



Press release
Cambridge, UK

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Techies Enter Race to Save the Planet

Conservationists are generally perceived to be green-wellie wearing, tree-hugging bearded people, who have yet to invest in a microwave because it's regarded as new-fangled technology. However, a conference held in Cambridge this week may have – for once and for all – laid rest to that image.

The Conservation and Appropriate Technology conference was put together by a group called “t4cd” – Technologies for Conservation and Development, and showcased a range of projects from around the world that are taking advantage of 21st century leaps in commercial technologies. For example, the adaptation of 3G mobile technology has enabled grey seals in the North Sea to ‘phone in’ their movements and GPS coordinates to scientists at St. Andrews. Also being explored is the potential to use self-organising sensors attached to animals, which could “talk” to one another and reveal unique information on social behaviour, and complex networking that has until now been little known or understood. Even the powering of these systems can use inventive ‘energy scavenging’ techniques, converting the animals’ own movements and kinetic energy into the electrical energy needed to power the phone calls home.

Conservationists have also leapt at the advances in world-viewer software such as Google Earth, through which they can observe alterations in critical ecosystems in far-flung locations, and mobilise responses and resources from city offices in London to the wilds of the Serengeti. On-the-ground, the provision of high-speed internet connection in remote locations such as the ‘Impenetrable Forest’ of Bwindi, Uganda, means that scientists traditionally cut off from the outside world can now communicate freely. Also, with conservationists’ adaptations of PDA technology enabling icon driven data collection, local people with little capacity in the language of computers have

the opportunity to become the managers of their own resources, contributing vital information for the conservation of their traditional lands and livelihoods.

Indeed the social and developmental aspects of these innovations became increasingly clear throughout the conference, as advances in technology are also providing critical alternative livelihoods for local people. Additionally the virtual information super-highway is inching increasingly into people's lives, providing much needed education and awareness, essential for successful conservation of the worlds dwindling natural resources.

The t4cd project - a brainchild of two conservation NGOs, Fauna & Flora International and ResourceAfrica, and supported by Vodafone & Microsoft - aims to capitalise on this and become a 'one-stop' centre for technologists and conservationists alike to share information and inspire invention. And if the conference held this week in Cambridge is anything to go by, those bearded images of conservationists may truly be a thing of the past.

For more information contact: info@t4cd.org or see www.t4cd.org

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Queries: Please contact Zoë Cullen or Wallace Kantai on 01223 571000

Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

FFI was founded in 1903 as the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire by a group of British naturalists and American Statesmen in Africa. Their aim was to safeguard the future of southern Africa's large mammal populations, which had declined alarmingly as a result of over-hunting and expanding settlement. Working in partnership with landowners, fellow sportsmen and governments, the founders helped to formulate effective legislation and establish protected areas. Decades later, their efforts led to the formation of the Kruger and Serengeti National Parks. The creation of such parks set a vital precedent. Their success proved that economic, educational and environmental concerns are not mutually exclusive. The organization played a key role in establishing much of today's global conservation infrastructure - including The World Conservation Union (IUCN), The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), TRAFFIC, and CITES - and was instrumental in focusing world-wide attention on the plight of endangered species.

A firm belief in the importance of conserving nature, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity, underpins all our activities. The ethos underlying all our work is that conservation should be achieved through the application of scientific understanding, a genuinely participatory approach, local capacity building and long-term commitment. We aim to arrive at solutions that are simple, sustainable and applicable at local level. Our success is measured in terms of lasting results beyond the life of individual projects.

FFI places great emphasis on the importance of engaging and empowering communities. The development of local partnerships is central to our philosophy.

www.fauna-flora.org

Resource Africa

ResourceAfrica upholds an African perspective on natural resource management and conservation. Our approach to conservation and development prioritizes community involvement and empowerment.

ResourceAfrica is a Not-For-Profit organization that works with a range of global and African partners to encourage and deliver new models of natural resource management, based on community participation in which the values of transparency, equity and respect for local people, their needs and customs, are uppermost.

Our Vision: A sustained improvement in the quality of life of marginalized Africans.

Our Mission: To champion collaborative approaches to the sustainable use of natural resources that will deliver tangible community benefits and effective conservation.

www.resourceafrica.org