



SEOSAW Quarterly Newsletter: December 2022

What is SEOSAW?

SEOSAW is a network of scientists and plots unified by a shared interest in understanding the changing ecology of African woodlands and savannas.

For more information, see 'What is SEOSAW?' and 'Who owns the data?' at the bottom of the newsletter.

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Version 3.0 of SEOSAW Dataset

 9992 Woodland plots	 13 Countries	 583871 Tree measurements	 110 Researchers
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SEOSAW now has more than 100 data contributors and more than a half million trees!

Dr. John Godlee and many other SEOSAW members worked extremely hard to put together a new and improved version of the SEOSAW dataset. The new version includes:

Data

- New plots were added from northern Angola (M. Rees), Kenya (M. Mbuvi), South Africa (S. Archibald), and Uganda (R. Harrison)
- New 2021 censuses from permanent plots in Angola (J. Godlee), Zimbabwe (A. Muchawona), Congo (S. Ifo), Mozambique (S. Lisboa, C. Ryan), and Tanzania (MCDI and C. Ryan)

Structure

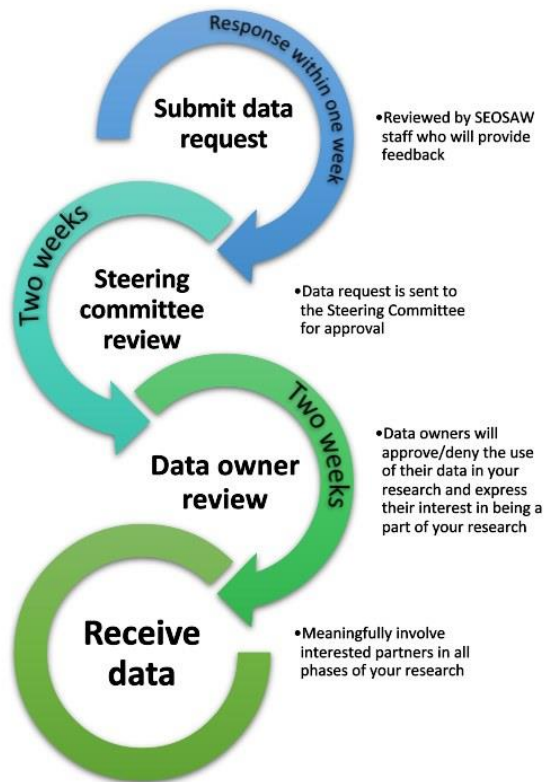
- Incorporated new columns to match the disturbance protocol
- Added new stem mode and damage flags
- Modularized functions in the seosaw R package
- And many more changes to improve clarity, organisation, and use of the database!

[Request the SEOSAW data!](#)

We want the SEOSAW database to be as open and used as possible! If you have science questions, we have data and people willing to help you draft a data request!

To access the SEOSAW data, we require you to draft a data request which is reviewed by the SEOSAW steering committee first and then the data owners. This process takes about a month. The SEOSAW office is here to make this process as easy as possible for you, and will assist you in formulating the perfect data request.

If you are interested, please answer the questions in this [document](#) and get in touch via the [contact form](#) if you would like to use the SEOSAW dataset. A sample of the dataset is freely available [here](#) to help you in formulating your data request.



Steering Committee Goals for 2023



The SEOSAW Steering Committee has been meeting monthly to make an ambitious plan for 2023! The goals for 2023 include, but are not limited to:

Protocols

The SC and SEOSAW members will continue to refine drafts of traits, woody understory, and human dimensions protocols with the goal of publishing final drafts by the end of the year.

Geographic expansion and new plots

New plots are planned in Namibia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar.(see details in next section). Further sampling is planned for many existing plots to expand the range of measurements (i.e. to include the herbaceous and woody understory). And SC members will explore the possibility for more plots and collaborations in Zambia and Malawi.

Capacity building

The SC will explore options for in-person and online trainings for field protocols and data analysis. Additionally, we will try to increase student engagement and connections with the Miombo Network.

Grant management

Several steering committee members have been awarded grants that will support SEOSW activities. In 2023, they will determine how these grants can best contribute to SEOSAW science and capacity building goals.

Upcoming fieldwork!



Zimbabwe:

University of Zimbabwe student, Eddie Nyamugadza, will set 5 more plots in Hwedza district in 2023. He and his team recently completed a census of their first plot in Hwedza (see pictures).

DRC:

Prof. Jonathan Muledi, Urbain Mumba and others from University of Lubumbashi as well as Mathew Rees (University of Edinburgh) are working hard to set up new plots and recensus the existing plots.

Namibia:

Drs John Godlee (University of Edinburgh) and Vera De Cauwer (Namibia University of Science and Technology) will set 8-10 new plots in Ongava Game Reserve during January-March 2023. They will collect data on trees, coarse woody debris, small stems, and soil.

Tanzania:

Dr. Elisha Njohomi and others from TAFORI will continue herbaceous sampling in Morogoro in January or February.

South Africa:

Skukuza and Satara (both in Kruger National Park) will be resampled using the full SEOSAW protocol in April or May by Professor Sally Archibald and others.

Kenya:

KEFRI will set new plots soon in *Brachystegia* woodlands owned by Nature Kenya.

Madagascar:

New plots are to be set by Drs Mariska te Beest and Sheila Holmes as part of their Swedish Links grant.

Zimbabwe:

The Zimbabwe Forestry Commission is planning a campaign of new plots to improve sampling across vegetation types nationally, especially in the mopane.

Kenya:

Dr. Nikki Stevens is heading into Kenya March-April 2023 to do SEOSAW-esque protocols, including shrubs.

Zambia:

Several new people to SEOSAW are interested in setting plots and collaborating with SEOSAW. We are planning a workshop soon, so please get in touch if interested.

Zimbabwe/Zambia:

Dr. Justice Muvengwi (Wits, RSA) plans to resample existing plots in a transect from Zimbabwe to Zambia using the full SEOSAW protocol.



1 - Images from Hwedza December 2022 by L. Benitez







Human-Environment Dimensions Workshop



On November 15 and 16, SEOSAW held a Human-Environment Dimensions workshop. Thank you to all our workshop participants and speakers for a stimulating and engaging workshop on incorporating research on the human dimension into SEOSAW. And special thanks to Penny Mograbi and Geoff Wells for organising.

You can read all about it in this workshop report [here](#).

Summary

In many of the world's savannah woodlands, vegetation structure and composition is greatly influenced by humans. These people's lives and wellbeing are in turn affected by savannah woodland change. Many SEOSAW members have a research interest in such human-environment interactions. A lot of information on human dimensions already exists for individual SEOSAW sites and plots, and some SEOSAW members have started to generate (relatively) standardized data on some of these human dimensions.

This workshop aimed to facilitate discussion between SEOSAW members on their existing and future work on social-ecological dimensions, and to explore interest and opportunities to facilitate this at the network level. This workshop also aimed to explore whether there is

an opportunity to standardize (some) data collection methods with a view to allowing comparable conclusion to be draw between sites which might lead to a regional understanding of H-E dynamics.

Science Meeting- November 18



We had a wonderful SEOSAW Science meeting on November 18! There were five great presentations and lots of discussion about SEOSAW *Beyond the Trees*. Thank you to all of our amazing presenters and attendees.

If you were unable to make it, you can view the full meeting [here](#).

Session 1: Understory vegetation

Understory vegetation of the miombo woodlands of southern Africa - Dr. Justice Muvengwi

What lies under the trees: Assessment of herbaceous vegetation at Benfontein Nature Reserve - Buster Mogonong

Discussion (30 minutes)

Session 2: Human Dimensions

Putting people in plots: Integrating social-ecological data into an ecological plot network - Dr. Geoff Wells

Community perspectives on long-term study plots in Tanzania - Dr. Elisha Njoghomi

Discussion (30 minutes)

Session 3: Fauna

Faunal Activities for Climate Action: A southern Africa network to find synergies between biodiversity and carbon storage in woodlands - Dr. Sheila Holmes

Discussion

Digital forms for data collection



We are always trying to improve our protocols and datasheets for ease of use and clarity. As such, Dr. John Godlee has developed ODK forms to assist with data collection in the field!

We use KoboToolbox to host digital data entry forms for use on Android devices. [Follow these instructions](#) to get setup with your Android device. The available ODK forms for plots, stems, small stems, coarse woody debris, herbaceous, and disturbance protocols can be found [here](#).

What is SEOSAW?



SEOSAW comprises a network of scientists and also a network of vegetation survey plots across southern and eastern Africa. Members of SEOSAW conduct diverse research and come from a variety of institutions (academic, government, private, etc.), but are unified by a shared interest in the changing socio-ecology of woodlands and savannas.

The long-term goal of SEOSAW is to understand the response of African woodlands to global change.

SEOSAW is managed communally, and the scope of SEOSAW's activities is open to change as the network and its members' research interests develop. SEOSAW's main purpose is to connect researchers and their data, and to facilitate collaborative research via standardized methods and a curated, accessible database. Anybody is welcome to become part of SEOSAW, by contributing data or expertise, or by using the SEOSAW dataset for their research.

Who owns the data?



SEOSAW data belong to the people who collected it. SEOSAW oils the wheels by standardising the data and storing it in a common database, but the intellectual property belongs to whoever puts the data in, and the data can only be used by others with the owner's permission, and for specific purposes.

Anyone can request to use some or all of the SEOSAW data (see [here](#)). However, we put most of our energy into supporting SEOSAW network members and researchers in the region to make full use of the opportunities the SEOSAW offers. Typically this allows us to scale up our research from site-specific analyses to regional analyses that use data from across all of the woodlands. Or it allows us to use multiple data sets that are hard for one person or group to be expert in (e.g. soils, grass and tree data).