



Agreement between the University of Oxford (UK) and Gorongosa National Park (Mozambique)

Monday, February 25th, 2019

Mozambique, Africa – Gorongosa National Park announced today that it has signed a multi-year collaboration agreement with the University of Oxford for an initiative called the “Paleo-Primate Project”. The Paleo-Primate Project is led by Dr Susana Carvalho-- Associate Professor of Palaeoanthropology, at the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, where she coordinates the Primate Models for Behavioural Evolution Lab, at the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology.

Dr Carvalho is leading an international, interdisciplinary team of distinguished scholars from the fields of geology, speleology, palaeontology, palaeobotany, archaeology, primatology, genetics and conservation biology. The research group represents institutions from seven countries (Mozambique, UK, Portugal, Germany, USA, South Africa, and Chile)*. Already, in their preliminary investigations, they have discovered the first Miocene mammal fossils of the Rift Valley of Mozambique, inside Gorongosa National Park.



Paleoanthropological and primatological research in Gorongosa National Park involves a field school and training to Mozambican and Oxford undergraduate and graduate students

Dr Carvalho explains that they have identified multiple promising fossil sites in Gorongosa Park and they've embarked on what could be a multi-decade exploration and research endeavour that might yield new insights about when and how our earliest human ancestors evolved in Africa. The team is also focusing on the unique modern ecology of the park to develop a better understanding of the environments where early humans evolved. Another powerful branch of this unique multidisciplinary project is the focus on studying modern primates, and their behavioural adaptations to the Gorongosa ecology, to model how, in the past, our human ancestors may have succeeded living in similar habitats. The University of Oxford currently has six doctoral students and one post-doctoral researcher – on prestigious scholarships/fellowships, including the University of Oxford Clarendon Fund, ESRC, AHRC, and the Leverhulme Trust– carrying out the first primatological projects with the baboons and vervet monkeys of Gorongosa (to see more about the students' projects: <https://primobevolab.web.ox.ac.uk/home>).

In 2018, the Oxford-Gorongosa Paleo-Primate Field-School had its first official trial. This is currently the only field-school in the African continent providing interdisciplinary training in Paleoanthropology, Primatology and Ecology. 50% of the students are selected from Mozambican Universities across the country. Dr Carvalho is currently supervising two undergraduate students from Mozambique who wish to pursue primatology and paleoanthropology.

() Gorongosa National Park, Oxford University (Anthropology & Zoology Depts), Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade do Algarve, CIBIO-Porto, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Boise State University, George Washington University, University of South Florida, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Chicago, Universidad Catolica de Chile.*

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The University of Oxford is delighted to be part of this exciting collaboration. The School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography is a dynamic and stimulating department, the largest and arguably the most diverse in the UK.

Under Susana Carvalho's leadership, research in the fields of primatology and paleoanthropology is developing into a major strength within the School. The collaboration with Gorongosa National Park provides an outstanding opportunity for productive research activities as well as offering unique possibilities of collaborative and research-led teaching. In this regard, the field-school offers unique opportunities to students at undergraduate and graduate level, and across several degrees, to experience field research at first hand.

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Gorongosa National Park is co-managed by the Government of Mozambique and the Gorongosa Project. The Park integrates conservation and human development with the understanding that a healthy ecosystem and healthy human communities are two sides of the same coin.

Scientific research is an integral component of the long-term Gorongosa restoration effort, as a deep understanding of Gorongosa's ecosystem will help park managers to make informed conservation decisions. One of the Park's most critical roles is to provide training to the next generation of Mozambican scientists in the Park, and also to send them to universities for advanced degrees. Several students, receiving full or partial financial assistance from the laboratory, have already begun studying for future careers as veterinarians, ecologists and lab technicians at universities.

If you would like more information about this topic, or would like to schedule an interview with those involved in the project, please call Vasco Galante at +258 822970010 or email vasco@gorongosa.net.

For more general information, visit <http://www.gorongosa.org>