

PROJECT REPORT
Tanzania Volunteer Trip
November 2-15, 2023



Executive Summary

Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®) organized and led a volunteer trip to the Karatu and Moshi Districts in northern Tanzania in November 2023. Eleven volunteers traveling from the United States, including Trip Leaders Kelly McCoy and Carol Clark, met in Arusha, Tanzania to begin this two-week journey. Maggie Simbeye, our Guide, Driver, and owner of Maggie's Tours, joined the group for the orientation meeting. Beginning on Day 2, she and Guide/Driver Nishel Kileo stayed with us throughout the first half of the trip. For the second half of the trip, we were met by the team from Joining Safaris, Guides and Drivers Benson Lucas and Sabath Mushi

who transferred the group from Karatu to Moshi, where we were met by Joining Safari Owner Erick Urassa and Driver Emanuel Seremi. The Joining Safari team stayed with us throughout the second half of the trip.

Work focused on the two main districts in the Northern Circuit tourism areas of Tanzania: In Karatu the group volunteered on reforestation of the foothills around the African Rift Valley wall in Gekrum Village near Lake Manyara National Park. In Moshi, the volunteers worked on reforestation and trail maintenance in the Rau Forest Reserve and the Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area near Mount Kilimanjaro National Park.

The Tanzania projects were carried out under the auspices of Dare Women's Foundation at Gekrum Village, the Rau Forest Reserve District Manager and Forest Caretaker, and Kiviwama Indigenous Tree Nursery at Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area.

Volunteers contributed a total of 862.5 hours towards the following projects:

Prepared the pre-dug holes and planted 400 tree saplings around the hillsides at Gekrum village near the boundary of Lake Manyara National Park. Cleared 2.5 kilometers of brush from trails and 1 hectare of brush from a campsite in the Rau Forest Reserve. Planted 810 tree saplings in pre-dug holes in 3 locations in the Rau Forest Reserve, and 200 tree saplings and 400 Vetiver grasses at the Kiviwama Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area. Our goal was to plant 1008 trees on this trip. Combined, we achieved 1410 trees and 400 grasses during this inaugural reforestation project! In addition, the fees paid by the volunteers for the trip encompassed the costs for both the procurement of tree-planting supplies and the acquisition of the trees and grasses that were planted during the trip.

DETAILED TRIP REPORT:

November 2nd Arusha:

The group met at our hotel for an introductory meeting and orientation to the work projects and the days ahead. Maggie's Tours Owner and Guide, Maggie Simbeye joined and shared her excitement for the project and the work at Gekrum Village, educated the group about the history and culture of Tanzania, as well as the community we would be working in. Due to flight delays we had 3 members who joined the group late that evening, received orientation during the drive from Arusha to Karatu the next morning.

November 3rd Karatu-Gekrum Village:

The following morning, our group was joined by Driver & Guide Nishel Kileo who is also Maggie's husband. Together our group departed in 2 safari vehicles leaving the hectic busy city of Arusha behind as we headed west for a 3-hour drive toward the more rural, idyllic, and open plains of the Great Rift Valley and the town of Karatu. We made

restroom and ATM/Bank stop along the way in Mto Wa Mbutu. Upon arriving in Karatu the group checked into our lodge and refreshed quickly, before heading to our volunteer project home for the next 4 days at Gekrum Village.

Upon arriving, the group received a lively, warm welcome from the community, lunch catered by Chef Peter (who made our tasty daily lunches during our community visits), and an engaging cultural immersion.

After lunch festivities, the group received an orientation of how to plant the tree saplings, from Maggie and Daniel Kalisti Mandoo, the Gekrum Village Advocate. During this time, the group also learned that Daniel led the community in pre-digging all the holes around the hillsides. The planting process has essentially 7 steps that we all learned in Swahili which was fun! Core to the process is mixing the soil and the “mbolea” (fertilizer), centering the sapling in the hole, adding the “matamahuluku” (mulch), then slowly adding “magi” (water).

Once everyone was clear on the planting process, we had the group walk the entire worksite. Due to the nature of the hillside being at varying heights and on uneven ground we wanted the teams to feel comfortable and decide on where they would begin working the next day. During this walk we also saw where the community created natural steps on the hillside to make navigating the terrain easier.



Gekrum Village warm welcome, group engaging with the community and walking to the tree planting site.

After this full day of driving, orientation and community immersion, the group returned to the lovely garden setting of the lodge to settle into their rooms and enjoy dinner before retiring for the evening.

November 4th:

We departed the lodge at 8 am and arrived at Gekrum Village around 8:30. Generally the drive is about 30 minutes, give or take time based on weather and road conditions. During this short rainy season, the normally uneven and unpaved dirt roads can become very muddy.

Upon arriving we gathered for an orientation where the group broke into 3 working groups of 3 and were assigned 1 translator from the community representing the Dare Women's Foundation. Our translators were Esther (local reptile and snake expert), Miriam (local tree and plant expert), and Asha (guiding expert who has gone up Kilimanjaro 3 times on Mountain Bike). The 3 groups named themselves Nguchiro (Mongoose: Esther, Dale, Jeff, and Sam), Nyumbo (Wilderbeast: Jan, Miriam, Melissa, and Raul) and Simba (Lion: Asha, Cuc, David, and Janet), and then they were joined by one more groups made up of 4 older children from the community who called themselves Twiga (Giraffe).

We conducted a tool and safety briefing learning the names of shovels (koleo or belesi), hoes/spades (jembe), and buckets (ndoo) in Swahili. Then the groups dispersed to all sides of the hill. Maggie, Nishel, Carol and Kelly constantly rotated the hill to check in with the groups. We wrapped up the day at about 3:45pm, having planted 390 trees!

November 5th:

Before breakfast some of the group members enjoyed an early morning bird walk around the lodge community. Then the group enjoyed breakfast before departing for Gekrum Village. We had enjoyed heavy rain the night before. On the way up the hill to the village, Nishel's vehicle got stuck in the mud not far from the project site. So, the whole group boarded the other vehicle to continue onto the site while Nishel waited for the road to dry and with help from the community was able to dig out in a couple of hours.

Upon arriving at the worksite, we had a briefing for next steps for the 390 trees that were planted the previous day. The groups went back all the trees that were planted to add a little another layer (in the following order) of "matamahuluku" (mulch), "mbolea" (fertilizer), one more layer of "matamahuluku," and then slowly adding 2 cups of "magi" (water) to help them settle. We completed this work around 3pm, then returned to the lodge to end the day.



Group receiving tool orientation, and then off to planting with Teams Nyumbo, Nguchiro, and Simba !



On the next day, the teams added another layer of “matamahuluku” (mulch), “mbolea” (fertilizer), one more layer of “matamahuluku”, and then slowly added 2 cups of “magi” (water) to all 390 trees planted the previous day.

November 6th:

Rest day! The entire group participated in a day of exploring Lake Manyara National Park on Safari and picnic lunch. This experience gave our group more context around climate change and the desertification happening along the Great the Rift Valley Wall and the impacts on Lake Manyara itself which has gotten narrower. We had a nice sunny morning exploring the various ecosystems of the park and viewed many birds, Baboons, Blue Monkey, Vervet Monkeys and various flora and tree species. We stopped for a great picnic lunch with an exceptional overlook of the park and lake, then hopped back into the safari vehicles for more wildlife viewing. After lunch when the clouds began rolling in, the larger mammals all began to come out! The group enjoyed watching the daily activities of Elephants, Impala, Buffalo, Hippo in the lake, Marabou Storks, Bushbucks, Baboons, Warthogs and finally Giraffe. We ended the day with sundowners and enjoying a great 180-degree view of the Rift Valley Wall and Lake Manyara before returning to our lodge for dinner and retiring.



November 7th:

For our last workday, we planted about 10 more trees and went through the full 2-part planting process before lunch. When completed, we were able to plant 400 trees, and celebrated over lunch and an afternoon with the whole community. Celebrating the work, community members, our group, along with Maggie and the Dare Women's Foundation, and finished the afternoon with music and dancing. We said "farewell" to the community and returned to the hotel for rest, relaxation, and dinner.



The 400 trees planted at Gekrum Village include 8 species:

- Croton Tree (*Croton megalocarpus*)
- Broadleaved Croton Tree (*Croton macrostachyus*)
- Lusina (*Leucaena leucocephala*)
- Diamond-leaved euclea (*Euclea Divinorum*)
- Quinine Tree (*Rauvolfia caffra*)
- Olmisigiyoi Tree or Datei Tree (*Rhus natalensis*)
- Sandpaper Codia (*Cordia monoica*)
- Sycamore Fig (*Ficus Sycomorus*)



Left: Gekrum Village Tree planting site in 2018. Center: Gekrum Village tree planting site today. Right: goal is to have tree and bush canopy like the hill of Lake Manyara National Park.

At dinner, the team at the lodge surprised our group with a cake and a song of farewell. It is generally important in African cultural traditions for the need to have ceremonies especially when leaving, because it is about transition. And we are learning that there is much joy in these heartfelt “hellos” and “goodbyes” in Tanzania!

November 8th: Transfer Day:

Our group enjoyed breakfast and checked out of their rooms and said final goodbyes to Maggie and Nishel of Maggie's Tours. Then after breakfast, we were met by Joining Safaris Guides and Drivers, Benson Lucas and Sabath Mushi who gave us an orientation on the next week of activities in the Moshi region. Then we hopped into their 2 safari vehicles and began the 4-hour drive from Karatu to Moshi.

We stopped for lunch midway at the Arusha Cultural Heritage Center. This is a national museum that reflects the history and culture of Tanzania's diverse people, along with art in one of the largest museums on the continent. This was also an opportunity for folks to shop, use an ATM etc. Upon arriving at our hotel in Moshi we were welcomed by Erick Urassa, owner of Joining Safaris. The group settled in, and then met later for dinner.

November 9th:

After breakfast, the group gathered to depart, and were met by Erick Benson, and was introduced to Emanuel Seremi, our other main driver for the week. The group enjoyed a tour of Moshi Town followed by a welcome meeting and daily sign in with the officers of the Kilimanjaro Regional Forest Authority and Rau Forest Reserve offices.



Then our group drove to Rau Forest for an orientation, lunch and begin volunteering. Orientation was given by Lucas and Jabirri, who are the volunteer Forest Caretakers and work in the 584-hectare urban forest. They led the group on a small hike from our base at a campsite to the “Milky Water Natural Spring.” Upon returning to the campsite the group enjoyed a tasty lunch by the local chef, Hardson, who will be making our lunches in the forest all week.



After lunch, the group engaged in trail maintenance work clearing brush from 1.1 kilometers of trail with slashers. Upon completion of the trail maintenance, the group headed off to a different part of the forest and met Mr. Samwel Kipule of Kiviwama, who has been leading conservation efforts in Moshi since 1995. He is the provider of trees for the Rau Forest from the Kiviwama nursery. He led our group in all re-forestation and tree planting work. Today he shared information on the types of trees we planted and how to plant them. Our group planted about 100 tree in 90 minutes. Upon completing this work, we returned to the hotel to freshen up and relax before dinner.

November 10th-11th:

Friday the group returned to our planting area we worked in yesterday to plant another 388 trees. On Saturday we went to a new section of the forest and planted another 322 trees before lunch. Carol, Erick and Kelly were asked to plant 3 special one-of-a-kind trees for this section: African Blackwood/African Ebony (*Dalbergia Melanoxylon*), Mvule/African Teakwood (*Milicia Excelsa*), and Sausage Tree (*Kigelia Africana*). After lunch we headed back to the trail work, where we began and completed clearing brush from an additional 1.3 kilometers of trail with slashers.



**Above: Before and After brush clearing along forest trails with slashers.
Below: Tree Planting in the Rau Forest Reserve.**



The 810 trees planted 11/9 – 11/11 include 10 species:

- East African Newtonia (Newtonia Buchanania)
- Red Mahogany (Khaya Nyasica)
- Sycamore Fig (Ficus Sycomorus)
- Nile Tulip/Siala Tree (Markhamia Lutea)
- Red Mahogany/East African Mahogany (Khaya Nyasica)
- African Blackwood/African Ebony (Dalbergia Melanoxylon)
- Baobab (Adansonia Digitata) Tree of Life
- Mvule/African Teakwood (Milicia Excelsa),
- Sausage Tree (Kigelia Africana)
- Serondea Tree



November 12th : Rest day! The entire group participated in a day of exploring a community and waterfall in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro. And no promises but maybe a view of the peak of Kili might be had. The day began with an hour drive from Moshi up to Materumi Village that sits at about 3,000 meters (midway up Mount Kilimanjaro), where we were met by a community guide. He led us on a 2 hour round trip hike through the village and over to beautiful Materumi Falls which is 85 meters high and 3 meters wide. Upon returning to the village the group enjoyed lunch made by the community and then a tour of the coffee farm and coffee making process. The group got an opportunity to make and enjoy their own coffee! Again, another lively and authentic cultural experience in a local community.



November 13th :

Today our group returned to the forest to continue clearing brush from the trails with slashers. After lunch we cleared brush behind the campsite and then we went on a hike through the forest with Forest Tour Guide, Cleophus, who led us to the tallest tree in the forest the Mvule Tree (African Teakwood) that is over 200 years old. Then to end our time working in the Rau Forest, Cleophus led us on a “silent hike” through the forest, to the main entry road and gate. While the end of the hike, like many of our days, was muddy, this was a great time to think about our work and let our 5 senses guide us through this beautiful and lush place. Benson and Emanuel met us at the gate with the vehicles which returned us to the lodge for the day.



Left to Right: Forest Caretakers Lucas and Jabirrii with Forest Tour Guide Cleophus, the 200-year-old Mvule Tree, tallest in the forest, group engages in tradition of walking backwards around the tree which is believed to elongate life.



November 14th - 15th: Last day of volunteer work, then departure! Today we went to the Kiviwama Indigenous Tree Nursery at Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area. Here we met Mr. Kipule and shared more about the history of Kiviwama in the community and his work reforesting areas in and around Moshi since 1995. The Njoro Juu Spring also serves as Moshi towns municipal water source. Our work on this day was planting 11 unique tree species (one to represent each member of our group!) along with Vetiver grasses to help mitigate erosion into and around the spring. If Vetiver sounds familiar, it is the plant in which fragrances are made from its roots. Before lunch, our group planted 200 trees and 400 grasses. After this work the group returned to the hotel to clean up and refresh before our lunch.

The 200 trees planted included the following 11 species:

- African Blackwood/African Ebony (Dalbergia Melanoxylon)
- Baobab (Adansonia Digitata) Tree of Life
- Mvule/African Teakwood (Milicia Excelsa),
- Sycamore Fig (Ficus Sycomorus)
- Quinine Tree (Rauvolfia caffra)
- Red Mahogany/East African Mahogany (Khaya Nyasica)
- Water Berry (Syzygium Cordatum)
- Nile Tulip/Siala Tree (Markhamia Lutea)
- Serondea Tree
- Moringa Tree (Moringa Oliefera)
- Ekebergia (Ekebergia capensis)



Left to Right: Receiving orientation from Mr. Kipule about Kiviwama and the Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area. Handing out trees to be planted and separating the Vetiver grasses to be planted.

For our final lunch and celebration, we were hosted at Erick Urassa's home along with the Joining Safari's team, the Rau Forest Reserve team, and Mr. Kipule. We were welcomed by local musicians with song and dance and enjoyed celebrating the work, community members, and our group!



Upon returning to the hotel, those who had room to eat enjoyed dinner and one another's company for our final night. And finally, Mount Kilimanjaro showed her peak that evening at sunset! And again, she appeared on our last morning at breakfast time.



Final Reflections

The primary goal for the Tanzania Volunteer Trip is to plant trees to help mitigate the effects of climate change and desertification in the communities of Gekrum Village in Karatu and Rau Forest Reserve in Moshi. Volunteers also helped to restore and clean up trails in the Rau Forest Reserve in Moshi. During this inaugural trip, our group was patient as we worked through some logistics kinks, and navigating jeeps through muddy roads that are typical in Tanzania. All in all, this group donated 862.5 hours of demanding work, in the rain, the mud, humid and hot environment while being able to experience some of the most incredible landscapes, nature, communities of people, and wildlife sightings in Tanzania. Our goal was to plant 1008 trees on this trip. Combined we achieved 1410 trees and 400 grasses during this inaugural reforestation project!