



AFRICAN BAT CONSERVATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME ENQUIRY PACK



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH



WELCOME TO THE ABC VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

WHY ABC?

Thank you for your interest in ABC. Volunteers play a vital role in helping us to achieve our aims.

We need as much help as we can get to make a difference for bats and biodiversity in Africa, we are a small team with a big task. In return for your time it is our hope that you enjoy volunteering with us, meet like-minded people and develop some new skills.

WHY BATS?

As one of the most abundant and diverse groups of tropical mammals, bats form a fundamental component of African biodiversity. Several studies have highlighted bat diversity and abundance as key indicators of habitat disturbance, environmental change, and conservation value (Pineda et al. 2005). Bats perform important roles as seed dispersers, pollinators and predators. Bats are therefore key to ecosystem functioning and should be included in conservation plans aimed at preserving the integrity of ecosystems (Kalka et al. 2008). Declining bat populations may compromise critical ecosystem services, therefore understanding their conservation status is vital (Williams-Guillen et al. 2008). Despite high diversity and the importance of bats to African biodiversity, the ecology and status of most African bat species are poorly known (Hutson et al. 2001).



WHY MALAWI?

Malawi has been highlighted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as of key importance to bat conservation in Africa (Hutson et al. 2001), having high endemism and species diversity with over 64 species. However, bat populations are at high risk in Malawi due to increasing agricultural expansion, deforestation, persecution and hunting of bats for food. Only nine species of bat are protected in Malawi and there are high levels of human bat conflict by roosting in buildings, hospitals or trees.



Conflicts are exacerbated by negative cultural perceptions of bats. Bats are often considered witches and used in witchcraft ceremonies. In addition, little research has been completed on the majority of bat species in Malawi resulting in a lack of understanding of bat conservation status, roosting and foraging requirements which limits our ability to conserve and manage populations and human bat conflict.

African Bat Conservation (ABC) is a non-profit conservation project based in Malawi, which falls under the umbrella of English charity Conservation Research Africa (CRA) (registered charity number 1170640). ABC and CRA were founded by Dr Emma Stone during her PhD studies on Bats in the UK. Emma is a Lecturer Assistant Professor at the University of Bath where she leads the Bat Conservation Research Lab at the Milner Centre for Evolution. ABC works in collaboration with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Malawi (DNPW), Lilongwe City Council, the University of Bristol, Cardiff University, Exeter University, Bunda University and Nottingham Trent University UK. ABC conducts three core activities across a variety of study sites and two research bases/stations.



WHAT WE DO

Applied Research

Our core work is the [Bats and Biodiversity Project](#) through which we conduct long-term biodiversity monitoring to determine and monitor bat population trends, assess threats and provide conservation recommendations. We work with bats across landscapes to assess drivers of bat diversity and abundance, and identify critical thresholds of population decline. A key focus is urban bat ecology and human bat conflict research, conducted from our Lilongwe and Salima lake shore research sites. All our projects facilitate and inform long-term conservation management of bat populations and their habitats. Key impacts to date include conducting the first biodiversity mapping of Lilongwe city and getting nine bat species legally protected in Malawi for the first time. Project results update IUCN species status reports and assist the DNPW and Lilongwe City Council in long-term population monitoring and management.

Education & Outreach

We conduct outreach and education about bats and biodiversity and related issues through comprehensive community based outreach, conflict mitigation through our bat helpline service in collaboration with Bat Conservation Trust, and awareness programmes around our study sites. We are seeking funding to develop an education centre at our Urban Research site from which we will conduct education programmes for local schools.

Capacity Building

We are increasing long-term success by building capacity in research, biodiversity monitoring and management for DNPW staff and students from Bunda University Malawi through training courses, placements programmes and postgraduate research projects at MSc and PhD level.



WHY WORK WITH US?

Real Scientific Research

ABC is led by expert bat scientists from the UK.

The project Director/Founder Dr Emma Stone has been researching bats since 1998. She is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bath (UK) where she heads up the Bat Conservation Research Lab. Emma completed her PhD on UK bats with Professor Gareth Jones and is a member of the IUCN Bat Specialist Committee, conducting red list assessments for African Bats. Emma has published in high impact journals on the effectiveness of bat licensing in England, mitigation of human bat conflict, impacts of roost exclusions and artificial lighting on bats (see www.africanbatconservation.org/publications). Emma has Class 4 NE Bat License and can act as a sponsor for UK bat license applications.



ABC also works in collaboration with the University of Bristol and Professor Gareth Jones, who is a Scientific Advisor for ABC, Nottingham Trent University UK (Dr Richard Yarnell and the University of Exeter (Dr Orly Razgour).

We offer a unique opportunity to work on existing research projects, run by established internationally renowned research scientists and assist in applied conservation research and community conservation.



WHY WORK WITH US?

Experience Bush, Lake and City!

You have a choice of camps with ABC from bush to city, all giving you a diverse range of bat research and conservation experience, and also a chance to explore the diversity of culture and environment that Malawi is famous for.

ABC conducts research and conservation from two research camps and conducts satellite camps around the country at certain times of year depending on our projects:



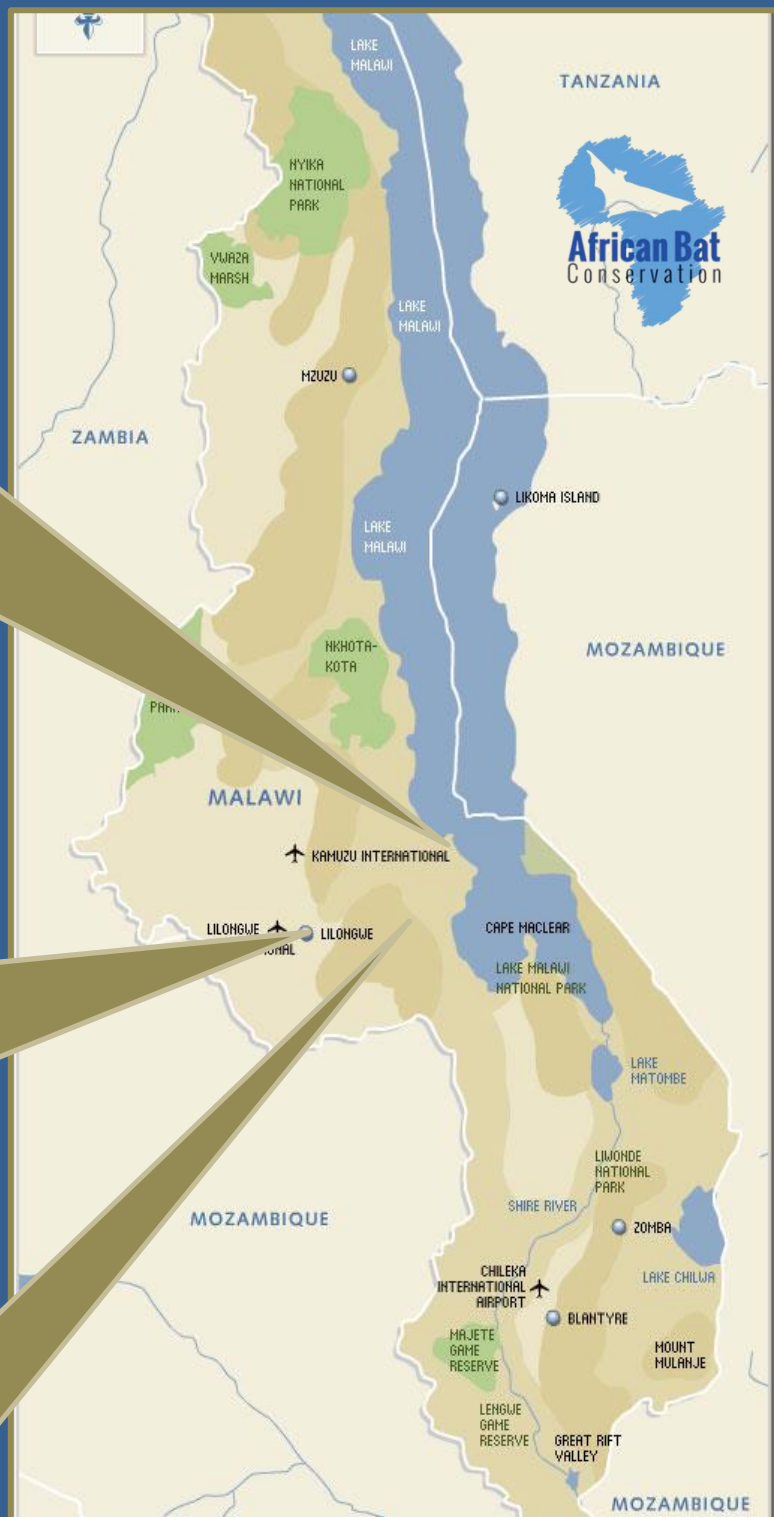
Kutu Wildlife Reserve & surrounding areas



Urban Research Centre Lilongwe



Lakeshore Salima



KUTI RESEARCH CAMP



Bat research in the heart of the bush

Working with us gives you a unique opportunity to work in a remote unspoilt African wilderness with very few visitors, untouched by the mass tourism found in Kenya and Tanzania. The ABC team are based at the Kuti Wildlife Reserve (KWR) near Salima town and Lake Malawi; located around one and a half hours from Lilongwe. Here we conduct research both on the wildlife reserve and in the communities in the nearby town of Salima, villages and the shores of lake Malawi at Senga Bay which have large numbers of bats and are experiencing a lot of human-bat conflict.

Kuti has a diversity of wildlife and in camp you will be on permanent safari, with regular visits to by zebras, vervet monkeys and bush babies. Camp is very comfortable with thatched A-Frame chalets equipped with beds, mattresses, linen and solar lights. There is a fully equipped ablution block with hot showers and flushing toilets. A trip not to be forgotten with visits to world famous Lake Malawi, and sundowners on the starlit sundeck.



Research Work Summary	
Research Projects	Bats and Landscapes Project, Nycteris Roost Ecology, Roost Monitoring Project
Research Methods	Mist netting, Harp trapping, Acoustics, Vegetation Surveys, Radio Tracking, Roost Surveys Roost visits and conflict work in Salima town and shores of Lake Malawi Education and outreach in Salima and lakeshore
Habitats Surveyed	Lakeshore, Miombo, Village, Wetland, Rice Paddies

URBAN RESEARCH CAMP LILONGWE



Bat research in the heart of Lilongwe



From our urban research camp, you get a chance to experience human bat conflict work, the hub of urban African city life and the cultural experiences of working in local communities. Our urban camp based in the beautiful grounds of Kumbali Lodge and Game Farm located only a mile from downtown. Volunteers are accommodated in the dorm rooms/safari tents which include beds, bedding, mosquito nets, hot showers and flushing toilets.

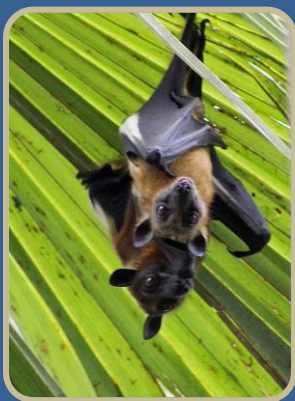
www.kumbalilodge.com

Meals are prepared and taken together with the ABC staff, interns and placement students at the adjacent staff house. As an urban volunteer you will be working out with our urban research team which often includes, MSc and PhD students, so you will get to join in and experience all the other research that happens including Urban Carnivore Research and Hedgehog Research depending on the time of year.



In November thousands of migratory Straw coloured fruit bats arrive in Lilongwe from West Africa. We conduct weekly colony and power line counts and some years conduct satellite tracking to understand more about their migration and urban ecology.

Lilongwe provides great training opportunities to be a Bat Ecologist in the UK, working in roosts, internal visits and emergence counts.



Research Work Summary

Research Projects	Human Wildlife Conflict Project, Bats and Landscape Project, Mops Spatial Ecology Project, Straw-coloured Fruit Bat Project, Bats and Farms Project
Research Methods	Internal roost visits at houses, endoscope surveys, conflict mitigation activities (exclusions, bat box installation etc.) emergence counts, mist netting, harp trapping, acoustics, vegetation surveys, radio tracking bats (only some months)
Habitats	Riverine, Garden, Parkland, Banana Plantation

WHY WORK WITH US?

Gain new skills, build your CV & your career

With ABC you will have the opportunity to gain many new skills and field research techniques including bat mist netting, bat handling, wing punch sampling, acoustic surveys, emergence counts, mitigation work, endoscope work, internal roost surveys, vegetation surveys and radio tracking (only at certain times of year). You can also gain lab based skills including acoustic identification of bats, call analysis and GIS.



Training for Bat Ecologists

If you are pursuing a career in bat research or consultancy you can gain specific skills which can take many years to obtain in Europe including: bat handling, internal roost visits, use of SM3/4, AudioMoth acoustic detectors, harp trapping, mist netting, ringing and wing punch collection; all of which contributes to a bat license in England or Wales. Our Director Dr Stone and Research Manager Dr Kieran O'Malley hold Natural England bat licenses and are able to provide references to augment your Bat License application in England and Wales, subject to demonstration of skills and ability during your time with us.

With over 64 species recorded, conducting bat research in Malawi means that you will gain experience of handling many more bat species compared to Europe, including fruit bats with one metre wing spans! If you are interested in a career in conservation research we would be happy to discuss opportunities for student projects, particularly MSc and PhD.



HEALTH & SAFETY

All volunteers **must** be vaccinated against Tetanus and Rabies to participate in the volunteer programme. We also advise you to be vaccinated against Typhoid, Meningitis, Hepatitis A & B, and Polio but up to date professional advice must be sought. Malaria is a serious problem in Malawi and in some cases it can be life-threatening. You should seek advice from a qualified travel health professional who will prescribe prophylactic tablets. The medication is normally started before you leave and continued for a short time after you have returned. There are several different options available to you, all with differing side effects and price.

How we support you

Our team are very experienced and have worked in research overseas for many years. We always work with scouts when conducting surveys at night or on foot in the city, and conduct a full risk assessment for each volunteer that arrives.

We have a medical evacuation procedure in place and conduct a comprehensive safety briefing and training period on arrival, including dangerous wild animals and snake bites. We keep volunteer group sizes small to ensure maximum safety and a high staff to volunteer ratio.



PRICES & ARRIVAL

ABC volunteers play a vital role in helping us to achieve our aims. We need as much help as we can get to make a difference for bats and biodiversity in Africa, we are a small team and without volunteers we would not be able to achieve our outcomes.

The price of volunteering varies according to the length of your stay. We suggest a minimum 2 weeks stay to get the most out of your experience but you can stay for up to 12 weeks, the longer you stay the cheaper it is per week. Placements longer than 12 weeks are available, and extensions can be made once in country subject to availability.

Arrival and Departure

There are no longer any quarantine requirements in Malawi. You can arrive and depart on which ever day suits.

Please contact us to discuss your preferred dates and duration of stay.

Mix and match!

For placements of more than 2 weeks there is a possibility that you may be able to split your time between our Kuti and Lilongwe locations. Mostly the team are located in Lilongwe, but there are periods spent in other study locations throughout the year. It is important you discuss with the team the timing of your stay and where you will be located, email us at volunteer@africanbatconservation.org





PRICES

We are passionate about supporting up and coming scientists and researchers in gaining the skills required to make a real difference in wildlife conservation. We recognise that money is tight during your time as a student or when you are in-between jobs trying to gain experience and we offer a 10% discount to students and those who are unemployed.

Bat Conservation Trust



To promote and support bat conservation we also give a 5% discount to members of UK Bat Groups or Bat Conservation Trust members on evidence of membership.

What's included

- Airport transfers
- All meals (3 per day on camp)
- All accommodation (at camp and one night at the beginning and end of your stay in Lilongwe if needed)
- All local work related travel
- Local sim card upon arrival
- Induction and research training pack
- Comprehensive safety training
- A donation to the project

No weeks	Kuti/Lilongwe Base Price	Student/ Unemployed	BCT/Bat Group Price
2 weeks	£1,150	£1,035	£1,093
3 weeks	£1,575	£1,418	£1,496
4 weeks	£1,975	£1,778	£1,876
5 weeks	£2,355	£2,120	£2,237
6 weeks	£2,585	£2,327	£2,456
7 weeks	£2,785	£2,507	£2,646
8 weeks	£2,935	£2,642	£2,788
9 weeks	£3,035	£2,732	£2,883
10 weeks	£3,135	£2,822	£2,978
11 weeks	£3,235	£2,912	£3,073
12 weeks	£3,335	£3,000	£3,168

What's not included

- Travel and medical insurance
- Flights, visas and vaccinations
- Internet and personal calls
- Excursions and personal expenditure
- Personal kit and batteries
- Meals and travel beyond the placement



HOW TO APPLY

Complete the online application form or download it from www.africanbatconservation.org/volunteer and email it to volunteer@africanbatconservation.org.

Once we have received your completed application form we will contact you to confirm dates and price and send you a detailed volunteer information pack with all the information you need before you arrive.

To confirm your placement we will need a £200 holding deposit (sent via bank transfer), once received you can get started organising your trip. Our volunteer coordinator will assist you with this and send you all the information you need, but there are a few things you will need to put on your to do list:

- Book your flights and insurance
- Visit a doctor/travel clinic for advice on vaccinations
- Go shopping for your kit, we will send you a recommended kit list, you will not require any specialist kit, but there are still the odd bits and pieces you might need
- Check if you need a visa
- Support us by organising a fundraising event — download our funding pack from the website for great ideas and activities!

Thank you for your interest in ABC
We look forward to hearing from you!

Follow us:   @africanbatconservation  @africanbatcon.bsky.social

Visit us: www.africanbatconservation.org

Email us: volunteer@africanbatconservation.org





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are there set arrival and departure days?

You can arrive any day of the week. Currently you are not required to quarantine on arrival in Malawi, however prior to departure do check for any changes in the COVID policy and visit the Ministry of Health — Malawi Facebook page for updates <https://www.facebook.com/malawimoh/>.

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Malawi?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. Most airline allowance is two checked pieces of luggage and a carry-on bag. You should check with your airline carrier to confirm.

What is the electric current and outlet type in Malawi?

Roughly 220–240 volts, 50 cycles; it may range from 190 volts to 260 volts when it is on. We have limited solar power at Kuti Research Camp and mains power at the urban camp. Batteries are available to purchase in Lilongwe however it may be worth bringing a charger and rechargeable batteries in all sizes. The sockets are the UK type, so if you have other power cords than UK you will need to bring adapters.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers based at Kuti have little access to shops and therefore spending money whilst in camp is limited to the occasional drink or meal at the lodge. If you have a few drinks per week and a meal, expect to spend around £20. If you are based in Lilongwe there are more spending opportunities including shopping, restaurants, bars and cafes. Volunteers may wish to bring additional money for vacation travel around Malawi or other countries. Suggested sources for local currency are covered below.

What food is provided and is the water drinkable?

Ingredients for healthy vegetarian meals are provided by ABC. Research Assistants, Volunteers, Interns and Placement Students all cook and eat together in the communal eating areas. Water is either bottled or from a borehole/boiled before drinking and is provided at all ABC facilities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should I do about getting local currency?

Cash in USD or GBP (notes over \$20/GBP20) can be changed on arrival at the airport or at one of the bureau de change offices around Lilongwe. Note that **Scottish and Irish pounds are not accepted** in Malawi. The simplest way to get local currency is to use the ATMs which are available at the airport and most towns around the country where you can withdraw Malawi Kwacha using your international VISA or MasterCard, credit or debit card.

Is Internet connectivity available and can I call home from Malawi?

Cellular internet is widely available in Malawi at a reasonable price. We recommend WhatsApp calling and texting which is cheap and convenient and so make sure you and your family have the App and are connected before leaving home.

Should I bring a mobile phone with me and what is the sim card you provide?

Yes, you are required to have a phone whilst you are on placement with us. A Malawian Sim card will be provided on your arrival. Make sure that the phone that you bring is **unlocked** and is SIM card and GSM compatible. The sim card we give you can be used on all unlocked cellular telephones. If you have any concerns about the phone you want to bring please discuss with the volunteer coordinator before travel.

Will there be email and Internet access?

1. **Lilongwe Urban Camp** - At the ABC Urban Camp office in Lilongwe we have satellite internet for work and emergency personal use. Cellular internet is available on your smartphone using a data bundle at a cost of MWK10,500 (approx. £11) for 6GB. Internet cafes and Wi-Fi are available in Lilongwe, and the larger towns.

2. **Kuti Research Camp** - Internet is limited to cellular internet service on your cell phone. If you bring an unlocked smart phone you can purchase internet data bundles and access the internet from anywhere using your phone.

Should I bring my computer?

Having your own laptop is not a necessity but it is very useful for data entry and communication with friends and family. The recommendation is to bring something lightweight and expendable.

What are the arrangements for washing clothes?

You can wash your own clothes, or you can pay for them to be washed for MWK 2,000 (£2) per bag. Washing powder is available in camp.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the sleeping arrangements for volunteers?

1. **Lilongwe ABC Urban Camp** - The accommodation in Lilongwe includes a bed, mattress, bedding and a mosquito net. You will need to bring your own sleeping bag.
2. **Kuti Research Camp** - In Kuti the beds are standard bunk beds with mattresses so you will only need a winter sleeping bag for the cold season (April — Sept) and a summer weight sleeping bag in the hot humid season (Oct — Mar). There is no need to bring a pad or camp cot.

How strictly should I follow the kit in regards to the medications in the first aid supply list?

You should bring the full recommended medical kit, as outlined in the kit list in the pre arrival pack, for the locations you plan to visit.

As well as camouflage clothing are there any other colours that are not recommended for wear in the bush?

Blue is not so great as it tends to attract more flies, but otherwise fine.

What type of mosquito net should I bring?

Mosquito nets are provided in Lilongwe and Kuti camp.

What kind of footwear should I bring?

In rainy season (Nov — Mar) we recommend bringing hiking boots and a pair of sturdy rain boots like bogs. The rest of the year hiking boots will suffice. Sneakers are not suitable for walking in the bush, but can be worn around camp if you wish.

Visit us at
www.africanbatconservation.org
to find out more about our work!

