



BIOSS Workshop for Francophones

By Félix Nicayenzi

Following the example of the training workshop on special studies techniques and methods held in Kigoma from 22 September to 3 October 1997 for Lake Tanganyika researchers from anglophone countries, a similar workshop was held in Bujumbura for the benefit of francophone countries from 2 to 10 July 1998. Twenty one participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo and from Burundi took part in the workshop with the assistance of international experts.

Mr Jean-Berchmans Manirakiza, the LTBP National Coordinator, made the opening speech. After bidding welcome to all participants, he recalled the importance of Lake Tanganyika for the riparian population, the different threats affecting the lake's biodiversity and the need to protect it. He finished his speech by wishing plenty of success to the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were among other things the analysis, discussion and standardisation of methods and protocols for the estimation and management of biodiversity used in the project in order to improve taxonomical knowledge and finalise protocols of sampling and surveying for the research program in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Students study the hippos, crocodiles, and birds at Rusizi National Park

An eight day intensive program was prepared and included some presentations/debates, theoretical and practical sessions of taxonomy of fishes and macro-invertebrates, sessions of initiation to the project database, field trips and analysis and processing of samples collected from the field. The program also inserted an excursion to Rusizi National Park. In order to facilitate practical activities on the field, in laboratories and on the computer, participants divided themselves into two groups taking turns around the trainers.

The different speakers addressed such themes as : “ What is biodiversity ? What is its importance ? How to measure it ?”, “Ichthyological diversity of the lake Tanganyika catchment” , “Ecology and evolution of cichlids frequenting shells”, etc.

Let us recall that special studies methods used by the project to evaluate and estimate biodiversity are the following : “manta”, profile of sub-lacustrine habitat, stationary fish census, rapid fish census, global fish census, census along mollusc transect and quads, gill net fishing, collecting macro-invertebrates with a bottom sampler or a net and crab trapping. Most of these activities are carried out through diving using SCUBA.

All these methods were scrutinised in order to improve them, and were practiced on the field during two days in Gitaza and Magara. Some samples of molluscs and of other macro-invertebrates were brought to the lab and studied, and then preserved with appropriate techniques. Calculation of biodiversity indexes was also introduced and applied to these samples. Participants also practised how to key in the obtained data into the computer.

After field and lab work, participants briefly presented the obtained results to make sure that the methods had been well practised and



Drs. Nshombo Muderhwa and J. Bosco Gashagaza make final preparations for an aquatic survey

to allow comparison of these techniques. Calculation of biodiversity indexes was well mastered. Taxonomical knowledge was improved.

The workshop was organised by Kelly West from LTBP and Eddie Allison from MRAG in the United Kingdom. The trainers who conducted the work were: Kelly West for molluscs, Eddie Allison for the calculation of biodiversity indexes and initiation to the Project database, Koen Martens from the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Science for macro-invertebrates, Luc De Vos from Kenya National Museum, J. Bosco Gashagaza from Rwanda National University, Gaspard Ntakimazi from University of Burundi, and Nshombo Muderhwa, Director General of CRH Uvira in the Democratic Republic of Congo for fish taxonomy. Other participants from DRC at Hydrobiological Research Centre were: Mulimbwa N'sibula, Scientific Director, Bwebwa Diamani, Mukirania Muke Syaira, Bashonga Bishobiri, Amandala Shekani, Patrick Kukiye Buda, Muzumani Risasi, all of them researchers with the Centre. Burundi was represented by: Félix Nicayenzi, Wilondja Kamalebo, both LTBP researchers, Benoit Nzigidahera, adviser at INECN, Libère Ndayisenga, Ladislav Habonimana, respectively chief warden and tourist guide for Rusizi National Park and Bernard Sinunguka, researcher with the Department of Fisheries and Pisciculture, and Albéric Rugirabirori, technician from the University of Burundi.

The workshop closed with a dinner during which Koen Martens entertained us with his presentation on ‘Speciation in Ancient Lakes.’

Félix Nicayenzi wrote his university thesis on the cichlids fish of Lake Tanganyika. He worked for the Centre de Recherche Régionale en Hydrobiologie Appliquée before joining LTBP.