

February 2007

Mayumba National Park



Outreach Program Update



New Puppets Make Their Debut In Villages

It's turtle season here in Mayumba, and the outreach team is just back from the lagoon villages, where we spent an exciting week putting on puppet shows about the life cycle of marine turtles.

The puppets, made by Fiesta Toys and Puppet Universe, and brought to Mayumba through a grant from Idea Wild and assistance from the US Embassy, were a hit with kids and adults alike; in many of the villages, the grown-ups couldn't resist the fun and got into the act too.

Village children and their new puppet friends wiggled, swam, crawled, and gobbled

jellyfish as they acted out scenes from the newly released book: *Ibonga, La Tortue Luth* (Ibonga, The Leatherback Turtle). In the story, a young leatherback turtle must overcome several natural and human-made obstacles in order to grow to adulthood and reproduce. Village children learned about Mayumba National Park's importance to leatherback turtle nesting, and ways they can help to protect these gentle creatures.



Photo: Aimee Sanders

Kids in Mambi village get into character during an outreach program puppet show.

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Mayumba National Park would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Sea World/Busch Gardens Conservation Fund for their generous support of the Mayumba Outreach Program.

Special points of interest:

- Over 300 village students receive donated school supplies
- Village women learn how to save their children from dehydration
- Teachers start Environmental Association in Mayumba



Health Demo Could Save a Child's Life

Mama Monique cupped her hand and watched it fill with a teaspoon of salt, then counted out 6 sugarcubes. She was just one of nearly 200 villagers who learned how to prepare oral rehydration salts at home, in an effort to potentially save children from deadly dehydration caused by waterborne illnesses.

Each village household also received flyers, prepared by the

Wildlife Conservation Society, that detailed how to prepare this solution, and how to treat water to prevent waterborne diseases.

After each demonstration, we glued flyers on kitchen walls for future reference, and the women took home a bag of oral rehydration salts that they themselves had prepared.



Photo: Aimee Sanders

Women from one of Mayumba's lagoon villages show what they've learned.

Dehydration from waterborne illnesses is preventable, and now these women know how.

Village Mat Weaving Cooperative Trains a New Generation

Biteffe biboti means “beautiful mat” in Vili, the language spoken in the villages near Mayumba National Park.

In Mallembé village, grandmothers belonging to Mallembe United, an artisans’ collective of matweavers, are teaching their granddaughters how to weave these beautiful raphia mats, an important art and tradition for the Vili people who live near Mayumba National Park.

Mats are traditionally ex-

changed for marriage dowries, and to resolve family disputes. They also serve as a means of income for village women.

With the money the women make from selling their mats, they are able to buy for their families the basic goods that their family gardens don’t provide: like soap, clothing, and medicines.

In Mayumba, the art of mat weaving was in danger of disappearing. Young girls were not interested in learning because the market for traditional

crafts is not yet well developed in the rural areas of Gabon, making the activity unprofitable.

This initiative, developed between Mayumba National Park and the village cooperative encourages the teaching of this tradition to young girls while helping to find a market for the village women’s artwork.

For more about Mallembe’s mats, visit our website, www.mayumbanationalpark.com, and click on the Mayumba Mats icon.



Photo: Aimee Sanders

Muriel finishes her first mat.

School Supplies Distributed in Villages



Ms. Van Huss’ Kindergarten/First Grade class at the American International School in

Libreville, Gabon collected enough school supplies to give every student in all of Mayumba’s lagoon villages new notebooks, pencils, pens, erasers, and rulers, encouraging them in their educational efforts.

Villages near Mayumba National Park are hours away from the nearest bookstore, and often lack basic supplies

for learning. It wasn’t uncommon for the outreach team to arrive in a village to find that children were unable to participate in the day’s lesson because they didn’t have a pencil to write with.

Thank you to Ms. Van Huss, her students, and their families for their kindness and generosity! You made a difference for some very special kids!

Over 300 students in the villages near Mayumba National Park received school supplies donated by students at the American International School.



Photo: Aimee Sanders

Village kids decorated their new notebooks with Wildcoast’s turtle stickers.



Mayumba’s new mural:
“We are proud to be the champions of Africa for leatherback turtles”

New Environmental Association to Expand Outreach Program in Mayumba Schools

This month, teachers from Mayumba plan to establish a new chapter of the IBONGA Environmental Association to expand and enrich environmental education programs in the town’s schools.

Members of the new association will be trained in hands-on, participative teaching methods, and will have access to the Park’s media and didactic materials for use in their lessons.