

STUDY TOUR TO LAKE MANYARA AND NGORONGORO CRATER

When Mr. Chuwa was going around to schools opening Malihai Clubs and sensitising teachers to conservation, he learned that none of the teachers had visited our National Parks. So he proposed to make arrangements for the teachers to visit the parks first so that they know what to teach the students. Later on he will arrange for students to visit the parks and see for themselves what they have been taught. Everybody got excited, for they thought it is too good an idea to be true. Soon a preparatory committee was formed, comprised of two teachers from every school. After finalising his plans, Mr Chuwa informed us that the trip would be on the second week of December, so everyone should take along with him/her a notebook and a pen. Series of preparatory meetings took place, but none of us knew what it entailed to go to a National Park, considering that we have never been on such a trip. As the day for the journey approached, some of us started to despair for we imagined – “What would happen if we come face to face with an elephant??” There were lots of imaginations and illusions, which made some of us think of dropping out. The Chief Patron saved the situation. He explained to us how such tours are conducted and that there is no need for fear, for in addition to himself, there are trained and experienced guides who would take us round to explain to us everything. We were going to see treasures, and so we would not regret. With this kind of perspective, all fear vanished.

The day chosen for the trip was a cool, cloudy Thursday morning. It was drizzling, but out of excitement, nobody noticed!! We assembled at a specific venue and waited for a truck to take us to the National Park. The College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka volunteered one of their trucks, and at 6.30 a.m. we took off. Word passed around that our Chief Patron would join us at Lake Manyara from his research tour of Tarangire National Park. We were all overjoyed. We drove straight to Moshi, where we picked other members, and proceeded to Arusha, where we drove straight to Malihai Clubs Headquarters. Since we had not informed them, we did not find anybody in the office, for they had gone to a meeting at Lake Duluti. We then left for the central market to buy some provisions for the journey and drove off to our destination. On our way we passed a small town called Makuyuni. Here the people are mainly Masai and a few other tribes. Their main occupation is the tourist trade. They make beautiful beads, carvings, and paintings that depict their culture. They paint beautiful animal pictures and others, depicting their surroundings, and sell them to tourists. Since all the items are meant for tourists, their prices are exorbitant. The Masai have become liberal, changing their conservatism to western culture, and now agree to take pictures with tourists, though for a fee, something which was unheard of in the past. All in all they have not yet changed their attire!! Here tourists mingle with the Masai so well that you would think they are of the same culture and habit. From here we entered a rough and dusty road, but no one noticed the danger as we were all too excited. We managed to see antelope, giraffe, and many other animals, of which we did not know their names. We soon arrived at another small town called Mto wa Mbu.

Suddenly the weather changed and became really hot. Here the scenery changed abruptly from dry grass to green surroundings. At a distance we could see the blue waters of Lake Manyara and the Rift Valley. This aroused our excitement even more.

At last we arrived at Lake Manyara, our long awaited destination. Our host, the Chief Park Warden, gave us a rousing welcome. He immediately took us to our hostel, where we took a short rest. Minutes later shouts were heard outside, "Chuwa, Chuwa, Chuwa." Everybody jumped out of the room and went to hug and welcome him. After exchanging greetings, we started preparing our supper. We had a very good supper served with all sorts of drinks, after which we watched a film on wildlife taken from Lake Manyara. We really enjoyed ourselves. Before retiring to bed, Mr. Chuwa gave us the itinerary for the following day, after which everybody went to bed dead tired. It rained very heavily throughout the night. Not all heard the downpour for they were too tired. It was a lullaby for them.

Early the following day, after our breakfast, we set off at 6.15 a.m. The weather was cool, as it had been raining all night. We descended the Rift Valley and on the left we could see Lake Manyara, covered with its dense forest. On our way we could see baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), acacia, umbrella tree, etc. Then we arrived at a viewpoint, where we stopped for a few minutes, and one of us spotted a very beautiful red flower called Isale Iya Chofu (*Aloe volkensii*), which is a plant found in Kibosho too. We passed through highlands where the whole land was covered with wheat fields. We proceeded on and arrived at a small town called Karatu. Here we had to stop for the driver to check the truck.

After riding for forty minutes, our truck got stuck in thick mud. All the men got out of the car and pushed it out and we drove on. After a few minutes drive we arrived at Ngorongoro Crater through a very thick forest. Though all of us came from the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, none of us had ever visited such a forest, so this was a surprise for us. We entered the Crater through the Big Gate called Lodua. There we saw the Big Caldera (Crater). It was marvellous. It was so big that we couldn't believe our eyes, as we had never imagined seeing such a big rift. Our Chief Guide, Mr. Chuwa, told us that we had entered through a viewpoint used by the first European to enter the Crater, and so it is a remembrance for people like ourselves who were visiting the Crater for the first time. We then proceeded on to the Conservation Area where we were met by the Assistant Conservator of Tourism, who gave us a very warm welcome. We drove off toward the Crater, where we passed through a very steep slope meandering around the Crater until we finally reached the bottom. This part of the road was very tricky, and everybody wanted to get off the truck and walk on foot, but the stretch was too long. On reaching the Crater, every one of us forgot all about the road, and started admiring one of the Eight Wonders of the World. We saw so many animals, some of which we had never heard of, birds of all kinds and flowers, etc. We drove to a place known as Ngoitoktok Springs, which is a Masai word meaning bubbling water.

Here we stopped for a short while to have refreshments and snacks, and in the meantime our expert, Mr. Chuwa, gave us a short history of the Crater amidst gnawings from animals like hippos, rhinos, etc. Due to his love of wildlife, he saddened when he told us that the rhino was on the extinction list, but frantic efforts are being made to rescue the animal from poachers. He also told us the names given to those kindly but ugly looking animals. Everybody was busy taking down the names of the different animals he told us. We then entered a forest called Lerai, where we saw many elephants. He told us that all were males. Females and the young ones (calves) do not come down the crater for fear of the steep slope. Some

of the animals came very close to our car like buffalo, monkeys, etc. Some of us screamed and ran away, but our Chief Guide, Mr. Chuwa, was always there to give us confidence that nothing dangerous would happen to us.

Time to ascend the Crater came. Fear surrounded each and every one of us, because when one looked at the steep slope and the gradient, coupled with the narrow slippery path which our truck had to meander, and not forgetting the sharp corners, our hair stood on end. Very meticulously, the driver passed through the snake-like path, while every one of us was tight lipped, saying all sorts of prayers. Soon we reached the top. Hurrah! We finally ascended safely. No sooner had we arrived than it started pouring like the previous night. We were quickly ushered to a dining room, where we found a buffet awaiting us. We sat down to eat, and after the delicious meal, we were shown around the Crater facilities. We were taken to the Fig Tree Bar, a bar built around a fig tree. To us it was one of the 'Wonders'. We were told that it is unlike any ordinary bar we had seen.

In the evening we started our journey back to Lake Manyara. On arrival, we took our supper with our Chief Guide telling us all sorts of funny stories, just to amuse us. After supper he gave us the programme for the following day, and with that in mind we retired to bed. As usual we woke up early, took our breakfast, and readied ourselves for the tour to Lake Manyara.

Mr. Chuwa briefed us a bit before we left, after which Mr. Mushi, the Tourism Warden, accompanied us. We passed through a thick forest. He told us that this is a unique forest, which is found only here and not anywhere else in northern Tanzania. Here we saw many animals like monkeys, baboons, giraffe, etc. On we drove to Hippo Pool, where we found a lot of hippos and flamingos in the lake. Here we were very fascinated to see the giraffe at such close quarters. We were now used to the animals and nobody had fears. Passing through the forest we saw how elephants were felling trees, and were very disgusted at the way they were destroying the environment. We were then taken to a campsite for a short rest where the Tourism Warden gave us a history of the Park. We were unable to go to the Park, as the roads were impassable due to the heavy rains, so we went back to our hostel, ready for the journey back home. We passed through a Snake Park and saw all sorts of snakes. As if this was not enough of a surprise, we saw people riding a camel!!! We live in a mountainous green area throughout the year so it has never been possible for us to see a camel.

We continued with our journey and finally reached home at 6.30 p.m, of course very tired, but with a lot of news to tell our families, friends, and students. It was indeed a very exciting tour which everybody liked and enjoyed.

WHAT WE GAINED FROM THE TOUR

Throughout this trip, we came to know each other and learned many things from each other from the several preparatory meetings which took place in different schools. We mingled with each other so well, that it ended up being a big family gathering. In fact, we are now one family under the guidance of our Chief Patron. We gained a lot of practical experience and knowledge. We actually saw in real life all that we have been reading in books, and it will be much easier to impart the

knowledge so gained to our students. The geography and science teachers in particular are the ones who profited most. It was a good time for teachers to relax mentally and physically. The fruits of this tour did not take long to be manifested. No sooner had we arrived, than a teacher took a group of students to Lake Manyara and Tarangire!!!



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Ngorongoro Crater is famous for its wildlife, like this rhino, which is walking majestically between these cars without fear. Many tourists flock to this place to see them.



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Malihai Club members from Kibosho East admiring wildlife at Ngorongoro Crater.



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Ostriches were a great attraction. We saw them very closely and we came to learn that the black ones are male.



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Here the teachers are listening to the Park Warden of Tourism, Mr. Mushi, after touring the Park.

SEMINAR FOR THE PATRONS OF MALIHAI CLUBS – KIBOSHO EAST

The objective of this seminar was to sensitise and educate the Patrons concerning methods of organising and running their branches, and to discuss the roles the students are supposed to play. The Seminar took place at the Malihai Head Office in Arusha. Transport costs and stationary were met by the Rafiki/Friends Foundation, and lunch was provided by the Chief Patron, Mr. Sebastian Chuwa, in collaboration with the Coordinator of Malihai Clubs of Tanzania.

We set off for Arusha on a misty, cloudy day in the company of our Chief Patron. On our way we stopped to take breakfast, and then we proceeded on to our venue, which is right at the centre of Arusha town. The place was really beautiful, with well arranged trees, flowers of all kinds decorating the path to the gate, and butterflies busy transferring pollen from one flower to another. The green lawn was well trimmed. The place looked really 'Malihai'.

Our host met and took us to the seminar hall around 9.00 a.m. There were self introductions and then the meeting agenda which was as follows:-

- Short history of Malihai Clubs Tanzania
- Scheme of Service of MCT
- Objectives of MCT
- Administrative role and duties of MCT
- Role of the Secretariat
- Places to visit after the Seminar

He started by giving us a short history of Malihai Clubs and explained the role of the Clubs. He told us the duties of the Secretariat and the structure of MCT. He then told us how to run and manage our branches, what our role was as patrons, and how to solve problems that would occur from time to time. Then everyone gave his/her report, highlighting problems encountered over time. These were solved by the Chief Coordinator.

Then followed the last agenda, which was to visit the Arusha Museum and Mt. Meru Game Sanctuary. Before we could embark on our tour, we watched a video show about the environment which was prepared by the Marangu Teacher Training College branch. Just next door was the Arusha Natural History Museum. We were shown very many archives. There were statues carved out of stone and many other ancient things. What impressed us was the way the building was being maintained, showing how serious the government is about the environment for the little portion that has already been finished. We then drove to the Game Sanctuary which is about 10 kilometres from the place. Cool weather and green surroundings were what fascinated us. The Chief Warden of the sanctuary met us at the gate and took us straight to the zoo, where we saw many animals kept in cages, and others kept in the same surroundings as those found in the National Park.

Some of the animals kept here are rare to see in the National Park, like porcupine, leopard, serval cat, cheetah, crocodile, chimpanzees, tortoises, peacock, pelicans,

secretary bird, and eagles. There were also animals we saw in the National Park, like elephant, zebra, eland, vervet monkey, etc. These animals are very friendly to human beings, to such an extent that you could even feed them. Each one of us took a picture feeding an elephant. We then drove to the Usa River for lunch. During lunch the Coordinator told us how expensive it is to maintain these animals in the sanctuary. As they cannot fend for themselves, food must be bought and trees must be planted for birds to live in. Short of all these facilities they would run back to the wilderness. Moreover, they need treatment once they fall sick. The government, together with some donors, contribute to their welfare.

Before we left, we took a group picture with our Coordinator and Sebastian's friend, Godfrey Kishongo Mbise, who is from Meru, Arusha. We invited him to come visit us and he promised he would do so after notifying us. We thanked the Coordinator, after which we left for home.

The participants enjoyed this seminar very much. They were educated in so many ways about how to run their branches, and they had a chance to see the museum and the sanctuary.



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Malihai Club Patrons getting into the bus ready for their trip to Arusha.



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Listening to the Coordinator of Malihai Clubs, Tanzania,
Mr. Peter Ottaru, when he was stressing a point.



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Seminar participants outside Arusha Natural History Museum.



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A group picture of Patrons from eight schools in Kibosho East who attended the seminar in Arusha with their Coordinator of Malihai Clubs, Tanzania, Mr. Peter Ottaru (third from right). Next to him is Mr. Godfrey Kishongo Mbise from Meru, Arusha.