



Lessons Learned from the South Turkana Ecosystem Project

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ABSTRACT The liabilities and rewards of multidisciplinary research in ecology and anthropology are reviewed with examples drawn from the *South Turkana Ecosystem Project*. This project spanned more than a decade from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. Scientists from ecosystems ecology and anthropology combined their skills to study a population of Ngisonyoka Turkana who are pastoral nomads from the dry savanna lands of northwest Kenya. The South Turkana Ecosystem Project has been identified as one of the most comprehensive projects in human ecology ever conducted. It is certainly the most thorough study of a human pastoral population ever done within the framework of human ecology. On balance, the rewards of multidisciplinary research far outweigh the liabilities, not only in the power of the scientific work and information generated, but in the richness of the intellectual experiences from scientific collaboration. It is suggested here that human ecology can only be pursued as a research effort through multidisciplinary science.

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