

# MADAGASCAR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



## NEWSLETTER

No. 13

November 29, 2009

[www.mwc-info.net](http://www.mwc-info.net)

### POLITICAL UNREST IN MADAGASCAR

Madagascar has been suffering from political unrest since the beginning of 2009. President Ravalomanana, who was democratically elected in 2002, was forced to resign in mid-March and the former mayor of the capital Antananarivo, Mr. Rajoelina, was installed as the head of a transitional government, the High Transitional Authority (HTA). At the beginning of August the key political parties signed an agreement to form an inclusive transitional government by mid-September. They also agreed to hold presidential elections within the next 15 months. However, the agreement was already breached 4 weeks later and the HTA announced a new government which led to renewed unrest. The political situation remains unstable and changes have to be expected every day. This long-lasting situation has already had its toll on the Malagasy people and subsequently on their environment. The complete breakdown of the tourism industry has led to decreased livelihood opportunities of the Malagasy people. Forests in protected areas and national parks are pillaged for bushmeat (lemurs) and precious timber (i.e., rosewood, ebony).

### PROJECT UPDATES

#### COMIC PROJECT:

*Visiting the heros of 'AROVY FA HARENA'!* In July MWC organized the first of many planned *piroque* trips to explore the marshes of Lake Alaotra. 30 children from the participating schools were invited to Andriba where the journey started to explore and experience the home of their loved heros, which so far they had only learned about in the comic book 'AROVY FA HARENA'. With these trips MWC aims to strengthen the bonds between the learned and the experienced and hopes to significantly increase the children's awareness for their natural environment. The first excursion was a great success and the children were buzzing with excitement when they were able to catch a glimpse of their most favourite comic character - the Alaotra Gentle Lemur!

*Capacity building:* The third environmental education workshop for teachers from the Alaotra-Mangoro region was held in Ambatondrazaka. Fourteen teachers attended the workshop. Furthermore, MWC received the permission from CISCO to implement its comic book in four additional primary schools in the



School children enjoying their boat trip in MWC's piroque on Lake Alaotra. All children had to wear life vests for their security (top). It is not easy to spot the Alaotra Gentle Lemur in the dense marshes of Lake Alaotra. Sometimes a lot of patience is needed (bottom).

Andreba-Mangoro region (EPP Vohimena, Sahamamy, Ambodimanga and Ampilahoana) for the school year 2009/2010. 515 comic books were distributed in those participating schools in October.

### CAMP BANDRO:

Madagascar is facing a significant drop in the number of visitors due to the political turmoil. This has also impacted Camp Bandro; however, we were still able to welcome 24 visitors since the month of July. We hope that the political situation will stabilize so more visitors will have the opportunity to experience the Alaotra region.



Malala - the Alaotra Gentle Lemur.

### WATER HYACINTH - MAKING USE OF AN INVADER:

The water hyacinth (*Eichhornia sp.*) has its origin in the Amazon but was spread throughout the world since it was used as an ornamental plant for water ponds. Nowadays the water hyacinth is one of the most invasive species in African Lakes and also big parts of Lake Alaotra are covered. A feasibility study conducted by MWC in 2008 has shown that the local people are very interested in using the hyacinth as primary product for fuel and handicraft. MWC has recently started a pilot project to produce briquettes from compressed water hyacinth in Andreba with the goal to replace charcoal. Further, the production of handicrafts (e.g., baskets, place mats) from the stem of the hyacinths is being professionalized. The benefits of using the water hyacinth may be manifold and need to be investigated further: First, selling the handicrafts will create income for the local population, second, using briquettes as fuel could reduce the use of charcoal and therefore may have the potential to remove pressure from local forests and lastly, the lake is cleared of an invader which is threatening its flora and fauna.

### MWC GERMANY

*Comic Project places second in contest and wins 27,500 Euros.* Green Rooster ([www.green-rooster.com](http://www.green-rooster.com)) is the environmental initiative of the German paper factory 'Hahnemühle FineArt'. For one year, the proceeds from the sales of their new bamboo paper were collected and donated to one of three



Receiving the cheques. Matto Barfuss (L), CEO Hahnemühle FineArt Jörg Adomat & MWC Germany chair woman Antje Rendigs (R).

selected environmental conservation projects. MWC's comic project was one of them and customers could vote for their favourite project on the Green Rooster website until December 2008. Thanks to your help, MWC's project won second place with 36 % of votes. Antje Rendigs - chairwoman of MWC Germany was very happy to receive a cheque in the amount of 27,500 EUR at the beginning of April 2009. We are very grateful and would like to thank Hahnemühle FineArt again for this very generous donation. MWC will use these additional funds to reach out to more children in the Alaotra region and to teach them about the amazing environment they are living in.

### MCD JOURNAL

For 2009, two issues were planned for the 4th volume of the MCD journal. Issue number 1 was released at the beginning of June. Of special interest to our readership might be an article about people's livelihood concerns in the Alaotra region by Copsey, J.A. et al. (*Voices from the marsh: Livelihood concerns of fishers and rice cultivators in the Alaotra wetland*). The second issue is currently in press and will be released at the beginning of December 2009. Issue 1 of volume 4 is available on our website.

Dear Reader,  
again a year is approaching its end and we would like to thank you for your interest in our work.  
We would also like to emphasize though, that in these days your support is needed more than ever!

We wish you and your families happy holidays and a great 2010!

Your MWC-Team

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For donations, please use the following account information:

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