

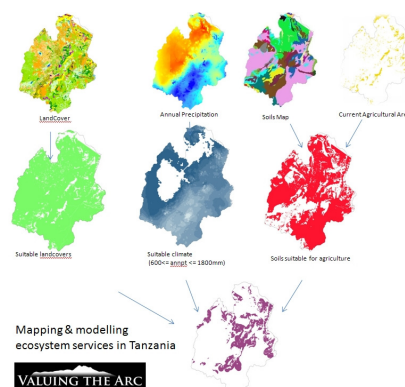
Ruth Swetnam Research Scientist

I am a Research Associate in the Conservation Science group at the University of Cambridge where I am working on a 5 year interdisciplinary project called "Valuing the Arc" which is focused on the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania – a global biodiversity hotspot. For the first time we are trying to map, model and value important ecosystem services (such as timber, water, carbon storage, medicinal plants etc.) in an integrated way in order to help Tanzania meet its conservation challenges whilst furthering socio-economic development. My role is to manage the project's spatial data, undertake spatial modelling and assist in the development and implementation of landscape change scenarios.



I have a BSc in physical geography, an MSc in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and a PhD in geography. My research interests lie in the fields of landscape ecology, historical geography, land use change, environmental information and planning. For the first 15 years of my working life I was employed in the public sector at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (www.ceh.ac.uk) where I was responsible for building GIS databases to investigate ecological processes relevant to both fauna and flora. Over the last few years of my time at CEH, I ventured into interdisciplinary working through a research project designed to explore the impact of farmer training on the delivery of biodiversity under the UK agri-environment schemes (www.ceh.ac.uk/farmcat/). Although a physical geographer by training I have always worked outside my core discipline, first by emerging myself in ecology and now by collaborating with zoologists.

Being made redundant after 15 years at CEH was initially a fairly depressing experience, but on the whole it has thrown me into a totally new and exciting area of science. I never expected to end up working in a developing country and so when the opportunity came up at the University I grabbed it with both hands. Although the first 6 months have proved a challenge, I think the change (though forced) was a very good thing. I have realised that I am most happy working in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment and I need the intellectual stimulation that such a research project can provide. I hope to stick with the project until my contract ends in 2011 by which time I may be ready to think about another area of science to collaborate with.



<http://valuingthearc.org/index.html>



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