

Promoting Primate Conservation Across the Globe

One FSC faculty member is working to help local communities understand the importance of primate conservation through children's books.

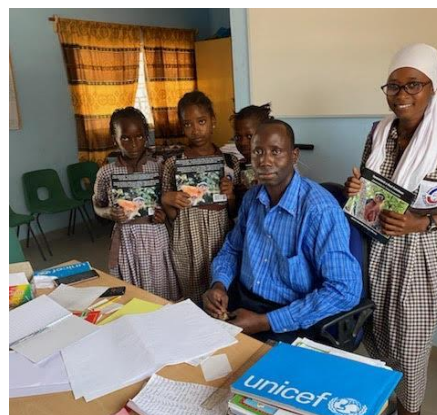
Dr. Christy Wolovich, Associate Professor of Biology, recently co-authored a children's book about the ecology and conservation of the critically endangered Temminck's red colobus monkeys in West Africa. A GoFundMe campaign raised funds to print and ship the books to the Gambia, West Africa where a local non-profit organization, The Communities for Red Colobus Project (C4RC) has been using the books in schools around the country to sensitize children and their families to the need to protect these primates.



Gambian women are helping CRAC to educate children about the red colobus monkeys.

After the initial success of the program, 75 more books were acquired via grant money by Dr. Mic Mayhew (Cumbria University, UK) and distributed to additional villages.

“Community-based conservation efforts tend to be more successful than those dependent upon outside revenue,” said Dr. Wolovich. “These books not only provide information about the biology of the monkeys and overall benefits of biodiversity, but they also empower local youth to develop their own conservation initiatives.”



The children's book is now in the hands of students in villages and cities throughout The Gambia.

Dr. Wolovich is not new to studying primates. She has spent twenty years studying the behavior of owl monkeys both at the DuMond Conservancy for Primates and Tropical Forests (Miami, FL) and in the field in Argentina. She is currently collaborating with recent National Geographic Conservation Leadership Award recipient Dr. Angela Maldonado (Fundación Entropika) to write a children's book focusing on the biology and need for conservation of these monkeys.

"The book will be translated into Spanish and Portuguese and distributed to children living in over 20 different villages in the Amazonian region of Colombia, an area in which owl monkeys are currently at risk due to extensive deforestation and illegal hunting for the pet and biomedical trade," Dr. Wolovich said. "This book will also include a traditional Tikuna tale about how owl monkeys are guardians of the moon."

The book will include fun activities that encourage the students to be excited about owl monkeys and protecting wildlife.



Dr. Christy Wolovich presenting her research about owl monkeys at the 2020 South Florida Primatology meeting prior to the covid pandemic.



Owl monkeys (*Aotus* spp.) are the only nocturnal primates living in Central and South America. They live in small family groups and feed on leaves, fruits and insects.

Dr. Wolovich also reaches out to her peers. As part of the American Society of Primatologists' Conservation Committee, Dr. Wolovich recently authored a newsletter highlighting conservation efforts related to endangered red colobus monkeys in Africa.

<https://www.asp.org/conservation/files/ASP-CAN%20action%20letter%20issue%201%20no.%203%20June%202020%20updated.pdf>

Another newsletter highlighted the need to protect nocturnal owl monkeys of Central and South America.

<https://www.asp.org/conservation/files/Aotus%20Conservation%20Action%20Letter%20March%202021.docx.pdf>