The Biology Department

**First message:** It is good, in a conference on biodiversity and sustainable development, that the scientists that study the biodiversity actually get the floor. Sounds self-evident but ....

**Second message:** The species of many groups of animals and plants are far from known. Hence, the essential inventory as a baseline for further studies is lacking in many groups and for many regions. Decision makers do not like to hear this.

**Second message:** In the Royal Museum for Central Africa, most studies on the biodiversity have a collaborative component and a sustainable development inference.

**Fourth message:** I am a fool in trying to present the activities of the Biology Department in a couple of minutes
Some examples

Wood biology: one of the largest collections of tropical wood; research contributes to forest ecology and underpins sustainable production of wood in tropical Africa
Some examples

**Tephritidae (fruit flies):** about 4500 species, 40% of which are fruit infesters and cause major damages.

Unique expertise in the Museum: monitoring of indigenous and exotic fruit fly pests, and their invasion pathways, through regional networks. Contributing to development of low-cost pest management practices

**Syrphidae (hover flies):** beneficial, important pollinators; the larvae of many species predate on agricultural pests.

Unique expertise in the identification and relationships between species; studying the host–pollinator relationships and their impact in pollination of crops
Some examples

Parasites of fishes and humans:
Invasive tilapia and introduction of new parasite species in the natural environment

Basic biological data on human parasites (*Schistosoma*) and the use of parasites to trace human migration within and outside Africa
Some examples

Fish

What is the problem?
Fishbase

The world’s largest, freely accessible, online database on fishes, and available on DVD

Objective = to transfer knowledge and information to developing countries often lacking libraries and data facilities

Some numbers:
> 30 million hits, ± 0.7 million visits by ± 0.4 million visitors per month in 2015
available in 24 different languages
306,300 common names in more than 350 languages
8 mirror sites

The museum is a founding member of the FishBase consortium and responsible for the information on African fishes

Large component of capacity building: three months training in fishbase and fish taxonomy

With the support of THE BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
Since 2004 collaboration with IUCN (International union for the Conservation of Nature) for red list assessments of African Freshwater fishes.
Just a stupid example: analyses of stomach contents of the fishes near Kisangani

Fish feed from the land. Crucial implications for conservation
Today’s newspapers

“Brazil hit by one of the worst environmental disasters ever”
“Brazil declares emergency after mine waste spill”
“Anger rises as Brazilian mine disaster threatens river and sea with toxic mud”

The museum has a small scale VLIR-UOS project with the KU Leuven on the influence of toxins from mining activities on the fishes and the aquatic environment in Katanga (RDC).