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UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

NEWSLETTER



Six-month training programme 2016

In March this year, 11 fellows started the UNU-LRT six-month training programme in Iceland. They come from seven different countries: Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia in Central Asia, Ghana and Niger in West Africa, Uganda in East Africa, and Malawi and Lesotho in Southern Africa, five women and six men. Lesotho is a new UNU-LRT partner country and this is the first time that specialists from Lesotho are being trained at UNU-LRT. Both specialists are Senior Range Management Officers at the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation in Lesotho.

The UNU-LRT fellows have now finished the first part of the programme that consists of lectures and practical training, and are well into the latter part which consists of individual research work, under the supervision of professors and other experts in the topics chosen by the fellows themselves. By mid-September the fellows will graduate and return to their home countries.

This year the UNU-LRT programme welcomed two international guest lecturers. Dr Patrick L Shaver from Oregon State University gave lectures for the programme for the first time. Dr Shaver has over 40 years of experience as a rangeland management specialist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service. He has extensive experience as well in working with private landowners, and state and federal agencies in rangeland management planning, inventory and monitoring, grazing management and ecological site concept development, e.g. in the USA, Argentina, Kenya, Mongolia and Russia. Dr Shaver is one of the authors of the 4th edition of *Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health*, which is widely applied by agencies to provide early warning of potential degradation, opportunities for recovery and to help design monitoring programmes. He is a former President of the Society for Range Management and is currently an instructor at Oregon State University and owner of Rangeland Management Services LLC. Another American guest lecturer re-visited UNU-LRT this year, namely Ms Susan

Muska, a communication and media specialist. For her third consecutive year with the programme Ms Muska again trained the fellows in communication and presentation skills.

Ahead is the participation of the UNU-LRT fellows in an international conference on grazing issues, which will be held in Reykjavik in early September, followed by the graduation of the UNU-LRT fellows on 14 September.



Photos: Dr Patrick L Shaver during his stay in Iceland



Jane Goodall in Iceland

The renowned British primatologist and chimpanzee expert, as well as a UN Messenger of Peace, Dr Jane Goodall, visited Iceland in June this year. The UNU-LRT fellows got an exceptional opportunity to attend a masterclass with her at the National Museum of Iceland, along with a few selected students from the University of Iceland. In addition, Dr Goodall gave an open lecture at the University of Iceland, open to the public, where she met with conservation and wildlife enthusiasts.

Dr Goodall first became famous for her pioneer research on chimpanzees in the late 1950's. She has been active in inspiring people to conserve endangered animal species, as well as encouraging people all over the world to make the world a better place for people, animals and the environment they share. She established the Jane Goodall Institute in 1977, which focuses on wildlife research, education and conservation.



Research and publications

A large review paper on the sandy deserts in Iceland was published this year in the *Aeolian Research* journal, titled: *The Icelandic volcanic aeolian environment: Processes and impacts — A review*. Iceland has extensive sandy deserts and rates among the dustiest places on Earth. Preventing land degradation and restoring many of these deserts is a major challenge for the Icelandic society, just as it is in many of the severely degraded areas within the developing countries. The severe land degradation and active restoration efforts in Iceland are among the reasons for the location of the UN University Land Restoration Training Programme.

A second review paper was also published this year, on wetlands in Iceland. The paper was published in the *Wetlands* journal, titled *Icelandic inland wetlands: Characteristics and extent of draining*. It shows that nearly half of all inland wetlands in Iceland have been impacted by drainage. Wetlands worldwide are important for water regulation, biodiversity and carbon storage and they are important habitats for many organisms, but compared to other ecosystems, wetlands are in even worse condition, as stated by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report from 2005. Restoring damaged wetlands should thus be a priority, as well as increasing their protection.

Such publications are valuable for teaching and research purposes at UNU-LRT. The lead author of both articles was professor Olafur Arnalds, a UNU-LRT Studies Committee member and one of the key lecturers within UNU-LRT. The other authors of the wetland article are also all lecturers at UNU-LRT and have supervised fellows in the UNU-LRT six-month training programme.



Photo: Mr Sveinn Runolfsson (3rd from right) at his last UNU-LRT Board meeting in April 2016 and new representative of the Icelandic Forest Service, Dr Throstur Eysteinnsson (3rd from left)

Changes on the UNU-LRT Board

UNU-LRT is governed by a Board of five members and the Chair of the Board is the Director of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI). In May this year, Mr Sveinn Runolfsson, the SCSI Director and Chair of the UNU-LRT Board, retired from his work after more than 40 years of service with SCSI. Mr Runolfsson has also served as the Chair of the UNU-LRT Board from the beginning of the training programme in 2007. Mr Runolfsson chaired his last UNU-LRT Board meeting in April this year and on that occasion was presented with a gift from the Board, Director and staff of UNU-LRT as a token for his excellent service in chairing the Board.

Dr Arni Bragason has been inaugurated as Director of SCSi and thus the Chair of UNU-LRT Board. Dr Bragason comes from a position as the Director of Nordgen in Sweden. The UNU-LRT Team warmly welcomes Dr Bragason to the service of UNU-LRT.

Dr Throstur Eysteinnsson is also a new member on the UNU-LRT Board on behalf of the Icelandic Forest Service. The UNU-LRT team warmly welcomes Dr Eysteinnsson and simultaneously sends its best regards and acknowledgement to Mr Jon Loftsson, former Director of the Icelandic Forest Service, for his good service on the UNU-LRT Board.



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