

If you no longer wish to receive these messages, please click here to [unsubscribe](#).



RCP REPORT | JULY - AUGUST 2018

RCP's Carnivore Scholar Lazaro makes big strides!

In 2014 Lazaro had just graduated from primary school and wanted to continue studying. Having come from a pastoralist family close to Ruaha National Park he was eligible for our Simba Scholarship programme. Each year RCP selects six pastoralist children - as well now as two non-pastoralist children - and support all their education costs for four years of secondary school. Pastoralist families in particular suffer the consequences of coexisting with carnivores and we believe that by receiving benefits, this will help them value the wildlife they live alongside.

Lazaro's life wasn't easy as a child. His father passed away when he was very young and soon after his mother, who was suffering from breast cancer, was taken by relatives to be treated. Lazaro was adopted by a Maasai family where he grew up, living a traditional pastoralist life.

Four years on, and Lazaro is succeeding again. He graduated top amongst all the scholars from secondary school and he was given a partial scholarship by the government to go to Mbeya to study Biomedical Chemical Engineering. RCP will keep supporting him until he finishes college, paying his fees and providing all the education materials he might need during his studies. We are thrilled to support such a talented and dedicated young man, and know he will be very successful in the future.



Lazaro pays us a visit in camp after receiving the good news of his selection as a Simba Scholar. Photo credit: Ana Grau, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

Lion Defender team expands with two new Defenders

The Ruaha Carnivore Project recently welcomed two new Lion Defenders, Alex Kilongo and Joseph Kwia. Joseph Kwia lives in the Maasai community of Namalok, an area of high conflict adjacent to community protected land. The increased conflict that Namalok has experienced in the past year has resulted in this community requesting the introduction of the Lion Defender programme.

Alex Kilongo joins the team in Idodi village, another hotspot for conflict. We are extremely happy to have Alex on board as he is very influential in the local area, and was reputed to be particularly influential with young hunters. However, he is now very committed to conservation, so we hope he can help spread that message amongst remaining hunters. We're excited to have these two new members as a part of our team!



Joseph (left) during his job interview with Stephano Asecheka (Community Liaison Officer) and Kambona Kanayaa (RCP Research Assistant). Photo credit: BenJee Cascio, Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Alex receiving training with Elisante Kimambo (RCP Research Assistant), Kambona Kanayaa and Stephano Asecheka. Photo credit: BenJee Cascio, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

RCP participates in the NaneNane exhibition in Mbeya

NaneNane (Swahili for eight eight, as it is held on 8th August) is a time for farmers to celebrate in Tanzania. Besides being a public holiday, there are big exhibitions all over the country. This year RCP was invited to participate in the exhibition in Mbeya. This was a great opportunity to spread the word about our work. There was great interest about our programmes, especially in our reinforced “bomas” that can protect livestock from the carnivore attacks during the night.

The team did a sterling job, building a representative wire enclosure, showing lion satellite collars and producing lots of educational material for local farmers. It wasn't a small effort to build the stand and prepare all the materials and it is a long trip to Mbeya. But it was definitely worthwhile!



People observing RCP's small stand at the Nanenane exhibition in Mbeya. Note the lion collar for monitoring movement and distribution of these big cats (RHS of photo), which is one of the projects which RCP is engaged in. Photo credit: Michael Kimaro, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

Lion Defenders attend annual Lion Guardian Games in Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Gathering every year for the annual Lion Guardian games is something our Lion Defenders look forward to with great anticipation and excitement. Not only do they get to participate in competitive events like spear throwing and sprinting, they also receive training and have time to exchange challenges and successes with Lion Guardians (Kenya) and Kope Lion (Ngorongoro Conservation Area).

This year the Lion Guardians provided training on how to respond to poisoning events which is unfortunately becoming more common across east Africa. Our Lion Defenders also shared their experience on how the Ruaha Carnivore Project has responded to poisoning in the past and at the end of the training were presented with a poison response kit. We are grateful for Lion Guardians, Kope Lion, and Ndotu Safari Lodge for helping to make the games possible. We've returned back to work rejuvenated and full of knowledge to help us continue to address human-wildlife conflict.



Lion Defender Darem Philipo always excels at running and has been the champion two years running - but had to settle for runner up this year. Photo credit: Kambona Kanayaa, Ruaha Carnivore Project



Maasai and Barabaig traditionally jump to display their strength and virility. Lion Defender Kitilu Lesso shows the other teams how it's done. Photo credit: Kambona Kanayaa.

Community Camera Trapping expands to four new villages

At RCP we believe that communities have a big role to play in wildlife conservation. It is they who, day after day, coexist with these animals, often with negative consequences. Our Community Camera Trap programme aims to link the presence of wildlife with tangible benefits for the community. Every time a wild animal - predator or prey - is pictured, the village is awarded points that will eventually translate into community benefits. Those benefits are distributed across three key priority areas for local villages: health care, education and veterinary healthcare.

Recently, thanks in particular to support from the Lion Recovery Fund, four new villages (Mboliboli, Luganga, Mbugani and Kisilwa) were given the opportunity to join the programme, and they received it with open arms. After visiting each village, our CCT team (Hillary and Stanley) explained to the community how the project works. It is really important for the community to be aware of the programme, so they don't damage the cameras when they see them in the bush. And also, that they understand the benefits they will be receiving actually come from the wildlife in their village.

Each community then selected two CCT officers who will be in charge of the well-being of the cameras. The CCT officers know their wildlife very well, and it is likely that some of them were hunters or poachers in the past, so this now gives them an opportunity to become involved in conservation. They place the cameras every month where they expect the wildlife to be. During the dry months the safest bet is to put the cameras close to water or on the paths that lead to water pools. Following this expansion RCP will be providing benefits to 16 villages which means thousands of people will be receiving benefits.



Some of the new CCT Officers posing with the newly placed community cameras in Mboliboli village. Photo credit: Hillary and Stanley, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

Snapshot of CCT activities in the communities

The benefits to villagers are directly related to the camera-trapping of wildlife on their village lands. Below are some images and their value in points - which translate into benefits such as health and veterinary support, education programmes for the village children, and other benefits such as building materials. Benefits are a very serious business in the villages, and elders and RCP team members will sit and discuss where the benefits are needed. With this clear link between wildlife presence leading directly to community development, it is a win-win situation for wildlife and for people.



These fleeting wild dogs gave Idodi 40,000. Being the only endangered large carnivore in our area they are worth most points. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Also, in Idodi these two lionesses gave the village 30,000 points (15,000 each). Lions are mainly responsible for the killing of cattle which have special value for locals, so it is important that they generate high numbers of points and therefore benefits for the people living alongside them. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



It is initially hard to distinguish them but this ghostly image reveals two lions in Isele, an area not far from our GPS collared lioness was poisoned last year. Lions rely quite heavily on village land, so it is very important to ensure that their presence benefits local villagers. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Vervet monkeys are not carnivores and are not threatened so they only generate 1500 points. However, they move in big groups so together they can generate a lot of points, which is good as they can also impose costs on local people through crop damage. However, they are cute and inquisitive, which makes for great shots! Photo Credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



A rarity in our landscape, a Marsh mongoose was spotted in Kinyika village. It is always wonderful to get images of the smaller carnivores as well. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



It is the dry season and survival depends on finding water. Looking at the feet of this group of elephants it is easy to see where they have been. This group gave Kisanga village 12,000 points. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Honey badgers are rarely seen, and getting three in one picture is rare. These three gave Mafuluto village 15,000. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Leopards are large carnivores, which have the same threat status (vulnerable) as lions and cheetahs. However, they tend to cause less conflict than lions, so they each generate 10,000 points (as compared to 15,000 each for lions). This beautiful specimen was photographed at Magombwe. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



We always enjoy snapshots of wildlife behaviour, but some can be puzzling when captured out of context. In Mahuninga this baby elephant is perhaps trying to scratch an itch? Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



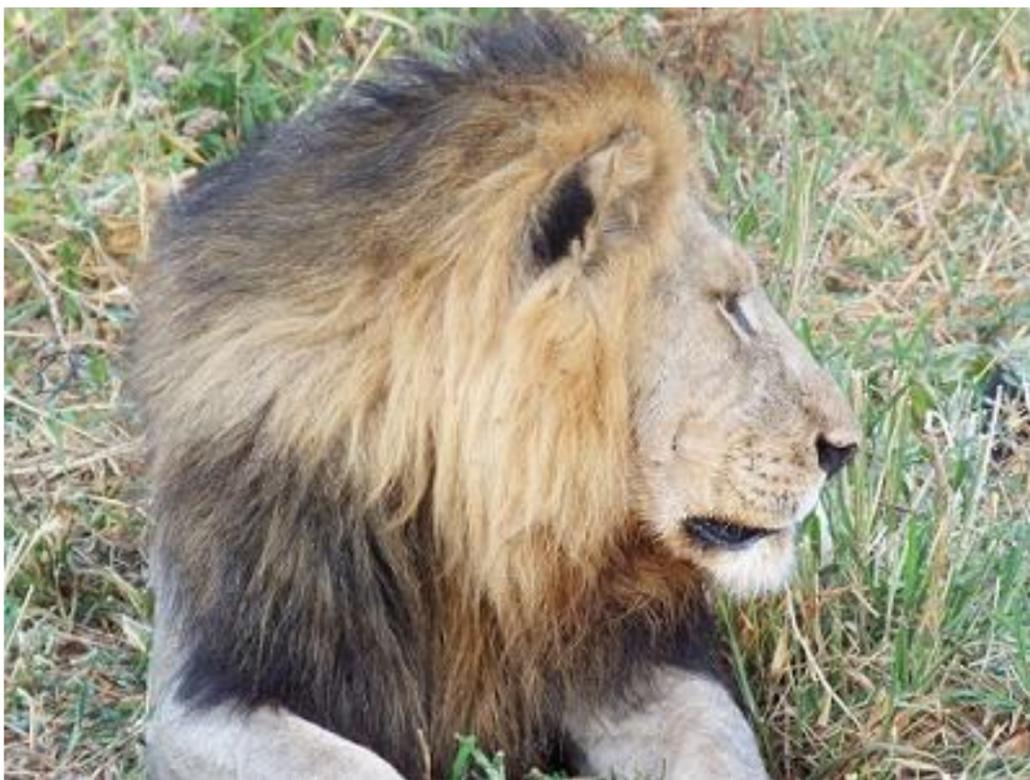
In Malinzanga there are often lions who kill livestock, but we rarely catch them on camera. Thanks to this picture the village will get 30,000 points and therefore a greater likelihood of more benefits for the community. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Another lioness was pictured in the village of Tungamalenga where conflict with people is also frequent. This rather lovely picture will give the village 15,000 points. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.

What is going on in the Park?

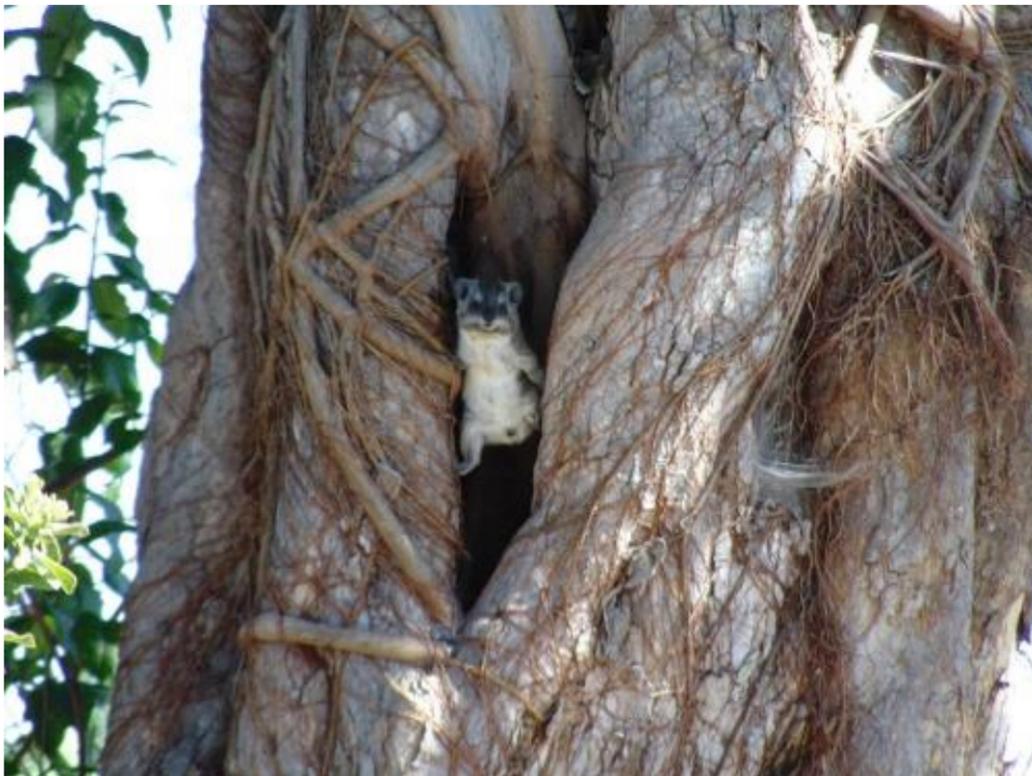
With the Ruaha river starting to dry out this is a particularly easy time to spot wildlife in the park. This is the guides' busiest time and the best time for us to collect data through the sightings programme. All the animals must come to the remaining water pools to drink and lions only have to sit and wait.



The dry season in prime lion viewing time. This is a magnificent black-maned lion. Interestingly, females prefer black-maned lions to their blonder counterparts. Photo credit: Theophil Myinga, [Jongomero Safari Camp](#).



As the sun rises in the sky this pride of lions seeks shade to rest for the day. Photo credit: Hussein Ngaroka, [Kigelia Camp](#).



A hyrax studies the situation (somewhat precariously!) from the entrance of its refuge. Photo credit: Jumanne Myovellah, [Mdonya Old River Camp](#).



It's not so easy to get close-up pictures of leopards because they feel more comfortable at heights. Interestingly, although this leopard has black speckling on its nose, that cannot be used for ageing in the same way that black on the nose of a lion can be. In lions, noses get more black with age and it is a relatively reliable way of ageing them. Photo credit: Thomas Tovagonze, [Mdonya Old River Camp](#).



As arguably the most elusive the carnivore in the park, wild dogs are always a treat to see! Photo credit: Zackaria Kahimba, [Mdonya Old River Camp](#).



Mwasty, RCP's collared female lion, often spends her time around the Ruaha River Lodge and it is regularly spotted by the guides working there. Photo credit: Dotto Miho at [Ruaha River Lodge](#).

Meet the team: Meshack Sanya, Research Assistant

My name is Meshack Sanya and I was born and raised in Mafuluto, one of the villages around Ruaha National Park. After I completed secondary school in 2012, RCP employed me as a Conflict Officer in my home village. This role involved visiting pastoralist households and collecting information on the number of livestock individual households own, and information on any depredation events that happened to the households. I also acted as an ambassador for the project, helping to convince people to leave carnivores alone and rather to call in the RCP Lion Defenders and other staff to work with them to protect their livestock.



Meshack - 'Apart from my career and conservation work I also love to play football.'
Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project

The income that I made through my work allowed me to pay for my further studies in 2013. In 2015, I graduated and was awarded a Certificate in General Agriculture from MATI-Ilonga College of Agriculture in Morogoro. In the same year, after my graduation, I came back home and continued my work as a Conflict Officer until May 2018. In June 2018, RCP employed me as a Research Assistant. Now I help to supervise the monthly monitoring programme and make sure my former fellow Conflict Officers keep up the good work.

Like many other people living in villages adjacent to park boundaries, I had no knowledge of conservation and never knew of the importance of conserving wildlife, and especially large carnivores, because they caused more loss than benefits to my village. But when I started working with RCP, I came to love wildlife and I now have my whole heart in conservation.

Species Spotlight: Bat-eared Fox, *Otocyon megalotis*

Averaging 20 inches in length, with remarkable 5-inch satellite-dish ears, the tiny bat-eared fox is one of the most charismatic of all of Ruaha's creatures. Named for its enormous ears (from the Greek words *mega* for large, *cyon* for dog and *otus* for ear), some wonderful images of family groups collected by guides in the park have inspired the choice of species this month. They are highly sociable, so if you see one, look around for more!

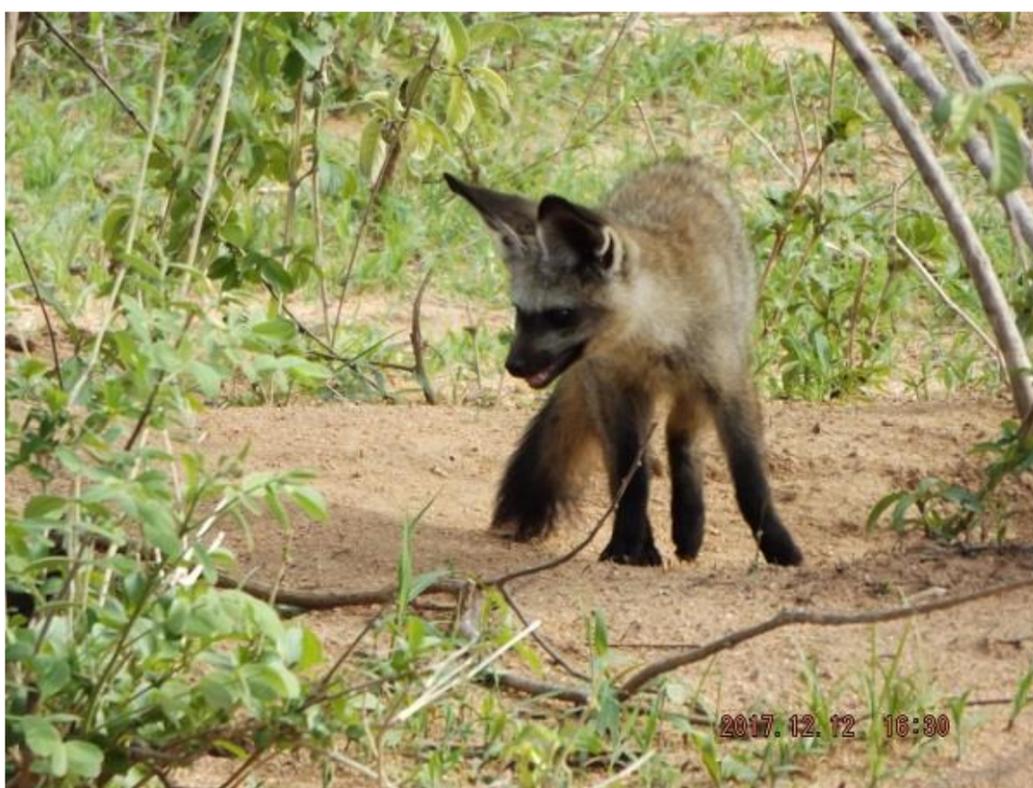


Photo: Intently concentrating... a bat-eared fox captured by one of lodge drivers who participate in the RCP Sightings Programme. Photo credit: Majuto Magellah, [Ruaha River Lodge](#)

These little canids are popular with farmers who consider termites a pest. They have even been found using old termite mounds as dens! Huge ears are important in thermoregulation (helping to shed heat and keep cool) and as a means of communication between individuals. They also act as antennae and are the primary method of detecting prey, which may be pinpointed accurately up to an astonishing 12 inches below the ground. Sharp front claws allow beetles and burrowing insects to be quickly unearthed, whilst grasshoppers, scorpions and occasionally small birds and mice are taken, often mid-air, by means of elaborate jumps and pounces.

Highly social and mainly active at night, bat-eared foxes emerge from their dens in the late afternoon and will groom and socialise until dark. They then forage intensively until midnight, rest for a while and become increasingly active again until dawn. Their largely insectivorous diet satisfies their water intake so they seldom need to drink, but it also means that a great deal of time must be spent foraging in order to consume enough food.



Non-territorial, bat-eared foxes live and forage in pairs or groups of up to 15 individuals which allows some protection against predators such as lions, hyaenas and wild dogs. Photo credit: Mohinga Timani, [Jabali Ridge Safari Camp](#)

Bat-eared foxes favour short grasslands grazed by ungulates, venturing into thick shrub to avoid daytime heat or evade predators. Several dens, with many entrances and chambers, will be newly dug or enlarged and are used to raise pups and to provide shelter from extreme temperatures and winds. Up to six cubs (or kits) are born at the beginning of the rainy season, emerging after 17 days. There is a high level of mortality and adults are fiercely protective of their offspring, which are vulnerable to jackals and eagles. In contrast to other canids, females do not regurgitate or bring food back for the pups, in fact males take on the majority of parental care, moving den sites and looking after pups to allow females to forage for enough food to maintain milk production.

References

Richard Estes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bat-eared_fox#cite_note-EB-6

<https://www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/bat-eared-fox>

<https://www.arkive.org/bat-eared-fox/otocyon-megalotis/>

<https://africageographic.com/blog/4-fun-facts-about-the-bat-eared-fox/>

THANK YOU ~ ASANTE SANA

As always, we thank all our donors for their generous and committed support.



Ecological research - RCP provides vital data on Ruaha's little-known carnivore populations through camera-trapping and recording carnivore sightings. More than 10,000 carnivore sightings have been recorded to date. ([Read more...](#))



Community camera-trapping - RCP trains and employs local villagers to set up and manage camera-traps on village land in return for community benefits, directly linking conservation with development. ([Read more...](#))



Protecting the livelihoods of villagers living in proximity to carnivores reduces conflict. Fortifying livestock enclosures and placing guarding dogs are proving successful in minimizing conflict. ([Read more...](#))



The RCP Lion Defenders actively prevent and stop lion hunts. These Lion Defenders are chosen from amongst the bravest and most influential warriors. ([Read more...](#))



Kids 4 Cats is a school-twinning programme where local schools are 'adopted' by international schools who raise at least US\$500 annually for them, to buy essential education material and equipment. ([Read more...](#))



Simba Scholars receive full scholarships for all four years of their secondary school. The cost is US\$2,000 per student and RCP is keen to expand the programme to more students. ([Read more...](#))



Porridge Project - No one likes to go to school hungry, so RCP and our partners make sure that local scholars have full tummies when they're at school - this increases attendance and attainment, employs local women and is a major benefit in villages where there is very little food security. ([Read more...](#))



DVD nights and Park trips provide education about conservation and species in a fun, non-threatening environment. To date more than 30 000 attendees have enjoyed DVD nights and more than 1,000 people have been on Park trips. ([Read more...](#))

Should you wish to know more about individual programmes we will happily send you more information. Please contact our communications manager, Margaret Roestorf at margaretroestorf.rcp@gmail.com. Should you wish to speak directly to the Director, Dr. Amy Dickman, please contact her at amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk.

To support our work, you can use one of the following channels:

If you haven't yet browsed through the **RCP wish list on Amazon**, it's a great way to get connected to the project and find needs that suit your pocket and your passion.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/registry/wishlist/?ie=UTF8&cid=AMZKTSB73EMFA>

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1880XADYUZXWF?>

Donating via EFT

Bank: Barclays Bank plc

Account Name: University of Oxford Development trust

Account Number: 40155586

Sort Code: 20-65-20

Swift Code: BARCGB22

IBAN Number: GB06BAR20652040155586

UK Donors (online)

www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/report/ruaha-carnivore-project

US Donors (online)

<http://www.houstonzoo.org/saving-wildlife/ruaha-carnivore-project/>

To pay via cheque please contact Amy Dickman at amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk.

Until next time... slow and steady wins the race!



Photo credit: Josephat Mdegela, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).

The Development and Alumni Relations System (DARS) provides a common source of data on all alumni, donors, students, staff and friends of the collegiate University. Our long-term intention behind this shared resource is to improve mutual understanding, by enhancing the quality of our communication at all levels and developing a better appreciation of our relationship with alumni, donors and friends.

Please see www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/data_protection for information on the way in which your personal data are held and used in DARS. If you no longer wish to be contacted by the University, or wish to alter the way your data are held and used, please send a suitably worded email to database@devoff.ox.ac.uk