



Kenya Newsletter February 2014

Canadian medical doctor Michael DiMeo takes time off to make a change while volunteering in Kenya



After graduating from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, 31-year-old Dr. Michael DiMeo from Thunder Bay, decided to travel to Kenya to gain some hands-on experience practicing medicine in a developing country.

Travelling with Projects Abroad, Michael spent 1 month volunteering at the medical project, where he was placed at Alghadhir Medical Clinic in Nakuru. The clinic is busy; and with only one resident doctor and a few nurses, Michael's presence was valued. "I worked hand in hand with the local doctor, treating all sorts of illnesses; it is amazing how many patients we were able to see in a day given the size of the clinic and the limited medical resources and equipment."

"We are really blessed back home given the technology and facilities we have but here it is a different story; nonetheless I am glad I came – it has been a learning process, I have learnt so much, like how to treat tropical diseases like Malaria, which is common here." Not only has Michael gained more knowledge but he has had the opportunity to impart some of his experience to the local doctors and nurses. "I have taught the local staff more efficient ways of practicing

medicine and suggested incorporating more technology in the field. Projects Abroad organizes medical outreach programs on a weekly basis, where I have used my knowledge to treat children who have little or no access to medical care. ”

Throughout his time in Kenya, Michael stayed with a local Kenyan host family: “I lived with a young family, it was a great way to experience the local way of life unlike staying in a hotel. I have learnt a lot about the local food, the culture and the way Kenyan people live. I have also taught them how we live back home and even made them Canadian dishes, although I had to improvise some of the ingredients which were not available here!”

When he was not working at the hospital or treating patients in the field, Michael had the chance to travel around the country on weekends with other volunteers. “I have met so many people, from all over the world and from here in Kenya. Unlike back at home, people here are very friendly and take the time to genuinely know each other.” After one month in Kenya, Michael feels that his time and contribution in Kenya has been worthwhile. Michael advises future volunteers to “have courage and patience and be open to new ideas; “Make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

Sitting Volleyball



A few months ago, the Nakuru sitting Volleyball team started with no funds or sense of direction. To this group of disabled Kenyan who has continuously been ignored by the government and any other relevant form of leadership organizations, this was a way of uniting them and for the few hours they were able to maybe forget about their problems. Gradually they have been growing and with the support they have been receiving from Projects Abroad, the team, which holds training sessions every Tuesday and Thursday of the week, was able to clinch the second place on the continental qualification matches that were held in Nairobi, and although the Nairobi team got the chance to represent the country, two Nakuru players were chosen to join them.



Care volunteer Jessica Kenny, U.S.A, has been supporting the team during their training, giving them morale support and also learning on referring technique from the head coach. Jessica was their number 1 fan in Nairobi, cheering them to the extent of intimidating rival teams and also attracting the attention of a local news media house and appearing on the 7pm news that night.

Monitoring of the endangered Rothschild's Giraffe



Projects Abroad, Kenya Conservation Project, aim is to provide an accurate and scientific overview of the ecology of the Rothschild's giraffe. The data that we collect replicate data collected by the Giraffe and Conservation Trust (GRCT) within the Central Rift Valley in Soysambu Conservancy. The on-going giraffe program in Kigio Wildlife Conservancy is monitoring a total of twenty seven adult giraffes and four calves, with each of the giraffes having its own individual identification kit. This monitoring program will provide information on the principal browsing behavior as well as a detailed overview of the diet and the key ecological requirements of the Rothschild's giraffe.

Giraffe populations are monitored using an individual ID-based approach in the conservancy. A research team of three to four volunteers is driven through the conservancy trying to cover as much ground as possible during each monitoring session. Typically a total of 4-6 surveys are conducted every week, equally split between the morning and afternoon. The monitoring team records a set of standardized parameters for each individual sighting, including: identity, time and date, GPS location (using the UTM Coordinate system), group composition, behavior, age and sex. Photos of each individual giraffe are taken and used for identification as well. Individuals are recognized by a combination of several features: skin pattern, distinctive body marks, age and sex. The ageing followed standardized categories established by Zoe Miller of the GRCT. All data was recorded on a standardized data collection form which was later entered in a giraffe data base. Additionally, this survey also covers the feeding behavior of the giraffes by identifying and recording the plants that are being browsed on. The diet was

assessed and species contributing 5% or more to the diet will be considered as principal forage.

The conservancy contains hyenas and leopards, but lions are absent. The aim of this study is to discover how Rothschild's giraffes spend their days without real predation risk. Besides that, this research will be done to find out which factors influence displayed behavior. The study will try to answer the following question: How do Rothschild's giraffes (*Giraffa Camelopardalis Rothschildi*) spend their day in Kigio Wildlife Conservancy? Is it also influenced by weather, time of the day, seasons, sex and age? This research will be performed mainly by volunteers; the set-up of this research is for the reason to be as non-technical as possible.

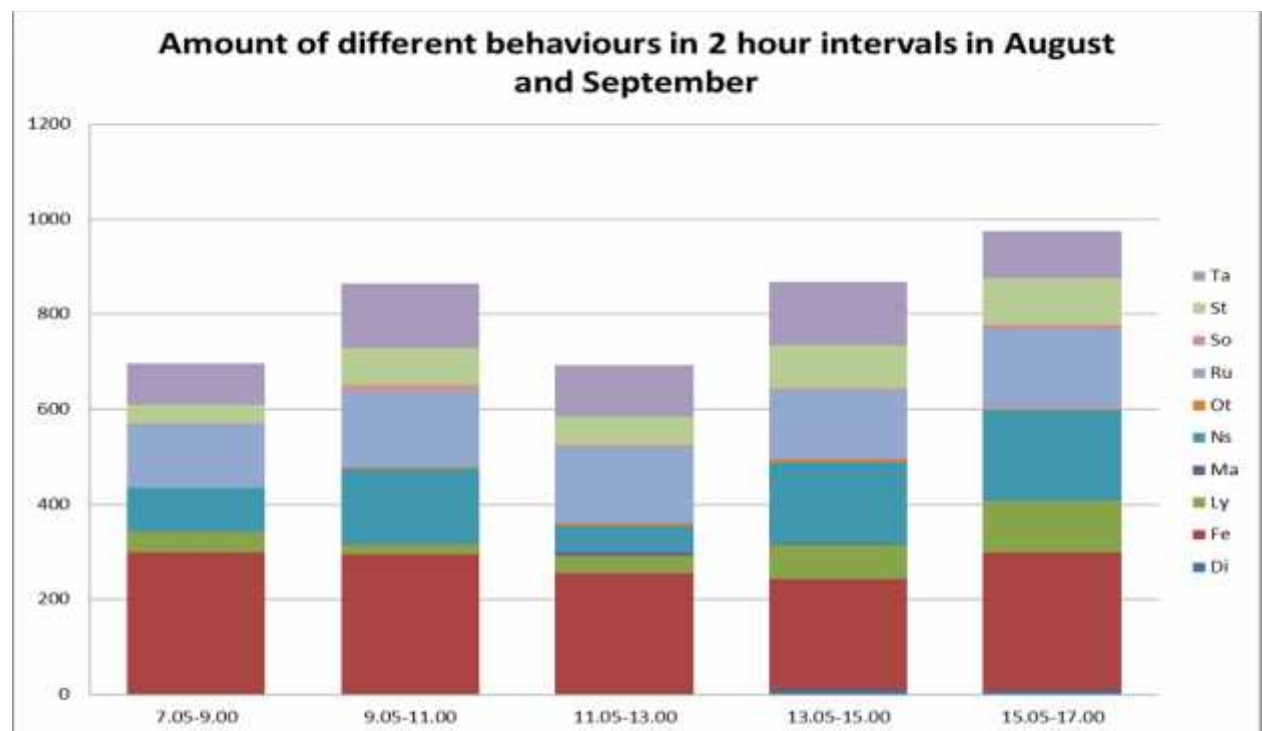


Figure 9: Diagram showing that feeding was observed as the most conducted behavior during all parts of the day. It seems that giraffes are lying down more during the afternoon. There does not seem to be a lot significant differences in activity patterns during different parts of the day. Fe= Feeding, Ns = Not seen, Ru= Ruminating, Ta= Transiting, St= Standing, So= Social behavior, Ot= Others, Ly= Lying and Di= Disturbed

Each session takes 12 hours. The 12 hours is divided into four shorter shifts, with a two hour delay in between. In total, each shift takes 4 hours and 30 minutes. During the shifts, the behavior of the giraffe is recorded every 5 minutes using a technique called scan sampling. The start and stop time of a session should be different each

time in order to obtain a 12 hours cover in the dataset. Because of the identification of the giraffes, it is possible to give exact information of the age, sex and if the females are pregnant or not. To follow the giraffes during the sessions, a vehicle will be used.

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