

A brief from the Presidency

The Eastern African region has diverse landscapes and ecosystems as well as a high diversity of flora and fauna. The region, also known as the cradle of mankind, has been shaped by natural evolutionary processes and long history of human influence. Prominent ecologists from all over the world have been attracted to eastern Africa to study its natural resources and the processes that have maintained its rich biological diversity. The region's biodiversity is an asset of regional and global significance. However, trends in global climate change and pressure from rapidly growing human population and the associated socio-economic development activities are posing serious threats to landscapes and biodiversity therein.

Following support from the British Ecological Society (BES), scientists from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda got together in May 2007 to discuss pertinent ecological issues in the region. The meeting culminated in the setting up of an Ecological Society for Eastern Africa (ESEA), a forum for regional ecologists to network, highlight their work and drive for evidence-based policies on environmental issues.

Ecological Society for Eastern Africa aims at developing an effective network and capacity building platform for ecologists in the region. It will have an outreach programme for students and the general public. It will also provide leadership and authority to lobby for mainstreaming of key ecological paradigms into national as well as regional policy, governance and sustainable development. Effective networking will ensure reduction in duplication of ecological programmes and activities in the regions that lead to redundancy.

Between May 22 and 23 2008, the society held its maiden scientific conference. This conference was fully sponsored by BES and attracted scientists from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Belgium and USA. Through special fund from BES, five scientists from Malawi and Zambia also participated.

The British Ecological Society's current support of £19,000 has ensured a successful maiden conference and a Governing Council meeting that developed a strategic plan. Funds will also be used to support a secretariat and a capacity building activity. We anticipate continued BES support while seeking for other support that will ensure ESEA activities run efficiently to serve its membership and the region in short and medium term.

Nicholas Oguge, PhD
President