pens, feeding any birds which might be in, or helping in construction of new facilities.

DAY 11 ENTOMOLOGY AND FREE TIME

The focus of the morning is insects! Learn about pitfall traps, pan traps, and see how they work. Experience how a range of apps can be used for data collection and set up some for your own citizen science contributions going forward. After lunch spend some free time exploring Watamu, or just relaxing on the beach or at the centre. This is the only "down-time" on the trip, so make the most of it! Tonight, we have dinner at The Crab Shack, a local community restaurant set in the mangroves, where you can enjoy local cuisine while discussing the pros and cons of eco-tourism. Watch the amazing sunset over the creek, knowing your meal contributes to local community up-liftment projects.



DAY 12 TRAVEL TO TSAVO EAST

Today we head off to Tsavo East National Park which is considered one of the world's biodiversity strongholds, providing homes to vast numbers of animals. On route we stop and discuss cliff formations, creek dynamics, conservation issues of infrastructure development (bridges vs ferries vs by-passes); discuss traditional 'sacred sites' and their impact on conservation; highlight coconut plantations, degraded soils, low grade agriculture impact and demonstrate the paucity of birds in such ecosystems. Settle in the park and get ready for our African Safari adventure!

DAY 13-15 AFRICAN SAFARI IN TSAVO

Over these few days, we will experience African Wildlife as it once was, spacious open spaces, large herds of game, and predators stalking prey. We will do early morning game drives, carefully watch waterholes at the lodge for animal interactions, and explore along the Tsavo River as we transition between camps. We will discuss conservation in large reserves, and spend time comparing it to other conservation efforts you have experienced on the trip. Throughout the safari we will engage in Citizen Science data collection for birds (bird atlas) and other biodiversity. Arrive back in Mwamba for one more dip in the ocean!

DAY 16 DEPARTURE

Today is a sad day as we have to say goodbye. After breakfast we will take you to Moi International Airport in Mombasa where you will start to make your way back home. We are sure this experience will benefit you throughout your career and will never be forgotten.



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