

The Red Book Challenge

“think small”

Inspired by the work of Russell A. Mittermeier, president of Conservation International (CI), The Red Book Challenge is a small scale conservation initiative started by two primate researchers working in Berenty Reserve in June 2012. The challenge is a partnership between two children’s conservation clubs: one in Berenty village and one in the city of Fort Dauphin.

Step One: The Berenty school lessons and creation of the red books.

Using the lessons of the CI film “Fanamby – The Bet” the Berenty students were asked: “How will you embrace the Green Challenge?”.



Colombe explaining the film's message

Each child was given a small red book with nine blank pages. They were encouraged to work at identifying individual ring-tailed lemurs ranging within the village, to create an original story or poem about Malagasy wildlife and conservation, or to draw pictures of local plants and animals.



The children paid close attention to the film

The students were given only four days to complete this challenge, as their books were delivered on a Monday and due to their instructors on Friday. Friday’s lesson was devoted to sharing the lessons learned during the challenge and proposed the question “How can you share what you have learned with others?”.



The children worked hard to create beautiful pictures and stories.

The students' enthusiasm ensured that most of the village had already learned about the challenge. A simple plan was proposed to the class of 38 students, ranging in age from 7 to 17 years to spread their message even further.

THE PLAN:

- *Berenty village children create conservation books*
- *Fort Dauphin children sell the books to tourists for 5,000 Ar (\$2.50 CAD each)*
- *Profits are matched by Canadian donations and returned to Berenty village*

On Friday, June 8th the Berenty village students volunteered to donate their books to a group of 5 children who had formed their own conservation club in the nearest city: Fort Dauphin.

Step Two: The Fort Dauphin Conservation Club

The Fort Dauphin children are experienced vendors selling souvenirs to tourists, have taken lessons on small business management, and have watched the same CI film as the Berenty village schoolchildren. At the first official meeting of the Fort Dauphin Conservation Club on Saturday, June 9th each club member was given a small number of books to sell to tourists, a set price to sell the books for, and asked to

carefully keep a record of their sales. The money they made from the project would be theirs to use for school supplies and all unsold books would be returned to the project leaders in good condition after 3 months' time.



Fort Dauphin Conservation Club meeting

Step Three: How you can become involved

Our message is “think small” because with a very small investment of time and money graduate students conducting fieldwork in Madagascar can engage local communities in small conservation projects which have a big impact. For this reason we have created guidelines for student researchers to replicate the Red Book Challenge at their own field sites.

For the Berenty-Fort Dauphin collaboration we are hoping to raise 90\$ CAD to match the funds raised from selling the red books to tourists. This money will be returned to the Berenty village children who created the books, by using

half to purchase school supplies and half to be invested by the students as they see fit.



Berenty students with their red books

Our goal is to promote conservation education in rural Madagascar by creating and linking as many small children's groups together as possible. To further this goal we have created packets for tourists who are planning a trip to Madagascar which contain everything a village will need to start their own Red Book Challenge, including instructions written in Malagasy. If you are planning a visit to remote sites in Madagascar please consider packing one of our packets in your luggage to deliver to deserving Malagasy children.

Contact us

To request the following documents or to make a donation, please contact Amber Walker-Bolton at amber.walker.bolton@utoronto.ca

- guidelines for student researchers
- Red Book Challenge packet for tourists*
- Our current financial statements
- Future newsletters

*If you require a tourist packet please indicate whether it is destined for Northern or Southern parts of the country.

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Fort Dauphin Conservation Club meeting