JULY - SEPTEMBER 2015

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COVER PHOTO BY: ANGELA SCOTT

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AFRICAN JOURNAL OF ECOLOGY
The African Journal of Ecology is Published by Wiley – Blackwell in association with East African Wild Life Society. Purchase a copy of this Journal at Wiley Online Library:
http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/aje

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SWARA is the Swahili word for Antelope

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UK travel advisory relaxation welcome but Lamu still suffers



The relaxation of the UK travel advisory on Kenya is welcomed. SWARA hopes that it will mean good news for the hard-hit tourism industry in coming months, especially the peak season. But the fact that it remains in force for areas close to the Somali border is a matter of regret, especially for the people of Lamu. By geographical accident they are caught up in a conflict in a neighbouring country that requires a political solution. Let's hope that the governments will stand to prosper from the Lamu Port South Sudan and Ethiopia, Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) will factor regional peace into their plans, and invest in the restitution of the conflicts in South Sudan and Somalia with as much energy and vision as they have the proposed port.

Tourism is one of the main beneficiaries of conservation, bringing not just fee-paying guests but establishing links that endure long after lift-off from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA). Every tourist is an unwitting ambassador for Kenya when they go home and it is SWARA's hope that the memories they recall are of the sort that will spur their friends and families to come to Kenya as well. It is our hope too that tourists will find and buy copies of SWARA magazine and become members of an organisation that fights to defend the raw material of tourism – the land and all its inhabitants – from ill-advised or inadequately planned development.

Being a member of East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) means a commitment to the sound governance of our natural heritage. The louder our voice, the stronger it is.

Andy Hill
Editor



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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN EAST AFRICA AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE TAKING

PHOTO BY: DENNIS SANG



Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries (about 15% per year) in our region and a large part of it (70%) is based on wildlife. Wildlife conservation provides an alternative and more effective use of marginal areas not suitable for agriculture. Unfortunately, we are seeing most of this land being managed unsustainably. Additionally, very few tourism entities are concerned about the impact of tourism on this fragile natural world and on its local communities.

Managed sustainably, tourism is an effective development tool for our economies. When tourism's environmental, social and economic constraints are addressed, tourism energises economies. The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as "tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems."

Sustainable tourism calls upon tour operators, hotels, camps and lodges to adhere to practices that have minimum effect on the environment and the wildlife living in it and to maintain the quality of the landscape and the wilderness experience to avoid the dreaded mass tourism that bedevils many destinations. But is this the case in East Africa? The Maasai Mara National Reserve, undoubtedly East Africa's premier nature-based tourism attraction, is an example. Illegal and unregulated infrastructural development, livestock grazing, low levels of adherence to environmentally and socially responsibly touris as show in the pictures below, are some of the many problems facing the Mara and many other parks in the region.

Another problem hurting tourism in East Africa and Kenya in particular is security and limited economic benefits and incentives from tourism to conserve wildlife on private and communal lands. If tourism is to facilitate good wildlife conservation as widely as possible, local communities must participate in the benefits of tourism. For this to happen, political support and leadership at national and local levels as well as appropriate policies are required. The Governments must also address market failures that affect the tourism sector and create an enabling environment for private investments. Without the private sector's investment, there can be no tourism. In Kenya, the Government must review the 16% Value Added Tax (VAT) on tourism services, in order for the country to compete fairly with other countries (e.g. $95 per night in Kenya National Parks compared to $55 in Tanzania). At specific tourism sites, wildlife habitat management and adherence to tourism and environmental standards must be addressed. Externally, development partners and governments must provide critical capacity and a conducive environment for tourism to thrive. Without any of these elements, the sector cannot grow to its full potential. Yet, the five East African countries have a huge potential to expand tourism if these issues are looked into.

PHOTO BY: ELENA CHELYSHEVA



Michael Gachanja
Executive Director

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U.S crushes one ton of Ivory in Times Square in gesture against poaching

New York – The United States destroyed more than one ton of illegal, confiscated ivory in New York's iconic Times Square on June 19 in a show of support for efforts to stamp out poaching and the illegal multi-million dollar ivory trade that threatens elephants.

The ivory tusks, trinkets, statues, jewelry and other decorative items were crushed while thousands of supporters gathered to watch; sending a clear message that the nation will not tolerate wildlife crime that threatens to wipe out the African elephant and a host of other species around the globe.

The high-profile, public event was organised by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in partnership with New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and New York State Senator Brad Hoylman.

PHOTOS BY: KELSEY WILLIAMS/FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE





PHOTO BY: ALEXA MARCIGLIANO/FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Partnering organizations included several of the world's most prominent wildlife conservation NGOs: African Wildlife Foundation, The Humane Society of the United States, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the World Wildlife Fund.

Said John Calvelli, Wildlife Conservation Society Executive Vice President for Public Affairs:"Crushing ivory in Times Square – literally at the crossroads of the world – says in the clearest of terms that the U.S. is serious about closing its illegal ivory markets and stopping the demand. We applaud the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NYDEC for their efforts to close this deadly trade that is currently decimating Africa's elephants at the rate of 96 each day. "

Said Peter Lehner, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC's) Executive Director: "Many Americans don't realize that the U.S. ivory market is one of the largest in the world. Or that its epicenter, until recently, was right here in New York City. Today's ivory crush, together with tough state and federal laws cracking down on the illegal ivory trade, send a strong signal that the United States wants no part in this trade that is so devastating to wildlife."





Said Dr. Patrick Bergin, CEO of the African Wildlife Foundation: "By destroying this ivory in New York's Times Square, one of the most recognized and visible places in the world, we are lending the elephant crisis the kind of global platform it deserves. With every ivory crush and every piece of federal and state legislation that bans ivory trade, we are sending a message that the United States is not just crushing ivory but crushing the trade for good." (AWF)

ARRESTS IN KENYA LINKED TO IVORY SEIZED IN THAILAND AND SINGAPORE



Mombasa, Kenya - Police in Kenya have arrested several people in connection with two seizures of illegal ivory seized in Thailand and Singapore respectively. Abdurahman Mohammed Sheikh, a tycoon living in Mombasa, and his two sons were taken into custody for their alleged involvement in illegally shipping ivory from the port of Mombasa to Asia. The investigation that led to the arrests was conducted by a joint team of detectives drawn from the Kenya Police Service, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Revenue Authority, Kenya Ports Authority, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, the Director of Public Prosecutions and Interpol's Environmental Crime Desk regional bureau.

"We will never halt the illegal ivory trade unless we are willing to throw kingpins and their middlemen behind bars, in addition to the poachers," says African Wildlife Foundation CEO, Dr. Patrick Bergin. "The coordinated investigation that led to yesterday's arrests is exactly the kind of whole-of-government approach we need to tackle this elusive yet pervasive industry. All of Kenya's agencies involved in the investigation should be commended." (AWF)

LARSON DONATES RECHARGEABLE SPOTLIGHTS TO LION GUARDIANS

KEMP, Texas - Larson Electronics has donated its RL-85-10W1 rechargeable LED spotlight to the Lion Guardians conservation organisation. Lion Guardians is dedicated to finding and enacting long-term solutions for people and lions to coexist. “In an effort to help protect our wildlife, it is my pleasure to donate some spotlights to help the cause,” Rob Bresnahan of Larson Electronics said. “These spotlights will provide a durable and reliable lighting solution for years to come.” (**Business Wire**)



Classical pianist Lang Lang urges an end to ivory consumption

Classical pianist Lang Lang is taking a stand against ivory consumption, with a new Public Service Announcement that urges his countrymen in China to say "no" to ivory. The PSA, which will be distributed throughout Lang's native China (the world's largest market for ivory), is part of the Ivory Free campaign sponsored by African Wildlife Foundation, WildAid and Save The Elephants. The illegal ivory trade is annually responsible for the poaching deaths of between 25,000 and 35,000 elephants in Africa. The legal trade is often said to provide cover for illicit ivory flows, and at an ivory crush in Beijing last Friday, the Chinese government appeared to indicate it will phase out the country's legal domestic ivory trade.



EAC AND IUCN SET UP FRAMEWORK FOR OBSERVATORY FOR PROTECTED AREAS

The East African Community (EAC) Secretariat is now the host institution for a regional observatory to support more effective protected area management and biodiversity conservation in the region, made possible through a partnership recently signed with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) supported by the EU-funded Biodiversity and Protected Area Management (BIOPAMA) programme.

The BIOPAMA programme, financed by the 10th European Development Fund of the European Union and implemented by IUCN and partners, aims to assist countries to improve technical and institutional approaches to conserve biodiversity, and address threats to biodiversity in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries while also reducing poverty.

An observatory for protected areas and biodiversity is being established in the East African Community Secretariat, located in Arusha, Tanzania, to provide decision and policy-making support on protected areas and biodiversity, in particular within the landscape context in which they exist. (EAC)



CHINA COMMITS TO PHASING OUT DOMESTIC IVORY MANUFACTURE AND SALE

China has committed to phasing out the domestic manufacture and sale of ivory products for the first time. Conservation groups said the announcement was "the single greatest measure" in the fight to save the last African elephants from poaching. **(See Esmond Martin analysis on pg 16-17.)**

At an event in Beijing where foreign diplomats witnessed 662kg of confiscated ivory being symbolically destroyed, Zhao Shucong, head of China's State Forestry Administration, said: "We will strictly control ivory processing and trade until the commercial processing and sale of ivory and its products are eventually halted." This is the first time China has committed to phase out its legal, domestic ivory industry. Lo Sze Ping, CEO of WWF's China division applauded the Chinese government's strengthening resolve to reduce demand in the world's biggest market for trafficked ivory. "This decision will have a profound impact on wild elephant conservation and ivory trafficking" he said. (Internet, BBC)

EAC BUDGET SHORTFALLS FOR PROTECTING WETLANDS



Poor coordination by wetland management organizations and an equally tricky test of balancing development projects and wetland conservation hurt regional endeavors on wise use of wetlands. This is the common view by regional experts from the Kampala-based Ramsar Center for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) who recently met in Kigali to share experiences and challenges on wetlands preservation in the East African Community (EAC).

The EAC also has budget limitations since, generally, attempts to increase budget contributions for the cause have been futile. "We need to evaluate ourselves in the five EAC states. How are we doing in terms of our contributions to the budget?" RAMCEA Regional Coordinator, Paul Mafabi, asked during deliberations.

During the Conference of signatories to the Ramsar Convention, an international environmental event, in Korea in 2008, Mafabi recalled, African countries agreed to make voluntary contributions - in addition to their statutory obligations - but later, they absconded on the voluntary contributions.

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands, recognizing their basic ecological functions as well as their economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value. (EAC)



RHINO CHARGE CHARGES TO NEW FUND RAISING RECORD

The annual Rhino Charge has over the past 27 years establiKshed itself as a prime fund raising event, supporting initially just conservation but of late also supporting the different host communities where the annual event is being held. This year the event set a new record with Ksh108,617,802 million being raised on the weekend of May 31st in Kalepo (Namunyak Conservancy), Samburu County, in keeping with the above Ksh100 million mark broken for the second time in the 27-year history of the Rhino Charge.

This beats last year's figure of Ksh102 million and the previous year's figure of Ksh90 million. The top three fundraisers for this year were Car 5 - Alan McKittrick (Ksh7,595,979), Car 23 - Peter Kinyua (Ksh5,620,000), and Car 35 - Mark Tilbury (Ksh4,546,925). Alan McKittrick's Car 5 team remains the highest fundraiser for 13 years in a row. Last year, Car 5 raised Ksh7,236,768 slightly below this year's figure. Since Car 5 entered the Charge in 1989, the team has raised a staggering amount of Ksh116,073,282. (Kenya Wildlife Service)

KWS UNVEILS DIGITAL RADIO, SOLAR BACKUP PROJECT

Kenya wildlife Service (KWS) has unveiled a Digital Radio Network and Solar Power Backup project, thanks to assistance by the French government. The project was officially switched on, on June 10, 2015 at a ceremony attended by top Kenya and French government officials. French Minister of Foreign Trade, Promotion of Tourism and French Nationals abroad, Mr. Matthias Fekl, presided over the switch on and made the first radio call to kick start the new digital radio network.

Kenya's Minister for Environment, and Natural Resources Prof. Judi Wakhungu was also present at the ceremony at KWS headquarters in Nairobi. The minister expressed Kenya government's gratitude to the French government for extending financial assistance to KWS to fund the project.

"This is a major boost to KWS and to Kenya in general as it will go a long way in aiding the country to achieve one of our targets under the National Elephant Action Plan as agreed with CITES to advance our technology in wildlife monitoring," Prof. Wakhungu said. (KWS)



NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK – AN UPDATE ON THE BYPASS AND RAILWAY CONTROVERSIES

EAWLS actively lobbies for a sound balance between conservation and development. Here is an update on the Society's work to protect the only National Park in an African capital, and one of the country's biggest local and international tourist attractions.

The Southern By-pass – plans to build a road through part of the park.

In 2012, the East African Wild Life Society, in collaboration with the African Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) and Dr. Paula Kahumbu, went to Court to appeal the Kenya National Highway Authority's (KeNHA) breach of a licence issued by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), which stated no encroachment of the Nairobi National Park (NNP) could take place with the construction of the Southern by-pass.

The National Environment Tribunal ruled (Tribunal Appeal No NET/91/2012) that in the event that any portion of the Southern bypass was intended to be constructed in NNP, a full new Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) must be conducted and due Environment Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) process be followed. Furthermore, any changes in the boundary of the park must follow the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 2013 (WCMA) provisions outlined under Section 34 of the Act, which requires joint consultation with the National Land Commission and an approval by Parliament. It is also important to point out that this Parliamentary process cannot be side-stepped by treating the bypass as an easement or wayleave. The road constitutes a change of use and is therefore an alienation, requiring Section 34 and 38 to be applied. Some three years later, KeNHA has now requested an alignment that will encroach into the Park as shown in Figure 1. KeNHA states that the alignment curve is required to satisfy the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) requirement of having 500 metres clear ground from the end of the runway at Wilson airport. Because of this requirement, the mitigation proposed is the purchase of a larger piece of land adjacent to the Park, but across the Mbagathi River, near Maasai gate. The current EAWLS position is that if KCAA confirm the 500 metre requirement, then we can accept the alignment, provided the alternative land is acquired and the due legal process is followed, especially Section 34 and 38 of WCMA. If KCAA confirm that less than 500 metres is required, then we will be pushing for the alignment curve to be reduced accordingly.

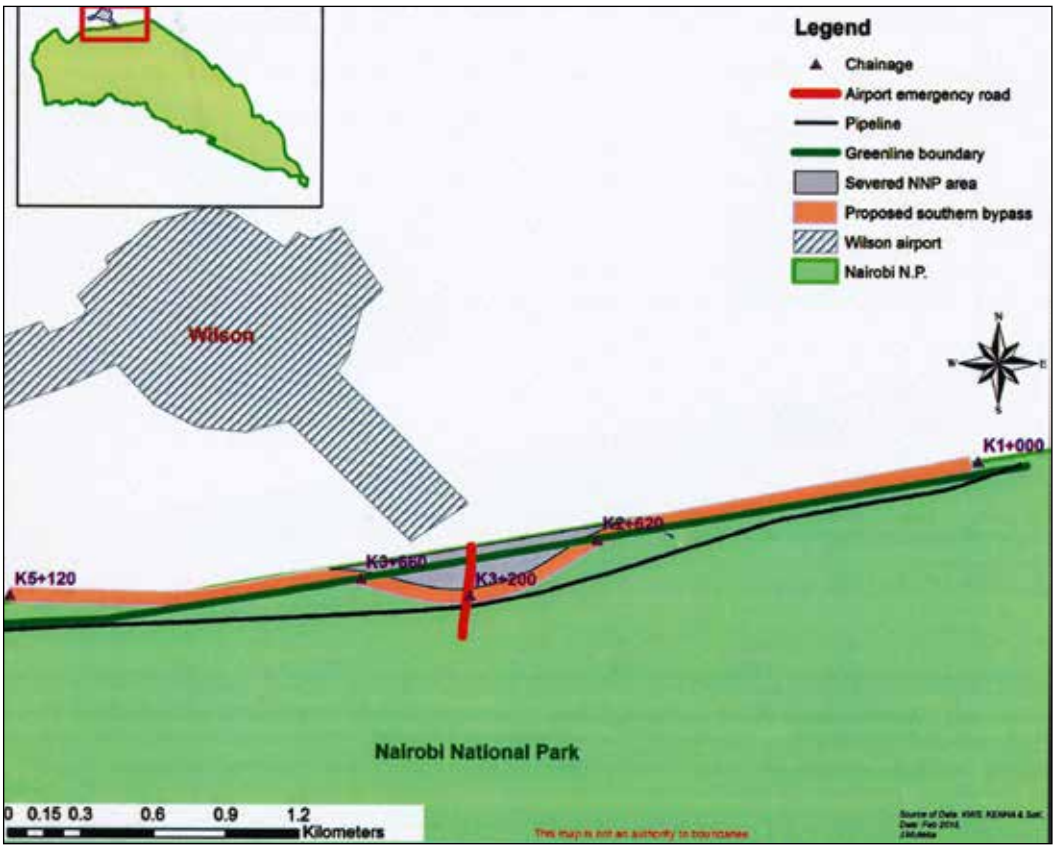


Figure 1. Proposed alignment of Southern By-pass (2015)
Source: KWS/KeNHA report

EAST AFRICAN WILD LIFE SOCIETY IMRE LOEFLER LECTURE

AMBOSELI'S OLYMPIANS .....
LIVING WITH LIONS, COWS AND ELEPHANTS

By Colin Church

Wednesday 9th, September 2015 Muthaiga Country Club In The Ballroom



Today's Maasai warrior age group is changing embedded cultural ways across two million acres of rangeland.
'Run as Olympians into manhood instead of killing lions '.

This will be the centre subject of a talk by Colin Church, a member of the Maasai Olympics organizing committee and formerly Chairman of Rhino Ark management committee.

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Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) to sever 80 hectares of NNP

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITALFM.CO.KE



Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and First Lady Margaret Kenyatta tighten down part of the Standard Gauge Railway track.

The East African Wild Life Society's original understanding was that the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) line would not be encroaching into Nirobi National Park (NNP) as the line was following the existing railway line. However, the latest Environmental impact assessment (EIA) and public notice requesting public comment, has revealed that the Society's understanding is no longer valid. Instead the SGR project would like to follow an alignment that essentially severs another 80 hectares at the bottom end of the park, including Cheetah Gate. This option would appear to be justified on the grounds that it would remove bends existing in the original alignment that inhibit the SGR operating as intended, and would be cheaper, as it avoids having to deal with compensation and other costs that would be incurred in the private land context related to the original alignment.

However, in carrying out that cost analysis, absolutely no economic value is given to Nairobi National Park land. This is a fatal flaw, because it does not recognise that the national parks are a valuable asset, providing the resource base for a significant element to Kenya's tourism sector, as stated in Vision 2030. This is particularly relevant to Nairobi National Park, which is the biggest revenue earner in the Kenya Wildlife Service's portfolio of parks. Furthermore, this old fashioned economic analysis would result in Nairobi National Park fast disappearing under yet more development pressure.

The proposed principle mitigation for this SGR excision is the obtaining of an equivalent area of land. However, there is no identification of where this land would be or even if it would be added to NNP as opposed to some other park. This SGR proposal has only just become available, so much more careful scrutiny will be required.

The Society will undertake this scrutiny in the next few weeks, and then provide whatever advocacy is required to ensure the best outcome for the park. An update in the next Swara, will be availed as the Society prepares to tackle this issue. We will require greater member support.

By Nigel Hunter

Want to become a Member of the East African Wild Life Society?

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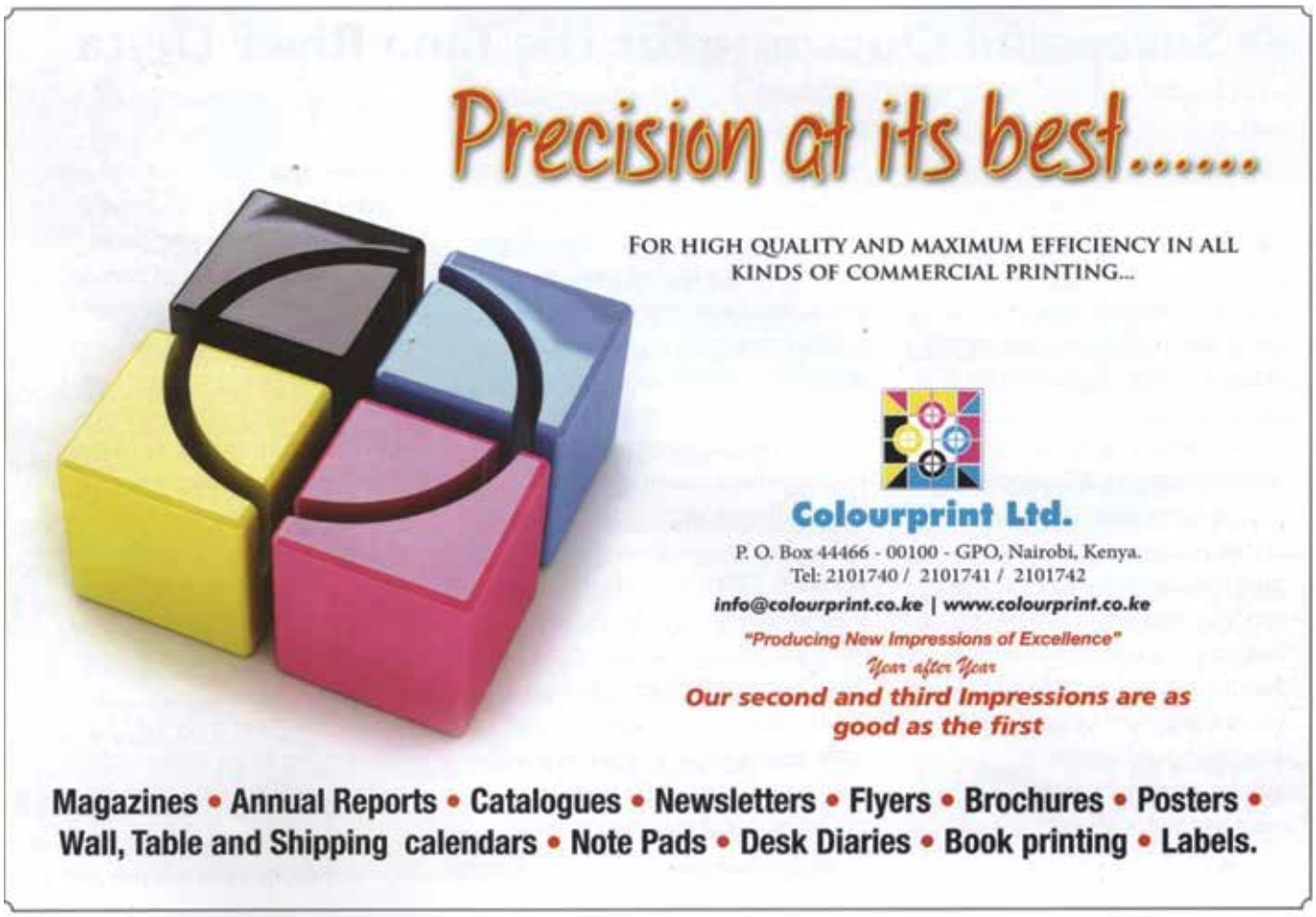
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MEXICO

ALEJANDRA HERRERA



What is the future of the Chinese ivory industry after China's latest moves?



Esmond Bradley Martin specialises in studying the illegal trade in wildlife products, especially rhino horn and elephant ivory.

TOP RIGHT: Personal ivory name seals made up 4% of the ivory items for retail sale in Beijing in 2014 and were priced at around $ 790.

BELOW: Sculptures of Africans, such as the one in the right of the photograph, are extremely rare to see for retail sale in Hong Kong.

Elephant poaching continues to reduce severely elephant populations in parts of Central , East Africa and Southern Africa. For example, the Tanzania government announced that from 2009 to 2014 the Tanzania elephant population dropped by a staggering 65,000 or about 60%; most of these 65,000 elephants were poached for the illegal ivory trade. Their tusks and others from surrounding countries are sent mostly to the ports of Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Mombasa.

Through circuitous routes, the tusks end up mostly in China, the largest market for illegal tusks in the world. There, they are sold to dealers for augmenting their stocks, to investors who hope the prices will continue to rise significantly for raw ivory, and to workshops where the tusks are crafted into a variety of objects for retail sale within the country.

Recently, the Chinese government has implemented major changes concerning the future of the ivory trade. Firstly, the most recent and probably the most important one is that on May 29, 2015, Zhao Shucong, minister of the State Forestry Administration, stated, 'We will strictly control ivory processing and trade until the commercial processing and sale of ivory and its products are eventually halted'. Although no dates were given, the Chinese government formally announced that at some time in the future the government will stop the legal ivory trade in China.



PHOTOS BY: LUCY VIGNE

Secondly, also in May 2015, the Chinese government reduced the number of officially licensed ivory factories from 37 to 34 and the number of officially licensed retail outlets from 145 to 130. The new policy of licensing ivory factories was started in 2004 with nine ivory factories; almost every year since then the government has







LEFT: Chinese are by far the major buyers of ivory in mainland China and Hong Kong, but sometimes sales can be slow, disappointing the shop owners.

RIGHT: In Beijing and Hong Kong ivory necklaces and other ivory jewellery items made up about half the number of all the ivory items offered for sale in retail outlets in 2014.

increased the number to a maximum of 37 in 2014. The same is true for retail shops: from 31 in 2004 to 145 in 2014. One explanation for the large increases in the number of officially registered ivory factories and retail outlets was that from 2002 the Chinese government strongly promoted the cultural heritage of the Chinese ivory-carving industry.

Thirdly, from early 2015 the Chinese government imposed a one-year ban on the import of ivory. This regulation closed down legal imports of some European pre-CITES Convention (July 1975) tusks that had been given CITES export permits, and worked ivory items for personal use, notably from Zimbabwe.

Fourthly, in early 2015 the Chinese government began to restrict the number of mainland visitors from the huge city of Shenzhen to neighbouring Hong Kong. Although the reasons are not yet clear, the regulation may reduce significantly the number of Chinese shoppers to Hong Kong. This could adversely affect the retail ivory industry of Hong Kong because most of the retail buyers of Hong Kong ivory items (the city with the largest number of ivory items on display for sale in the world) are mainland Chinese. These buyers smuggle ivory objects out of Hong Kong and bring them into mainland China illegally.

Curiously, but significantly, the price of ivory tusks in China on the black market for 2014 and for the first quarter of 2015 has remained about the same, contrary to earlier large increases in tusk prices. In early 2014, the average black market wholesale price a factory or carver in Beijing paid for 1–5 kg tusk of good quality was $ 2100/kg; in 2010 the average price for a similar tusk was $ 750/kg. Thus, the price had tripled over four years.

For the first quarter of 2015, the average black market retail price for a polished (not raw) tusk was $2650/kg; wholesale prices were not available from my source but probably would have been around $2000–2200/kg. The $2650 price is based on polished tusks actually sold on social media and on certain restricted social media carrying information for potential buyers in China (the display for sale of which incidentally is prohibited), both of which I myself saw.

To conclude, the demand for ivory in China may have either remained stable or decreased slightly in 2014 and the first half of 2015. This may be plausible because the economy of China is no longer expanding at 9–10% per year, the government has clamped down on corruption in which some government officials accepted ivory objects as bribes, and Chinese officials are no longer supporting the ivory industry as an important part of China's cultural heritage to the same extent as previously.

EAWLS MEMBER PROFILE

agnes

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF HER MERU COMMUNITY

BY ANDY HILL



Across the playing field comes the Guardian Angel, Agnes Rigiri Kiugu, to meet SWARA. EAWLS member K2463 is a slight but fit-looking woman in her late 60s, in a white headscarf and green dress. She has the handshake of a lumberjack and a smile that would melt an iceberg.

She is the very definition of an EAWLS grassroots member, someone who joined the society in 2002 to be part of an organisation battling to balance the competing needs of people and the environment. The schoolteachers adore her. There are 13 teachers working out of a small, cramped staff room, of which eight get government salaries and the rest are paid by the community to ensure that class sizes in a school of 320 are manageable and efficient.

"We have good buildings, we have electricity and we have water. We are fortunate, and live in a fertile place," says Lydia. Agnes helps complement the traditional lessons by talking about conservation issues from time to time, especially about the need to plant trees.

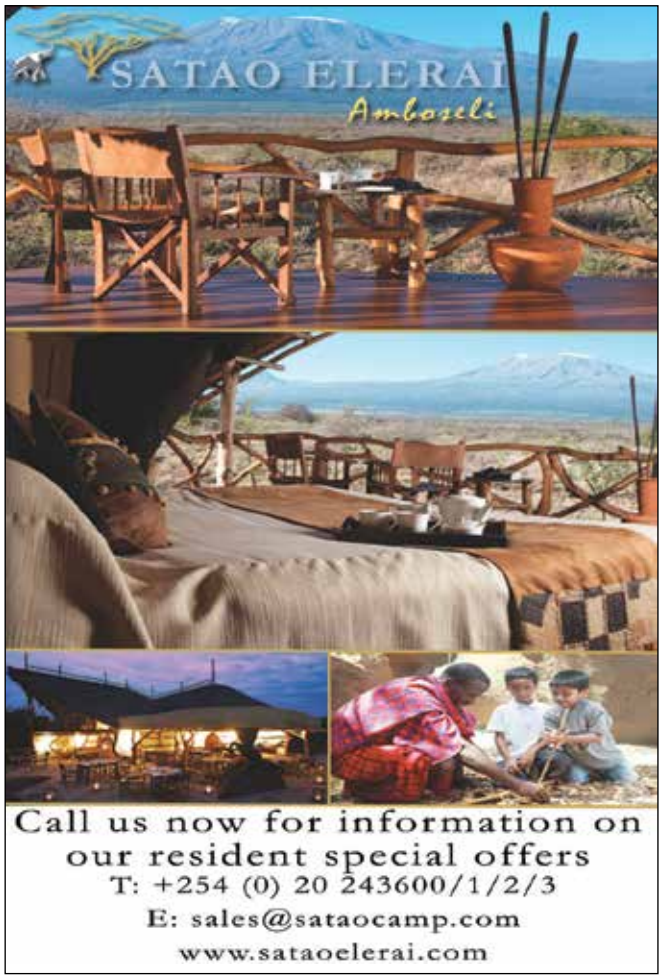


PHOTOS BY: ANDY HILL

The school only has one computer and it is in the headmaster's office, an old desktop that "we show the children copies of SWARA so at least they know what one looks like," says Lydia. She asks if EAWLS members can provide any computers and equipment they no longer need because the need at Murangine is overwhelming. I promise to put her

"Agnes is our Guardian Angel, she's an amazing lady. She teaches the kids about conservation and trees using material that EAWLS gives her, and so much more. She works for the kids and the community."

Lydia Kinyo Kinyua
Deputy headmistress of the hilltop Murangine Primary school







"WE MUST PLANT TREES TO BRING DOWN THE RAIN AND KEEP THINGS GROWING HERE," AGNES EXPLAINS, "TREES ARE LIFE."

request in SWARA. "We must plant trees to bring down the rain and keep things growing here," Agnes explains, "Trees are life."

Her home area is high up on the hills breasting Mount Kenya in an area rich with agriculture and greenery, but illegal tree cutting leaves holes in the landscape which can lead to the erosion of the lifeblood soil on which the area depends.

She takes me across the road and down the hill to the Weru Huruma Tree Nursery, a self-help group with 150 members who have established a safe place to raise trees from seeds and seedlings. The nursery has that quiet feel and smell of a well-tended garden. Indigenous trees sprout in small enclosures.

"We established this nursery in 1999," says Agnes. "The main reason was to plant in places where trees had been cut down or did not grow, to pull down the rain and keep this area safe for things to grow."

From this project the group has spread its wings to work on the conflict between animals and humans in the area, especially the elephants, lobbying successfully for the erection of a KWS fence to protect villagers from wildlife.

This has been reinforced by a schools programme that educates children about wildlife – that it is an asset, not a threat, and one that needs to be managed. She has used EAWLS stickers, films and SWARA magazine to illustrate the campaign. The group provides seedlings for other schools in the area, plants trees to fill holes caused by illegal or legal logging and sells seedlings to organisations as diverse as Safaricom and Lewa Conservancy.

"We can make between 50-100,000 shillings ($ 500-$ 1,000) a year," says Agnes, "but we need help. If any EAWLS members can help us buy seed and fertilizer and other materials, we would be most grateful," she says.

The school children engulf their Guardian Angel as I leave and Agnes waves a copy of SWARA at me as I drive away for the long trip back to Nairobi.

If you can help Murangine primary school with computer equipment, or provide support to the Weru Huruma Tree Nursery Self help Group, please contact EAWLS membership officer Rose Chemweno at: **Rose.Chemweno@eawildlife.org**

A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE MARA?



Mike Eldon was brought up in London and based in Kenya since 1977, he enjoys aligning energy around common visions and values. His consulting firm, The DEPOT (The Dan Eldon Place Of Tomorrow, www.depotkenya.org), focuses on leadership, strategy, culture, performance management and coaching, and it works with both public and private sector organisations. He is currently helping to introduce a performance management system into Kenya's national and devolved governments, and works extensively in promoting public-private dialogue. He writes a column in Kenya's *Business Daily*.
mike.eldon@depotkenya.org

I'm very much a city fellow, but I was recently asked to join a small group that has been engaging with Narok County Government officials to find ways of improving how the Maasai Mara Reserve is managed. Topping the list of challenges that need to be handled are the over-development of camps and lodges, the lack of discipline among driver-guides and the massive encroachment by cattle, which together have led many to predict the eventual demise of this extraordinary national asset.

It was not always this way. Indeed until Tanzania closed its border with Kenya in 1977, the Mara was little more than a stopover for tourists on their way back to Nairobi from the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti. Not only was the Mara far less well known internationally, but until the 1960s and early 1970s ,wildebeest weren't even chomping on its grass.

What we now know as the great migration of well over a million wildebeest and 200,000 zebras was held in check by frequent outbreaks of the viral disease rinderpest, which had spread from cattle to wild animals such as wildebeest and buffalo. And it was only when a programme to inoculate cattle was established around the Serengeti in the 1950s and early 1960s that rinderpest disappeared from the wild herds.

As a result, wildebeest numbers skyrocketed from 250,000 to their current level, and it was this dramatic increase that made the Mara vital to the migration, as a place where the animals could find food and permanent water during the dry season. The Mara at that time becomes the world's premier destination for game viewing, as a result of which up to 400,000 tourists visit it each year to see the migration.

It was not only the wildebeest population that exploded in the Mara. Tented camps and lodges spread across its pristine landscape, and despite numerous attempts to create a management plan that would protect the environment and regulate tourism at sustainable levels none was properly implemented. The big challenge was political will, without which it would always be impossible for such efforts to succeed.

So when Narok Governor Samson Ole Tunai and his team hosted a Maasai Mara stakeholders' meeting in Nairobi in September 2014, it offered hope that there was now a real desire by the County Government to restore the Mara's reputation. For this to happen, there would have to be dialogue between the County Government and

PHOTO BY: SUSHIL CHAUHAN



PHOTO BY: JONATHAN & ANGELA SCOTT

all the other players in the sector, and happily the last few weeks have seen an impressive gathering together of good people, a coalition of the willing, to indulge in the needed brainstorming.

I've been very impressed by those participating, who have included stakeholders from the Maasai community and the wildlife conservancies surrounding the reserve, folk from the tourism industry and the media, from NGOs such as the East African Wild Life Society, and also others from the diplomatic community, all willing to contribute their energy.

Much of what is needed to transform the Narok Governor's vision for the Mara was addressed in the 2008-2018 Maasai Mara Management Plan that was rejected by the Narok County Council at that time. Now the plan is to be revised and updated to fit the current situation – and it should happen rather quickly. The Governor announced recently that it will be worked on as a matter of urgency, including progressing its necessary ratification through the County Assembly. Attention is already being diverted to preparing for the 2017 elections, so if the plan does not get finalised now it will become increasingly difficult to focus on the hard choices necessary to sort out the Mara and its future.

The African Wildlife Foundation and the Conservation Development Centre, both of whom had supported the writing of the 2007 management plan, are prepared to become engaged once more, but at the centre is the leadership of the Narok County Government. For the plan to work it must be embedded in Narok's five-year County Integrated Development Plan and its annual County Plan as well. The need for the plan is already identified as a key determinant of the county's future success, but now we see the encouraging prospect that it will actually provide a robust basis for implementing what is needed to see the Mara rebound. The good news is that the Governor and his County Executives are determined to drive the process, tracking and managing comprehensive implementation.

The Governor made his announcement about the updating of the plan at a recent meeting in the Mara that was also attended by British High Commissioner, Christian Turner. The Governor made the welcome announcement that a revised management plan will be unveiled in three months' time. It will, he confirmed, embrace the concerns voiced by stakeholders, spelling out the key priorities – not least how the Maasai community will benefit more from the tourism revenues gathered.

High Commissioner Turner had driven down for the meeting in reaction to alarm over the repercussions of British travel advisories on non-essential travel to various parts of the country following the acts of terrorism that have left tourism in the country at an all-time low. In his statement he reminded us that although the UK travel advisory is still in place in parts of the country, the Maasai Mara is not among them.

It's always reassuring to see Kenyans and others of goodwill gather together and engage constructively with their government counterparts to confront common national and local challenges. Let no one imagine it will be easy to overcome the vested interests that have so far prevented the Mara from both conserving the wildlife and the environment and attracting high quality tourists in a sustainable way. But now is a unique opportunity to support this initiative to serve the worthy cause of a viable Maasai Mara Reserve that Kenyans and visitors from around the world, along with their future generations, can continue to enjoy.

This article appeared previously in *Business daily*.

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CLOWNS OF THE PLAINS

MIRACLE of the WILDEBEEST



The migration of wildebeest, zebras and gazelles is the largest land migration on earth.



Jonathan and Angela Scott are multi award-winning wildlife photographers and longtime residents of Kenya. They are the only couple to have won, individually, the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award. They write, illustrate, teach and are TV presenters, most famously known for the 'Big Cat Diary' series for BBC television. They have also written numerous bestselling books including Jonathan's 'The Marsh Lions' (1982) and their co-authored, Safari Guides to East Africa. Their book, 'Stars of Big Cat Diary', was published in 2008.

PHOTOS BY: ANGELA SCOTT

King of Beasts, Lords of the Savannas, The Lion King - all familiar tributes to the mighty lion, a creature revered as a symbol of courage and strength from the days when we first acquired language and began to create vivid representations of these iconic beasts as rock art. Yet how shabbily we have treated our animal brethren. Lions for instance have lost 75% of their natural range; their numbers whittled away from the 75,000 that roamed free in Africa in the 1980s to half that number today. Competition with the growing population over 'real estate', conflict with livestock owners, loss of their natural prey and poaching now threaten the existence of an animal that was once the most numerous large mammal on earth - after man. Hardly a surprise when rhinos are slaughtered for horns worth their weight in gold, and tens of thousands of elephants are killed annually to feed the insatiable demand for 'white gold' in China and the Far East.

It seems we are either unwilling or unable to stem the tide in International Wildlife Crime (IWC) - yes, *crime*; lets not legitimize it by calling it trade. It is now a $ 10-20 billion business, bedfellow to gun-running, drug cartels and trafficking people - humanity at its worst. While Kenya has enacted tougher laws to try to deal with the scourge of elephant and rhino poaching, it is not enough as evidenced by the recent seizure of 511 elephant tusks shipped from Mombasa and impounded by Thai Customs. The shipment was declared as 11 tonnes of tea destined for Laos. Less than a month later Singapore seized 3.7 tons of ivory, rhino horns and big cat teeth en route to Vietnam from Kenya. While much of the poached ivory is from other countries - mainly Tanzania and DRC - Kenya has the dubious distinction of being the leading transit route in the world for ivory trafficking with Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and the UAE acting as conduits for ivory bound for Thailand - and primarily China.

According to a 2013 report by the Kenya NGO WildlifeDirect founded by the highly respected conservationist Dr. Richard Leakey and headed by the inspirational Dr. Paula Kahumbu, wildlife crimes were 'mismanaged' by Kenyan courts during the period under investigation (2008 - 2013) with only 4% of those convicted actually going to jail. Instead they were fined sums of money representing little more than a slap on the wrist. In 70% of cases scrutinized evidence files were 'misplaced', making effective prosecution impossible. It isn't just Kenya. Stories of shipments disguised as tea, coffee beans and marble carvings along with evidence stolen from courts vie for newspaper headlines reporting the theft of a ton of ivory from state vaults in Uganda, 40 rhino horns stolen from a South African provincial park safe and 12 rhino horns spirited away from police headquarters in Mozambique, all within the last 18 months.

Governments of both the 'source' countries and 'consumer' countries involved in IWC need to address the devastating repercussions to the economies of 'source' countries. Only through corruption on a massive scale in the Police, Judiciary, Revenue Authorities and Ports Authorities is this possible.

WE NOW HAVE THE DUBIOUS DISTINCTION OF BEING THE LEADING TRANSIT ROUTE FOR IVORY TRAFFICKING IN THE WORLD WITH MALAYSIA, VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ACTING AS CONDUITS FOR IVORY DESTINED FOR THAILAND OR CHINA.



Crimes such as these should be considered acts of economic - perhaps even political sabotage involving highly organised criminal gangs that in some instances support terrorism. Viewed from that legal perspective, more potent and meaningful sentences could be handed down and greater accountability demanded of those countries helping to perpetuate the trade. This is not a battle that is going to be won, despite some progress; it is a war that each new generation will be tasked to wage on behalf of our wild places and their unique and beleaguered inhabitants. Doing so will help ensure a brighter economic future for the younger generation as well as preserving what is left of our natural environment. For that to happen China needs to acknowledge that their domestic trade in ivory threatens a species that is vital to the economies of African nations and take concrete measures to stop the demand. All the roads and bridges and railway lines will be worth nothing set against the loss of Africa's wildlife heritage.

Little wonder then that a recent study published in the Journal Science warns that 60% of the world's large herbivores such as rhinos and elephants are at risk of extinction, with the majority living in Africa, India and Southeast Asia. The study was conducted by wildlife biologist William Ripple and his co-workers, who looked at 74 different species. All the usual suspects are implicated: overhunting, competition from livestock, loss of habitat due to deforestation and pollution that, if unchecked, will result in 'empty landscapes'. It begs the question "Is anything sacred anymore?" What do our great National Parks and Game Reserves represent to us today? Gone are the days when Governments could set aside vast tracks of wild habitat for the benefit of animals without having to justify their existence. In today's congested planet protected areas are increasingly under pressure. When they were conceived most such wildernesses were considered of little use to man - often semi-arid places with unpredictable rainfall unsuitable for agriculture or other forms of human development. Those halcyon times are gone. More people, more livestock, more hungry mouths to feed, with owning a plot of land every citizen's dream. How

to harmonize the interests of people with those of wildlife is our greatest challenge if we are to conserve even a fragment of what is left of our protected areas.

In West and Central Africa, 155 million people live on less than a dollar a day with the bushmeat trade cutting a wide swath through Africa's last tropical rainforests - the same forests that we all depend on to store carbon and keep the global climate stable. The lungs of the earth are rapidly turning in to 'silent forests' as logging companies plough roads deep in to their heart. In their wake come the meat hunters. Meanwhile, powerful multinational companies collude with resource state governments (or insurgencies) to plunder the continents other riches - oil, diamonds, gold. Proof of that is powerfully attested to by the brilliant Oscar-nominated documentary *Virunga* that highlights the threats to protected areas from oil exploration (or other equally valuable natural resources elsewhere). The setting is Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), home to some of the last remaining mountain gorillas. It should be mandatory viewing for schools, universities and government officials the world over.

I travelled through the DRC (formerly Zaire) in 1974 on my overland journey through Africa and remember marveling at its rich abundance. But as wondrous as such leafy tropical places are with their gorillas and okapi, whenever I visit I soon find myself longing to emerge in to the sunlight again, to reconnect with savanna Africa - those grassy animal-filled plains with their dazzling array of antelopes and gazelles and the magnificent big cats that prey on them; places like the Mara-Serengeti situated astride the Kenya/Tanzania border that has been my obsession for the past 40 years.

So how fares the animal that is thought of as the architect of the Serengeti plains, the odd shaped creature sometimes known as the 'gnu' or more commonly the white bearded wildebeest of East Africa? With its ox-like head, hump-back and long horse-like tail it certainly appears more like the Clown of the Plains as it gallops along, glancing this way and that, beating a hasty tattoo for kilometre after kilometre as it skitters across the plains. Over the grasslands and through the acacia woodlands the herds thunder onwards, barely pausing to eat and drink at times as they continue on their never-ending journey around the 25,000 sq km Mara-Serengeti ecosystem. This 'great migration' as the assemblage of nomadic hoofed animals is known, numbers 1.3 million wildebeest, 200,000 zebras and more than 300,000 gazelles. It is the last great land migration on earth. When you see all those animals spread thickly across the Serengeti's short grass plains during the rainy season (November to the end of May) it is as if all is well with the world in the birthplace of man. Here wild animals still



LEFT PAGE: 65,000 elephants have been killed in Tanzania between 2008-13

TOP: Rhino horn is worth its weight in gold.



There are at least 200,000 zebras in Mara-Serengeti.

roam free for as far as the eye can see. But that vision is as deceptive as a desert mirage, a mere fragment of how things must have appeared to our ancestors in Pleistocene times. When the President of Tanzania announced to the world his plans to build a major highway across the northern Serengeti to bring development to people living in the west of the country, any illusion that the Serengeti was truly the last great place where animals were forever guaranteed right of passage evaporated. Easy of course for Western nations and America to shout foul, but who are we to point the finger when we have already destroyed so much of our own wild places, cut down our forests, drained our wetlands, exterminated our large predators in the name of progress? If we want to be heard then the international community should help to pay the cost of protecting Africa's wildlife from the fate suffered by our own.

WHEN YOU SEE ALL THOSE ANIMALS SPREAD THICKLY ACROSS THE SERENGETI'S SHORT GRASS PLAINS DURING THE RAINY SEASON (NOVEMBER TO THE END OF MAY) IT IS AS IF ALL IS WELL WITH THE WORLD IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF MAN.

The Serengeti is facing the same pressures confronting many such wilderness areas. Richard Leakey, who was recently appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Kenya Wildlife Service (an organisation he ran in the 1980s and early 90s) talks of "massive population growth on the fringes of the parks, poaching for bushmeat and the illegal wildlife trade (anything from 50,000 to more than 100,000 wildebeest are poached annually in Serengeti), human-wildlife conflict, land use change, and widespread poverty." He believes the Serengeti Highway - as it quickly became known - will go ahead at some point and that the solution is to build an overpass - a multilane skyway - with financial support from the international community to allow the wild animals to continue their annual migration around the Mara-Serengeti without undue disturbance.

With these thoughts in mind I came across an excellent article by writer Claire Bedelian of UNEP entitled "Saving the Great Migrations: Declining Wildebeest in East Africa?" It painted a bleak picture, reflecting on the fate of other great migrations that blessed our planet in times past such as the 30 million bison that once roamed the great plains of North America. The bison all but vanished within a hundred years as hunters cut them down for skins and meat and crushed their bones for fertilizer, ripping the heart out of the traditional way of life of the first Americans

in the process. By 1880 only a few hundred bison remained. Bedelian tells of how a million Saiga antelope in Central Asia declined to 200,000 between 1980 and 2000, while closer to home in Kenya's Great Rift Valley, abundant herds of zebras and Thomson's gazelles migrated between the Lake Nakuru-Lake Elementaita region and Lake Baringo until hunting and loss of habitat snuffed out their annual journey. By the early 1900s they were gone. And when I first came to live in the Maasai Mara in 1977, Kenya's Loita wildebeest migration in Narok District numbered 120,000 animals before dwindling to barely 30,000 today due to the leasing of large tracts of Maasai land for agriculture - primarily wheat and maize. Their demise continues as more people develop their land and more fences are erected.

Forty years ago, the Loita wildebeest headed East each October as the short rains began in earnest, returning to the mineral-rich grasses of their ancestral calving grounds out on the Loita Plains. Today, with development having robbed them of much of their wet season dispersal area, it is not uncommon to see Loita wildebeest calving in the Mara and its surrounding Wildlife Conservancies from January through March. In Kenya's capital city the migration of wildebeest and zebras from the Athi-Kaputiei Plains into Nairobi National Park during the dry season (July through to mid-October) once drew tens of thousands of overseas visitors each summer. Arguments as to whether the Park should be fenced off completely - it is fenced on three sides but open to the Athi-Kaputiei Plains - are almost irrelevant given the pace of human settlement and urbanization that now blocks much of the migratory corridor. This has led to a decline in wildebeest numbers from over 30,000 in 1978 to under 2,000 in 2011. And in Tanzania cultivation and human settlement have blocked the wildebeest migration between Tarangire National Park and the Simanjiro Plains causing a decline of nearly 90% between 1988 and 2001 as the population plummeted from 43,000 to 5,000. Many of East Africa's parks and reserves mainly protect dry season pastures for migratory wildlife with wet season dispersal areas concentrated primarily on private or communal lands. This is one reason why the wildlife conservancies adjacent to the Mara Reserve provide such a vital function by protecting migratory corridors and dispersal areas for both the Serengeti and Loita wildebeest. By offering financial opportunities to land owners through partnerships with wildlife based tourism operators the needs of local communities and conservation priorities can be realized, allowing remnants of our last great migrations to survive.



The Mara's lions are under increasing pressure from illegal grazing of livestock in the Reserve.

RETURN TO ELGON

CAVE ELEPHANTS PROMPT BONFIRE THOUGHTS

Ian Redmond reports from his former study site on Mt Elgon, Kenya, then attended the Brazzaville ivory burn, and asks how the latter can help protect the former.



Ian Redmond, OBE is a wildlife biologist and conservationist, known for his work with great apes and elephants. For nearly 40 years he has been associated with mountain gorillas, and served as Ambassador for the UN Year of the Gorilla 2009 and subsequently for the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species since 2010. He co-founded the ELEFRIENDS campaign, which helped achieve the 1989 ban on international ivory trade, and in 1996 established the Ape Alliance www.4apes.com which he still chairs.

Elephants feel their way across roof-fall in Kitum Cave, Mt Elgon National Park (NP), Kenya.



It's a paradox. Simply put, ivory is a consequence of there being elephants, and if an animal's front teeth can be carved into a nice ornament, why not collect them when they have died of natural causes? History shows, however, that when demand for ivory exceeds natural mortality, and there is money to be made in meeting that demand, elephants won't be left to die of old age, they will be killed. There's the paradox - the way things are going, poaching for the ivory trade will ensure there are no elephants left to grow ivory. If there is one thing the current crisis facing elephants and rhinos shows, it is that in a world awash with guns, crime and poverty, an animal with a fortune on its face cannot be protected 24/7. Only a change in the fashion for ivory can do that, which is what the dramatic destruction of confiscated ivory stocks is designed to achieve, so far by 13 countries and rising. Can global campaigns change deep- rooted attitudes?

We've been here before, as anyone perusing back-issues of *SWARA* will know. My studies of the amazing mining behaviour of Mt Elgon's cave-elephants in the early 1980s were interrupted by poaching. By 1986, the price of ivory rose to a level where even the scratched, pitted, worn-down stumps of Elgon's salt-mining elephants were worth killing for. In 1987, I stood beside the carcase of Charles, a young tusker I'd photographed mining minerals in Kitum Cave, his face sliced off with a chain saw for his tiny tusks. That gut-wrenching experience launched the African EleFund (now part of the Born Free Foundation), and with several other NGOs led to the ELEFRIENDS campaign that helped bring about the CITES Appendix 1 listing for African elephants in 1989. Ivory prices fell, anti-poaching efforts increased and the fall in elephant numbers across Africa was slowed, for a while at least. But the trauma of poaching for Elgon's elephants was long lasting. Instead of the previous pattern of small groups of relaxed elephants feeding here and there, meeting up and separating at will, the surviving Elgon elephants appeared to move around the mountain in a single defensive herd, avoiding human contact. They were seldom seen and it was feared that

PHOTOS BY: IAN REDMOND

their numbers had fallen below 100 from an estimated 1,200 in the early 1970s.

When in 2000, Sir David Attenborough wanted to film the mining behaviour of Elgon elephants for the BBC *Life of Mammals* series, I advised that we would need to regain the trust of the elephants and learn more about their movements. Enter the MEEM Team, the Mount Elgon Elephant Monitoring team, comprised of selected KWS rangers working with trusted trackers from the local community and a hand-held GPS unit. On our first outing in 2001, we encountered the elephants in the bamboo zone and panic reigned among both elephants and humans – trumpeting, cracking bamboo stems and a rapid end to any observations.

IF THERE IS ONE THING THE CURRENT CRISIS FACING ELEPHANTS AND RHINOS SHOWS, IT IS THAT IN A WORLD AWASH WITH GUNS, CRIME AND POVERTY, AN ANIMAL WITH A FORTUNE ON ITS FACE CANNOT BE PROTECTED 24/7



TOP: Elephants file into Kitum Cave, Mt Elgon, Kenya, maternal trunk keeps baby safe in dark.

BELOW: The MEEM Team, Mt Elgon NP, Kenya.

I suggested adapting the method developed by Dian Fossey for habituating gorillas, and trained the men to use a low rumbling sound to announce their presence so as not to take the elephants by surprise. When I returned a few weeks later, I was delighted to be able to observe the elephants feeding in the forest even though they knew we were just a few paces away. For the first time, we began to learn about their ranging pattern and how they moved between the Mt Elgon National Park and the Sosio Forest Reserve to the south. The filming was so successful, the BBC then made a 50-minute documentary on the elephant caves (clips of which can be viewed online by searching for 'cave elephants') featuring the MEEM Team. Funded initially by the BBC and the African Ele-Fund, after the filming was over, the MEEM Team was supported by the Born Free Foundation and the Powles family, who used to farm on Elgon (and whose former home is now the Mt Elgon Lodge), with administrative support from local farmer Tony Mills. The boots on the ground brought benefits. Over the years, successive wardens told me





PHOTOS BY: IAN REDMOND



TOP LEFT: Forest elephant at saline bai, Dzanga-Sangha NP, Central African Republic.

TOP RIGHT: Charles, a young tusker, mining mineral-rich rock in Kitum Cave, Mt Elgon NP, Kenya

BELOW: Ian Redmond collects rock samples for analysis, Kitum Cave, Mt Elgon NP, Kenya.

that the MEEM Team had greatly improved community relations, had removed hundreds of snares and helped the park management understand how the elephants moved around the slopes of the mountain on the Kenya side (it seems they have not been over to the Uganda side for many decades).

Fast forward to 2013, and as reports of ivory poaching came in from across Africa, the world realised a new ivory crisis was upon us. In the Congo Basin, forest elephants declined by 65 per cent in a decade. The scale and extent of the trade is shocking, especially given that there are far fewer elephants than in the 1970s. Poaching is on the rise because people with no money are tempted by traders offering wads of banknotes. An outbreak of poaching was even reported on Mount Elgon last year, triggered by rising demand for ivory in China and Southeast Asia. The MEEM Team had been credited with keeping the elephants safe until then, but we were disturbed to hear that a new MEEM Team recruit may have provided information on the location of the elephants to poachers. In February this year, I returned to Mt Elgon with a couple of colleagues to find out more. The warden explained that there was no hard evidence for the allegation, but that the MEEM Team had been suspended while security checks were run against all members. All but the new recruit had been cleared, and although there was no evidence to support a prosecution, the suspect was said to have gone missing. Otherwise the news was encouraging. Despite the small number of poaching incidents, elephant numbers were rising and the single defensive herd was now breaking up into smaller groups, suggesting that the elephants were becoming more confident. Plans were made to recruit more trackers (with strict background checks) so the different groups of elephants could be monitored simultaneously.

While on Elgon, I took the opportunity to take a series of spherical panoramic photographs for a virtual tour of Kitum Cave on **www.vEcotourism.org** We hope to gain more international support for this unique tribe





of spelunking elephants by enabling anyone with internet access to immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of this amazing phenomenon. I left Elgon feeling more optimistic, greatly impressed by the warden and his senior management team, but worried about the vulnerability of elephants so close to an international border with ivory prices rising. It is the same for elephants everywhere, their front teeth are their downfall, and poachers, like migrating animals, know no borders.

A few weeks later, I found myself crouching a few paces from an inferno of petrol-soaked tusks stacked over illegally logged timber in Brazzaville, Congo. I had been invited, in my capacity as an Ambassador for the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species, to attend a four day meeting where delegates from across the continent hammered out a pan-African strategy to tackle the illegal wildlife trade. I recorded the crackling sound and rotated my camera to take a 360 panorama that would enable the on-line community to share the experience virtually (minus the heat). The presidents of Congo and Chad who had lit the bonfire, accompanied by Somali super-model Yasmin Warsame, put down their flaming torches and retired for lunch while a gaggle of conservationists gave each other high-fives and took photos. Congo burned 4.7 tonnes that day in April, Ethiopia burned 6.1 tonnes in March, Kenya started the trend in 1989 by burning 12 tonnes, and this year torched another 15 tonnes. But why celebrate the destruction of millions of dollars' worth of ivory in a continent where so many live in poverty? What does burning ivory achieve?

BUT WHY CELEBRATE THE DESTRUCTION OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS' WORTH OF IVORY IN A CONTINENT WHERE SO MANY LIVE IN POVERTY? WHAT DOES BURNING IVORY ACHIEVE?

Some people can't get it out of their heads that ivory is worth a lot of money. It's only worth a lot of money if people want to buy it. But that can change if, by burning or crushing ivory in a blaze of publicity, you can get across the message that ivory is no longer a status symbol, it's a symbol of support for organised crime and murder. Rangers are killed defending elephants, customs officers are killed trying to arrest criminals and the organised crime gangs and terrorists who ship container loads of ivory around the world are making a fortune out of those deaths. Even people who don't care about elephants should care about that; and if purchases of ivory are essentially paying for organised crime, do they want to be a part of that? 'Look at my new ivory carving – I support organised crime and murder'. So the cave elephants of Mt Elgon, along with all the other elephant clans, clinging on in fragments of their former range, each with their unique culture, face a better future if this message goes global. Ivory is most valuable when it is attached to living elephants – gardeners of the forest and savannah.

LEFT: Ivory carving reduced to ashes in Brazzaville, Congo.

RIGHT: Many tree species have their seeds dispersed by elephants – this one on Mt Elgon.

BARBARY MACAQUES EXPLOITED AS PHOTO-PROPS IN MARRAKESH'S PUNISHMENT SQUARE

In the ancient Moroccan city of Marrakesh, tourists are unwittingly helping the trade of Barbary macaques by having their photographs taken with them. Vincent Nijman, Daniel Bergin and Els van Lavieren report for SWARA.



PHOTO BY: PATRICK TKACZYNSKI



THE AUTHORS

Vincent Nijman is trained as a biologist and currently holds a professorial chair in anthropology at Oxford Brookes University. He has worked on a wide range of primates, from slow lorises and howler monkeys to macaques and orang-utans, but a significant chunk of his time is devoted to researching wildlife trade.
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Els van Lavieren has an MSc in Primate Conservation and is one of the founders and the Executive Director of the Moroccan Primate Conservation foundation (MPC). She has been working on Barbary macaque conservation in Morocco for more than 10 years, specializing in the illegal trade and active in the protection of the species' most important habitat in Morocco.
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Marrakesh is a medieval metropolis retaining much of its historic character. With Rabat as Morocco's capital, Fez as its spiritual centre and Casablanca attracting the more affluent visitors, in the years since independence, Marrakesh has carved out a role as the Nation's artistic place-to-be. In the 1960s and 1970s the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin joined the roving hippies who frequented the city, and Yves St Laurent found a home away from home in the Jardin Majorelle. Always cosmopolitan, Marrakesh truly opened its doors to the world in the 1990s when budget airlines made available to the masses what before was restricted to the happy few. In 2014 the city received over a million tourists.

To the first-time visitor Marrakesh is perhaps best described as an alleyway labyrinth designed by a town planner without a sense of direction, that is packed to the rim with people, shops and goods. The centre of town has always been the Djemaa el-Fna ('*Assembly of the Dead*': here law breakers faced their ultimate punishment in public) and to this day this square is packed with salesmen, herbalists, food stalls, entertainers, and anyone willing to make or spend some money. Radiating out of the Djemaa el-Fna are a series of small alleyways and covered markets called souqs. At the Rahba Qedima potion sellers have plant-, animal- or mineral-based cures for every ailment, from broken fingers to broken hearts, as well as tonics that improves one's general health. Wool skeins are hung out to dry in the Souk Sebbaghine ('*Dyer's souq*'), and for some peace and quiet in between the Adhan (call for prayer) one has to visit the gardens of the Koutoubia Mosque to the southeast of the Djemaa el-Fna.

Besides its historic and hippy-ish appeal, Marrakesh also has the reputation of being

LEFT PAGE: Barbary macaques, dressed up and ready to have their photo to be taken, in the town of Meknes.

TOP: Barbary macaques used as photo-props on the Djemaa el-Fna in Marrakesh.

BELOW: Barbary macaque in Marrakesh.



PHOTOS BY: ELS VAN LAVIEREN



PHOTO BY: ELS VAN LAVIEREN

Barbary macaques and their transport cages in Marrakesh.

one of North Africa's largest centres of wildlife trade, with numerous species, protected or not, offered openly for sale[1]. In the early 2000s researchers working on wild populations of spur-thighed tortoises *Testudo graeca* recorded almost 700 of these globally threatened animals for sale in Marrakesh[2]. More recent report suggests that this trade continues, and boxes full of often-small tortoises are displayed in open plastic containers in front of the shops[3]. Leopard *Panthera pardus* skins are regularly observed on sale in Marrakesh[4] even though the species is all but extinct in Morocco.

Based on a trip to the cities of Fez and Marrakesh in 2011, Martin and Perry[5] gave a vivid account in SWARA how tourists underwrite Morocco's illegal trade in wildlife artefacts, including items made out of elephant ivory. They also mention the presence of Barbary macaques *Macaca sylvanus* being displayed by entertainers on the Djemaa el-Fna. Tourists may want to take a photograph of the monkeys and by paying for this, tourists keep the entertainers in business. Primates used as photo-props brings back memories to the beach chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* in Spain that were popular in the 1970s and 1980s and that were subsequently banned, but to this day the primate photo-prop trade continues in Asia (e.g. slender

MARRAKESH ALSO HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING ONE OF NORTH AFRICA'S LARGEST CENTRES OF WILDLIFE TRADE, WITH NUMEROUS SPECIES, PROTECTED OR NOT, OFFERED OPENLY FOR SALE.

[1]Bergin, D. & Nijman, V. (2014) Open, unregulated trade in wildlife in Morocco's markets. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26: 65-70.
[2]Znari, M., Germano, D.J. & Macé, J.C. (2005). Growth and population structure of the Moorish tortoise (*Testudo graeca graeca*) in westcentral Morocco: possible effects of over-collecting for the tourist trade. *Journal of Arid Environments* 62: 55-74.
[3]Bergin, D., Gray, M. & Nijman, V. (2015). Marrakesh: a centre for tortoise trade. *Oryx* 49: 205.
[4]Shipp, A. (2002) Wildlife for sale in Marrakech, Morocco. *Traffic Bulletin* 19: 65.
[5]Martin, E. & Perry-Martin, C. (2012). Tourists underwrite Morocco's illegal trade in wildlife artefacts. *Swara* (Jul-Sep): 16-29.



PHOTO BY: RONALD TROOSTWIJK

Local and international tourists take the opportunity to have their photo taken with the globally threatened Barbary macaque.

lorises *Loris lydekkerianus* in India[6], lar gibbons *Hylobates lar* and slow lorises *Nycticebus* ssp in Thailand[7], and Philippine tarsiers *Carlito syrichta* in the southern Philippines[8]). In Africa this practise seems to be confined to Morocco and the Barbary macaque.

The Barbary macaque is the only African member of a widespread Asian genus. The species is confined to parts of Morocco and Algeria (and a small introduced population in Gibraltar on mainland Europe), but in the past it occurred throughout northern Africa and parts of Europe. Its population is highly fragmented, and with the most recent population estimates from Algeria of around 5,500 individuals, dating back to the 1970s, the largest stronghold of the species is in Morocco. Estimates from Morocco are more recent and it is thought that a population of around 6,000 individuals remains[9].

Trade is recognized as one of the major threats to the species, with again the most recent data originating mainly from Morocco[10]. Trade in Barbary macaques is to fulfil the demand for pets and the entertainment industry (tourism) and, as such, is almost exclusively focused on the younger individuals. Indeed, opportunistic observations from wild populations suggest that it is this age group that is most often extracted from the wild. The trade in Moroccan Barbary macaques is to supply domestic demand whereas the international trade is largely directed towards Europe; the majority ends up in Spain, France and the Netherlands,

[6]Kanagavel, A., Sinclair, C., Sekar, R., Raghavan, R. (2013) Moolah, misfortune or spinsterhood? the plight of slender loris *Loris lydekkerianus* in southern India. *Journal Threatened Taxa* 5: 3585–3588.

[7]Osterberg, P. & Nekaris, K.A.I. (2015) The use of animals as photo props to attract tourists in Thailand: a case study of the slow loris *Nycticebus* spp. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 27: 13-18.

[8]Yang-Martinez, S. (2011). An investigation of tarsier tourism in Bohol, Philippines: assessments of 11 tarsier exhibits, a worry for tarsier welfare and conservation. MSc thesis. Oxford Brookes University, Oxford.

[9]El Alami, A., van Lavieren, E., Aboufatima, R. & Chait, A. (2013). A survey of the Endangered Barbary macaque *Macaca sylvanus* in the Central High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. *Oryx* 47: 451-456.

[10]Van Lavieren, E. (2008). The illegal trade in Barbary macaques from Morocco. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 21:81-88.

coinciding with the Moroccan diaspora. This trade is illegal (**see Box on Legislation**)

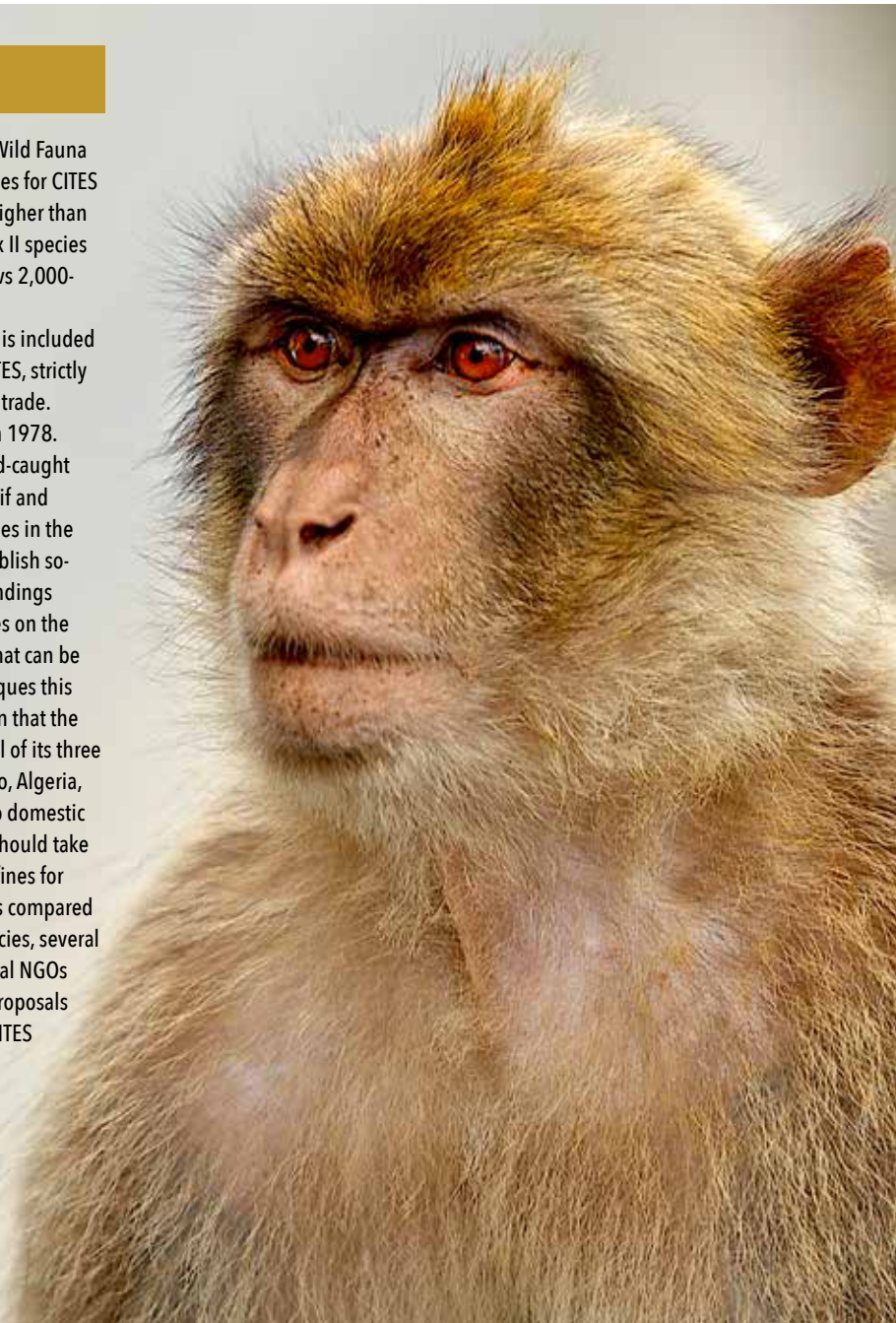
Over the last decade, the use of Barbary macaques for photo-props in Marrakesh has increased from one group of vendors using one or two macaques to four groups of vendors displaying up to nine macaques openly at any given time. As of 2013 some 35 Barbary macaques are kept on and around the Djemaa el-Fna for the photo-prop and pet trade. In 2014 another group of photo-prop vendors have set up shop in the town of Meknes, 400 km northeast of Marrakesh. In addition, in recent years the link between macaques being used as photo-props and them being sold as pets has become more clear. Given that the species is protected and there are no provisions in Moroccan law to use macaques for display purposes, the activities on the square are illegal. The majority of visitors to the Djemaa el-Fna square are Moroccan, and indeed they are the ones that have their photo taken with macaques most frequently, next to visitors from Western Europe. The price one has to pay for having one's picture taken differs widely (and depends on one's bargaining skills) but typically up to 100 Dirham($10) exchanges hands.

The places where Barbary macaques are displayed for the photo-prop trade are known to be centres of wildlife trade. It is ironic that Djemaa el-Fna in the past was the place where lawbreakers faced their punishment in public, and that this same place is now where the law is broken on a daily basis. Shutting down these wildlife markets in cities such as Marrakesh and acting upon those that openly tout the macaques and prosecuting traders to the full extent of the law may be difficult to achieve but is essential in improving the conservation prospects of Barbary macaques. Central in this is a focus on taking appropriate enforcement actions in line with Morocco's domestic legislation as well as respecting the rules and intentions of international conventions to which Morocco is signatory.

LEGISLATION

The Barbary macaque has been protected under a general national hunting law. In 2015 however, a new law (Loi 29-05 Relative à la Protection des Espèces de Faune et de Flore Sauvages) will be implemented that will regulate the trade in wild animals and plant species. The High Commissary of Water and Forests plans to announce a 6 months grace period in which the public will have the chance to end their current activities of using and selling wildlife without being prosecuted. The government has until now turned a blind eye to the illegal activities connected to wildlife use, but with the implementation of the new law, they want to initiate enforcement. It is not clear yet when the new law will be announced officially. The decree contains a list of species of wild fauna and flora involved in the provision of this Act and the terms of issue of permits, certificates and authorizations for the import, export, re-export, possession, collection, introduction and reintroduction into the wild of these species. The fines when the law is violated are directly linked to their listing on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): the fines for CITES Appendix I species are higher than those for CITES Appendix II species (i.e. 3,000-10,000 euro vs 2,000-5,000 euro).

The Barbary macaque is included on Appendix II of the CITES, strictly regulating international trade. Morocco ratified CITES in 1978. Commercial trade of wild-caught individuals is permitted if and when the CITES authorities in the range countries can establish so-called Non-detriment Findings that sets clear boundaries on the number of individuals that can be taken. For Barbary macaques this is largely irrelevant given that the species is protected in all of its three range countries (Morocco, Algeria, Gibraltar) and as such no domestic nor international trade should take place. Given the higher fines for Appendix I listed species compared to Appendix II listed species, several national and international NGOs have been arguing for proposals to be submitted to the CITES Conference of Parties to allow Barbary macaques to be transferred to Appendix I.



BALANCING NATURE AND OIL DEVELOPMENT – THERE ARE WAYS



Andrea Athanas is a Program Design Manager with the African Wildlife Foundation and has been working for two decades to find pathways for societies to transition to sustainable growth using business as a driver for achieving a better future. Her work has involved advising industry leaders such as Shell, Nestle Nespresso and the International Council on Mining and Metals on how to manage biodiversity risks.

We entered a room the size of a small cinema, with video screens surrounding us. When the doors closed and the lights went out, the screens filled with a picture showing the layers of geological substrates as though we were descending down the shaft of an oil well. The seams of alternating porous and dense rock, liquids and gases, unfolded before our eyes as if we were the drill boring into the earth. This was the heart of the analytics of one of the largest companies in the oil and gas industry, a tool used by geologists to identify and assess hydrocarbon fields.

As a conservationist, however, I was more concerned about the impact that this drilling would have above ground.

Together with a team of experts, my task was to develop an early warning system capable of alerting companies in the oil and gas sector when areas they were considering below ground were too risky to operate in from a biodiversity perspective. Using data compiled by United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the World Database on Protected Areas, our team layered on the geospatial data of potential concessions to develop risk profiles for each site that informed the business strategies and investment plans of the oil operator.

Today, as I reflect on the many advancements that have been made in oil and gas exploration since the day I sat in that small cinema more than a decade ago, it strikes me that the systems and safeguards we were designing then are more relevant than ever now, and especially in Africa, where one quarter of the world's mammal species, one fifth of the world's bird species, and between 40,000 and 60,000 plant species are found. Of the world's 34 identified biodiversity hotspots, eight of these are in Africa.

It's important to acknowledge the continent's unique natural heritage. On the 22nd of May,

INSERT: Flamingoes in Lake Natron.

BELOW: The Nile Delta



PHOTO BY: THIERRY BANCHET

we celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity. The day, established by the United Nations aims to increase awareness and understanding of biodiversity issues, and this year's theme-*Biodiversity for Sustainable Development*—drew attention to some of the efforts being made toward the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals as part of the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda. Ensuring that protection of biodiversity is integrated into development initiatives that span a number of sectors has long been on the agenda, yet progress towards meaningful integration has been slow. This is particularly true in Africa, where I now work.

Africa supplies approximately 11 % and 7 % to the global oil and gas sector respectively, and contains 10 % of the world's proven oil and gas reserves. As the world turns to Africa to supply the fuel and raw materials needed for many industries, there will be increased pressure to extract and mine the natural resources that lie below its surface. This need not mean sacrificing the natural resources that lie above its surface though. Africa's natural systems sustain its population of more than a billion, and generate a number of benefits for both the nations they are found in and the global community as a whole.



PHOTOS BY: ANDREA ATHANAS

TOP: Geita Gold Mine in Mwanza District, Tanzania.

BELOW: The Nile Delta

The Congo Basin, for example, is the world's second-largest tropical rainforest and supports the highest level of biodiversity in Africa. It also supports an estimated 40 million people who depend on it for their livelihood. It is often referred to as the world's second lung for its role in regulating and stabilizing the planet's climate. If, however, its ecological integrity is sacrificed to logging, mining and drilling interests, the repercussions to the region and global community will be considerable. A suitable balance of development and biodiversity protection needs to be sought.

How the underground oil, gas and mineral resources are exploited has significant impact on the above ground ecological systems. Done carelessly and in the wrong places, exploration and extraction can have devastating

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT THE QUANTITY OF OIL SPILLED OVER 50 YEARS OF OIL EXTRACTION EQUATES TO BETWEEN 9.0 MILLION AND 13 MILLION BARRELS, WHICH IS EQUIVALENT TO 50 EXXON VALDEZ SPILLS, WITH IMPACTS ON THE RICH SYSTEM OF MANGROVES, SOILS AND FISHERIES IN THE NIGER DELTA.



AT AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (AWF) WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AFRICA HAS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MODERNIZATION AND WILDLIFE.



PHOTO BY: THIERRY BANCHET

and lasting effects on biodiversity. According to an article in the Global Journal of Science, Environment and Earth Sciences, the oil industry in Nigeria, while contributing immensely to the growth and development of the country, has also rendered the Niger Delta one of the five most severely damaged ecosystems in the world. Studies have shown that the quantity of oil spilled over 50 years of oil extraction equates to between 9.0 million and 13 million barrels, which is equivalent to 50 Exxon Valdez spills, with impacts on the rich system of mangroves, soils and fisheries in the delta.

In most cases, once an area of high biodiversity is lost it is near impossible to reestablish as a biodiversity hotspot and the costs of restoration are often prohibitive.

But that is not to say that there cannot or should not be any resource extraction in Africa. Africa needs to grow, and oil, gas and mineral resources can provide an engine for that growth. Robust measures and safeguards can be put in place for the planning, management and responsible governance of resource extraction. This includes conducting a thorough, science-based analysis of an area before the first drill is placed, and identifying those places not suitable for exploitation because the risks are too high, such as Lake Natron in Tanzania, Murchison Falls in Uganda or Mount Nimba on the Guinea-Côte d'Ivoire border.

Building a sustainable future for Africa is paramount, and efforts to conserve not only Africa's wildlife (a valuable resource in itself) but also the ecosystems on which wildlife and people depend will enhance and sustain the continent's rapid economic growth. At African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) we do not believe that Africa has to choose between modernization and wildlife. We see part of our role as articulating a vision of modern Africa that is friendly to wildlife and friendly to business. And we are showing what that vision looks like on the ground, from businesses adopting sustainable practices that protect wildlife corridors to partnerships between rural communities and private companies that alleviate poverty, provide employment and protect wildlife. One of the key ingredients though to developing Africa's green economies is ensuring that all stakeholders are at the table—government and non-government actors, rural communities, business leaders, industry leaders and conservation groups.

Whether the ecological systems that sustain the people and wildlife of Africa prosper or collapse will depend on how we as a community work together to design and deliver economic systems that respect people and nature. Collaboration and a shared commitment to placing people and nature at the center of development need to be core to the new Sustainable Development Goals.

TOP: The Lake Natron

BELOW: A team of oil prospectors carrying out exploratory tests in the Murchison Falls in preparation for oil mining .



PHOTO BY: ANDREA ATHANAS



PHOTOS BY: ADRIAN GARSIDE

BRINGING CONSERVATION AND HOPE FOR PEOPLE IN TROUBLED SOUTH SUDAN



Adrian Garside set up Fauna & Flora International's project in Western Equatoria State in 2011 and is now leading their work in South Sudan.

South Sudan, the world's newest nation, may be mired in conflict and poverty, but there is one part of this vast country where seeds of hope for people and conservation have been sown and are slowly taking root.

With a land mass of 620,000 km² and a population of just 11 million, South Sudan still has vast uninterrupted and intact habitat and wilderness – a rare attribute. Nearly 14% of the land comprises gazetted National Parks and Game Reserves, sadly much of which is being violently fought across in the centre and east of the country.

But when Fauna & Flora International returned to southern Sudan in 2010, the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation & Tourism and FFI's then Country Director Matt Rice, made an inspired choice – to focus in Western Equatoria State.

Western Equatoria's habitats and wildlife are unique in South Sudan. The most important Protected Areas are the western sector of Southern National Park to the north of the State; and the Game Reserves of Bangangai and Bire Kpatuos to the west, on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. South Sudan's border with the Congo was demarcated along the source of the tributary systems that flow east to the river Nile and west to the river Congo. The eastern tributaries flow into the Sue and Ibba Rivers before entering the Bahr el Ghazal and on to the Nile, making Western Equatoria a key range state for the future health of the White Nile.

The Wildlife Service and Community Wildlife Ambassadors working together: Philip Michael, Sgt Nichola Junubi and Thomas Apollo deploy camera traps in Bire Kpatuos Game Reserve.

PHOTO BY: ROBERT HOWARD







The Game Reserves were gazetted in the 1930s and 1940s because of the wildlife – specifically the Bongo – that existed in this transitional zone between the tropical forests of Central Africa and the savannah systems of East Africa. Dr Chris Hillman spent some three years in Bangangai in the early 1980s studying the most easterly extent of the western subspecies of the Bongo, and produced some of the best wildlife handbooks on southern Sudan, which remain the prime source of information on national fauna.

The ironstone plateau that extends east from the DRC border underlies the western sector of Southern National Park. One now leaves the tropical forests, crosses the Sue River and enters rolling plains of low tree, tall grass savannah dotted with inselbergs. Some 7,000 km² of relatively 'unknown' landscape, is likely to be home to one of the largest remaining populations of Giant (Lord Derby's) Eland and ,potentially, the endangered African Wild Dog.

TOP LEFT: Navigation skills and mapping: converting GPS waypoints into grid references and plotting them on a map.

TOP RIGHT: Training in the use of camera traps in Bangangai Game Reserve.

BOTTOM LEFT: GPS instruction, an essential aspect of the training for gathering and recording information from the game reserves and National Park.

With all that is happening in South Sudan – the violent conflict and spectre of economic collapse – this is a good time to talk about conservation and the potential it holds for stability and future development, because it requires attention now. At this stage, conservation in South Sudan is first and foremost about people: the main predators and the best solution. The people of Western Equatoria are desperately avoiding embroilment in the current conflict. In this context, the gazetted habitats present many opportunities to the state: the wilderness, small human footprint and undeveloped (in all regards) protected area potential offer the opportunity for stability, recovery and sustainment of both people and wildlife. So if the will can be generated, skills and knowledge developed and equipment provided to protect the gazetted habitats, then the wildlife might prosper for everyone's benefit.

There exists a latent knowledge of the importance of protecting these natural resources.



Camera Trap photos of a chimp, bongo, buffalos and herd of bongos.

WITH ALL THAT IS HAPPENING IN SOUTH SUDAN – THE VIOLENT CONFLICT AND SPECTRE OF ECONOMIC COLLAPSE – THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TALK ABOUT CONSERVATION AND THE POTENTIAL IT HOLDS FOR STABILITY AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, BECAUSE IT REQUIRES ATTENTION NOW.

The knowledge and capacity has been eroded by decades of violent conflict, under-development and the undeniable need for protein in an agrarian subsistence livelihood.

This situation presents considerable opportunities for people-centred natural resource management, which fits the first step of FFI's seven-step approach to conserving biodiversity: '*building local capacity for conservation*'. Developing the skills – and the will – to do this work has been a major part of the programme. The enthusiasm to learn amongst the rangers and communities has been exceptional; teaching Ranger courses here is extremely rewarding, with both rangers and community members eager for every scrap of information. Literacy can be very low but is not an obstacle as the capacity to remember from verbal and practical instruction is exceptionally high. Life is uncluttered with technology, the absence of computer screens and artificial light seems to be the reason why their eyesight is so acute, able to identify fauna with the naked eye where, for others, binoculars are essential. Numerous courses have been completed including ranger training, logistic management and data collection. Training is constant, with regular foot patrols to maintain the skills that have been taught.

After the training comes the work. Presently, the best security offered to Western Equatoria's Protected Areas is through their remoteness and location. Who would have thought the South Sudan/Congo border, near the junction with the Central African Republic, would hold so many opportunities? Lengthy, multi-day foot patrols are the only means to get onto the ground and manage the process of learning, understanding, mapping, identifying and monitoring these areas. Under the guidance of the Wildlife Service and the support of the local communities, over 100km of bush track has been cleared and 11 bridges (re) constructed just to get to the edge of the western sector, and to establish a ranger training bush camp on the bank of the Ibba River. Under the leadership of Lt James Albino, a team of rangers and community members from Bandala had crossed the Sue River and cleared a track 30km into the western sector. This track is heading for Jebel Ndo, an almost mystical landmark in the heart of the western sector that will make an excellent VHF repeater station.

This work has been popular, being founded on issues of development and progress rather than of war and trauma, and helping to keep peoples' minds from the current conflict. The rangers in Western Equatoria remain employed in their role as managers of the Protected Areas. And the Home Guard community groups that protected the border communities during the years of pillage by the Lords Resistance Army, now have an opportunity to protect their communities' natural resources. They are 'people of the forest' with excellent local knowledge who require the smallest logistical tail on lengthy foot patrols. The trained community members are now called 'Community Wildlife Ambassadors' under a concept led by the State Minister for Local Government & Law Enforcement.

The work is now paying off with some exceptional results coming from the Game Reserves in particular. The work in the Game Reserves is funded through a partnership with Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, and specifically Dr DeeAnn Reeder a specialist in small mammals. Earlier research in 2012 had led to the naming of a new genus of bat trapped in Bangangai, so striking the news went viral under the title 'panda bat'. In January this year, Bucknell provided 56 camera traps which have been deployed and monitored by the rangers and Community Wildlife Ambassadors. Their knowledge of the forests was vital in siting these cameras in the right locations. The results are incredible, confirming what local knowledge had been leading us to, and much more. The first photographs of bongo in South Sudan for over 30 years indicate a healthy population; as well as good numbers of chimpanzee and forest buffalo. New species to the South Sudan list include golden cat, water chevrotain and brush-tailed porcupine, indicating some major range extensions. Other notable wildlife are yellow-backed duiker, troops of black & white colobus monkey, leopard and more. 80,000 photographs are still being studied and more news will follow. Western Equatoria's Game Reserves are indeed host to some extremely important habitats and wildlife.



TOP: Sgt Benneth Ezekiah instructs Wildlife Service rangers and Community Wildlife Ambassadors in the use of camera traps, at Namama Ranger Post.



BELOW: Wildlife Service Officers on the first ranger course held at the new Training Centre on the banks of the Ibba River, near Southern National Park.

These results mean there is much urgent work to be done to properly secure these habitats and vital wildlife for the future, and the Community Wildlife Ambassadors and Wildlife Rangers have a critical role to play. It is a long game and demarcation is the next step. At least there is now a growing awareness of the importance of these areas and most importantly, a growing will to protect them. The biggest threat is resource extraction, in particular de-forestation – timber can provide a vital source of income in an economic crisis. However, if the gazetted habitats are lost there is no long game, and the rangers and local communities lose a future based on these resources. Critically, we now have confirmation of some of the important wildlife that is hosted by the Game Reserves. Therefore, this is the most important time to stick with it, despite the tightening of conservation funds during a humanitarian crisis. And it is time the work and successes of the Wildlife Rangers and Community Wildlife Ambassadors is known beyond South Sudan. This is one area where the conservation gains that have been made – and the desire not to return to war – should be widely acknowledged.

A NEW ENDEMIC AGAMA FROM NGONG, IN KENYA



Steve Spawls was born in London but brought up in Kenya. A science teacher by profession, he has published a number of books and papers on Africa and its reptiles.

With the possible exception of chameleons, few African lizards are as spectacular as the agamas. These relatively large, big-headed lizards are widespread and often fairly easy to see in Kenya as they are both active by day and not shy. They are fast movers, running swiftly on their long legs, the rock-dwelling species move across sheet rock like a stone across ice, and think nothing of jumping a half a metre or more. Visitors to the game lodges in Tsavo and the Mara cannot fail to see a few.

Agamas are a widespread family, about 450 species are known. They occur in Australasia (where they are called dragons), Asia, Africa and southern Europe. About 80 species are known from Africa and until recently 10 were recorded from Kenya, belonging to two genera, *Agama* (large and small, with a enlarged occipital scale in the middle of the head) and *Acanthocercus*, (large but with no occipital scale). Some agamas are small ground-dwelling animals where the male is fairly similar to the female, and they usually live in pairs, in a hole.

But several Kenyan agamas are large, rock and tree-dwelling species where the male is much bigger than the female and has stunning display colours. As you might guess, these large species are territorial, living in structured colonies,



Blue tree agama. The vivid blue colours the head of tree agama, *Acanthocercus atricollis*.

PHOTOS BY: STEVE SPWALS



and the males bask in prominent places; their bright colours are designed to attract the females and warn off other males. 'I'm the one with the Mercedes-Benz in the garage, and I'm big and strong', those males are saying. The dominant male has several females, and when his offspring grow up, the young males are driven away once they reach a certain size and have to stake out their own territory. The best spots are often taken, and if a young male wants to create his own territory, he must move across country and try to find a colony where he can defeat the dominant male.



TOP: Redhead female. A female red-headed rock agama, at Mzima Springs, the red flank bars indicate she is pregnant.

INSERT: New agama upside down. The vivid throat and chest colours of the Ngong agama.

BELOW: A male of the widespread Kenyan species, red-headed rock agama, *Agama lionotus*, displaying at Mzima Springs.

AGAMAS ARE DIFFICULT TO CLASSIFY. THEY HAVE AN ANCIENT HISTORY, A 70-MILLION YEAR OLD FOSSIL AGAMA IS KNOWN.

Agamas also have a limited ability to change colour, non-dominant males and those not holding territory usually show a much more subdued version of dominant male colours. At one time in Kenya, agamas were known as 'cockamondas', derived from the South African term 'goggamannetjie', colloquially meaning a small animal, although the term translates literally as 'little vermin'. A number of people in Kenya, especially in rural areas, mistakenly believe that agamas are venomous, although there are no venomous lizards in Africa. A territorial male, displaying to a female, bobs his head up and down, and some Muslims believe this is a disrespectful parody of prayer, so in some places agamas have the Swahili name '*mjusi kaffiri*', i.e. the unbelieving lizard!

Agamas are difficult to classify. They have an ancient history, a 70-million year old fossil agama is known. The family as a whole is easy to identify, they

have such a distinctive shape, with their rounded heads, narrow necks, strong limbs, flattened bodies and long tails. Many reptiles can be divided into species using scale data, but agamas tend to have large and overlapping scale counts. Some species have very wide distributions; the form previously known as the red-headed agama, or red-headed rock agama, scientific name *Agama agama*, had a massive distribution across the Sahel and savanna of Africa, from Senegal east to Ethiopia and Kenya. A major review of the taxonomy of agamas by American herpetologist Scott Moody was only published as Ph. D. and received little attention. But during the last 15 years, the German herpetologist Philipp Wagner, based at the Alexander Koenig Research Natural history museum in Bonn, Germany, has spent a good deal of field time in Africa, concentrating on agamas. Previous work often looked just at museum specimens, and could not make use of colour; because the vivid hues of the wild agamas faded in preservative. However, Wagner's work, using a mixture of life colours, traditional scale counts and molecular taxonomy, is beginning to make sense of the agamas of Africa, and clarify where the species boundaries lie. Wagner was a member of the team that recently described a new agama from western Kenya, *Agama finchi*, Finch's agama, named after the eminent Kenya ornithologist Brian Finch (who has a regular column in SWARA). Interestingly, Finch noted the unknown species and brought it to the world's attention in the January 2003 edition of SWARA magazine! Now Philipp Wagner has recently

TOP: New agama male. A male of the new species, the Ngong agama, *Agama hulbertorum*, at Olorgesaile.

BELOW LEFT: Female *Agama hulbertorum*, on wall at Olorgesaile.



PHOTO BY: DANIEL HOLLANDS



described a new species from southern Kenya, from the Ngong Hills, Olorgesaille and Kajiado; his paper was published in Salamandra, the journal of the German Herpetological Society (Volume 50(4), December 2014, pp 187-200), and you can get it as a free download from the Reptile Database (a wonderful resource) here: **http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Agama&species=hulbertorum&search_param=((taxon%3D'agamidae'**. Specimens are also illustrated in the agama account at the free Kenya reptile atlas website, **www.kenyareptileatlas.com**.

Wagner has named the new species *Agama hulbertorum*, for the Hulbert family, who are German experts at captive breeding of agamas. The first specimens were collected by a zoologist called Alexander Burmann, on the lower southern slopes of the Ngong Hills; hence the species has received the popular name of the Ngong Agama. Although related to the big red-headed rock agamas of northern and eastern Kenya (now called *Agama lionotus*), the Ngong agama is smaller, with a distinctive unpatterned red throat and a pale vertebral line and head scalation that differs significantly from the red-headed agama. The females do not have vividly coloured heads and look rather dull, in fact the females of all large Kenyan agamas look very similar, (something seen with other animals, for example female sunbirds) and hence can be hard to identify. The museum type specimens are from Elangata Wuas, near Kajiado, and the southern Ngong Hills, the species has also been observed and photographed at the Olorgesaille Prehistoric Site. It is probably more widespread but, as always, specimens are lacking. So if you see one, photograph it, or if you find a dead one, preserve it and take it to the Herpetology Section of the National Museum. The more data we have, the more accurately we can document our biodiversity.



TOP: Somali Painted agama. *Agama persimilis*, is a small solitary species. The male and female look the same.

RIGHT: Philipp Wagner at a recent IUCN reptile conference in Tanzania (third from right, back row).



Below: The habitat of the Ngong agama, in the dry hills on the Magadi road.

RHINO RETURN TO SAMBURU

A FIRST FOR A COMMUNITY CONSERVANCY

The first community-owned and operated Black rhino sanctuary in East Africa has opened its doors. For the first time in 25 years, Black rhino are once again roaming alongside the Samburu, Borana and Rendille people of northern Kenya. It is hoped the Sanctuary will not only nurture Kenya's population of the critically endangered species, but also provide local people with jobs, increased security and tourism revenue.

PHOTO BY: IAN CRAIG



The Sera Rhino Sanctuary is prime black rhino habitat.





Sophie Harrison works for Northern Rangelands Trust as a Media and Communications consultant

One of the rhino from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is safely loaded into the transportation crate.

There is a generation of young warriors in Samburu which has only ever heard of the rhino in stories passed down from their grandparents. Up until the early 1970s, the land they call home held significant populations of Black rhino – who would have peacefully shared the plains with livestock herders. The last individual in the area was shot 25 years ago. This marked the end of a long and unrestricted hunting and poaching campaign that wiped out an entire regional population.

The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) has partnered with Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the Kenya Wildlife Service to reintroduce Black rhino to this native habitat. Last month, animals from Nairobi and Nakuru National Parks, as well as Lewa, were translocated to Sera Community Conservancy, which sits to the east of Archer's Post in Samburu County.

The Sera Rhino Sanctuary - governed by a locally elected board and patrolled by local rangers - materialises the Government of Kenya's promise to support community based conservation initiatives as part of the new 2013 Wildlife Act. It also embodies the strength of the growing community conservation movement in Kenya – which has managed to reduce elephant poaching in respective areas by 43% in the past three years.

The Northern Rangelands Trust supports 27 community conservancies that span coastal and northern Kenya. The Sera Rhino Sanctuary will be the second community operated endangered species sanctuary in the NRT family, alongside the Ishaqbini Hirola Sanctuary. These conservancies are starting to earn substantial revenue through sustainable natural resource management, eco-tourism and small enterprises supported by NRT. At the same time, species such as Grevy's zebra, Wild dog, lion and giraffe are benefitting too.

According to IUCN, populations of Black rhino (Diceros bicornis) plummeted by 98% between 1960 and 1995 – primarily as a result of hunting and poaching. Conservation efforts have managed to stabilise and increase numbers in most of the black rhino's former ranges since then, and Kenya has done particularly well. Kenya's black rhino have increased from 381 to 640 since 1987, and continue to rise. That said; the cost of rhino horn on the black market shows no sign of decreasing, and protecting black rhino is becoming expensive and dangerous.

THE SERA RHINO SANCTUARY - GOVERNED BY A LOCALLY ELECTED BOARD AND PATROLLED BY LOCAL RANGERS - MATERIALISES THE GOVERNMENT OF KENYA'S PROMISE TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION INITIATIVES AS PART OF THE NEW 2013 WILDLIFE ACT.





PHOTOS BY: SOPHIE HARRISON

PHOTO BY: JO O'BRIEN



TOP: Sera Conservancy Chairlady Pauline Longojine talks to NTV about what these rhino will mean to the community.

BELOW RIGHT: Kenya's black rhino population is estimated to be around 640.

BELOW: All rhino in the Sanctuary have been fitted with transmitters for monitoring purposes.

Private sanctuary owners and the Kenya Wildlife Service are now up against highly organised criminal networks, and the cost of security is estimated by the Ol Pejeta Conservancy to be around $850 per rhino, per month. This has forced many private sanctuary owners to move their entire populations of rhino to safer areas, resulting in reduced habitats and a higher risk of inbreeding.

Sera Rhino Sanctuary will provide an expanse of much-needed space for the species, as well as encouraging the diversification of the gene pool. The individuals that have been chosen by the Kenya Wildlife Service range from 1.5 years to 20 years old, to try and reflect a natural demographic and encourage natural breeding conditions. All animals have transmitters fitted to their horns, to enable the Sera Conservancy rangers to monitor them closely. The rangers, part of a squad that reflects the diversity of the surrounding communities, have been trained by KWS and Lewa in data gathering, anti-poaching operations, bush craft and effective patrolling. They will have the back up of the NRT and Lewa Anti-Poaching Units when necessary.

It is hoped that the sanctuary will bring increased revenue for Sera Conservancy as ecotourism operations provide income and employment. The aim is that this ecotourism income will one day ensure the self-sustainability of the Sanctuary. Parts of the sanctuary will also be set aside for dry season grazing for local herders, and the community look forward to increased overall security in the area.

Earlier this year, NRT invited several young warriors from Sera to visit Lewa. Here, for the first time, they encountered Black rhino. Not only that, but they were able to meet and touch Lewa's three orphaned Black rhino calves and learn more about the species from their keepers. The magnitude of this experience was etched on the faces of the young men, and as this story is retold throughout their communities, support for rhino conservation grows.

The Sera Rhino Sanctuary and the translocation of the black rhino was supported by Samburu County Government, USAID, The Lundin Foundation, San Diego Zoo, St. Louis Zoo, Tusk Trust, The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fauna and Flora International, Zurich Zoo, and several private philanthropists.

THE MYTHS AND REALITIES OF ECO AND COMMUNITY TOURISM



Damian Cook is the founder and CEO of E-Tourism Frontiers, an international initiative to develop tourism and technology resources in emerging markets, and works with leading destinations worldwide. He is Kenya-based and lives in Watamu, where he is Chairman of the Local Ocean Trust.

I was recently sitting with the management of an Eco and Community Tourism project discussing how they could better market their products. As I work with almost 30 destinations, predominantly in emerging markets, it's not unusual to encounter these kinds of ventures.

This one was certainly running some environmental projects in line with tourism businesses, and members of the local community were involved, but there was no real business model behind the project, and no accounting structure or systems to show any profit or disbursement of revenue into communities.

The project was almost entirely dependent on donor funds, and had been overseen by an expatriate manager for almost a decade. When I asked if there was any structure in place to shift management into the local community and introduce business plans to create profitability, this was shrugged off. They explained that the manager had the right networks to maintain the aid funding, and that he worked for a low wage because he liked the local lifestyle, and that similarly qualified local managers would probably require a higher salary. The local community



Feynan Ecolodge has been built to exist sustainably in harmony with the desert environment.

members all nodded in agreement. Someone said, "That's just the way it is". But is it really?

All over the world, concerns about the impact of travel on the environment and communities has made travellers question their choices, and as a result the eco and community tourism has become both a source of responsible travel, but also a growth industry. And as ever, with commercialism comes controversy.

The Eco and Community landscape has become clouded by blurred definitions of what sustainable and environmentally sound travel actually means, and these waters become even murkier when they are joined by the support and influence of large corporations and aid agencies with their own agendas. It now seems that almost every tourism business on the planet is making claim to be saving the planet, in many cases by simply not washing the towels in your hotel room. With a green sticker on everything- how does a traveller start to discern if their trip really doesn't cost the earth?

The first step to grasping truly sustainable ecotourism is to distinguish between actual business ventures that are locally owned and managed by communities to create revenue and protect the livelihoods and environment that sustains them, and projects that exist off the donations or corporate social responsibility of larger multinational corporations or business interests.

While it is, of course, great to see any company taking steps to mitigate their impact on the environment or the communities they work with, the balance between mitigation and impact needs to be assessed. A safari camp that burns more campfire wood from local forests than the trees it plants once a year on Earth Day, for example, or a hotel that donates to a local school but employs none of the parents of the students, can make this balance questionable.

PHOTOS BY: ECOHOTELS



TOP: Feynan is an award winning ecolodge in the Dana Valley of Jordan.

BELOW: Guests with the Bedouin Community at Feynan.

Another concern with this "Green Washing" is that any ecological or sustainability project that depends on funding from a large corporation is unlikely to ever criticize or question the actions of that corporation- or they themselves will rapidly cease to exist.

Genuinely beneficial projects are those that have a legitimate stake owned by local people who can make independent decisions, and that protect resources as an alternative to their destruction in a way that has minimal impact. Kenya is the home to some of the best and most successful eco and community tourism ventures and partnerships.

The fantastic work of the Northern Rangelands Trust and its creation of legitimate, independent and profitable ventures that are managed by skilled community members with structured channels for revenue distribution have been a model for the world to follow. (See the NRT Focus column in SWARA).

So too is the Conservancy model set up with local communities via Porini and Gamewatchers (SWARA

IT NOW SEEMS THAT ALMOST EVERY TOURISM BUSINESS ON THE PLANET IS MAKING CLAIM TO BE SAVING THE PLANET, IN MANY CASES BY SIMPLY NOT WASHING THE TOWELS IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM. WITH A GREEN STICKER ON EVERYTHING- HOW DOES A TRAVELLER START TO DISCERN IF THEIR TRIP REALLY DOESN'T COST THE EARTH?



201502), who have made this their focus. As Managing Director Mohanjeet Brar explains: “I believe one of the keys to successful community ecotourism ventures is directly contributing to the protection of habitat that would otherwise not be protected. So for example if that eco-camp or eco-lodge closed down or moved what would happen to that area, would it still be protected?” This is the criterion by which they have chosen to form business partnerships to create camps within locally owned communal wilderness.

The real key is community ownership and partnership. “An important part of this is employment. One of the best things one can do to raise people's standards of living and impact their self worth is having permanent jobs where they can apply themselves and contribute positively and there is scope for the employed community members to be trained and move to management roles”.

PHOTOS BY: PORINI



TOP: Tent at a Porini Camp.

BELOW: The Maasai community conservancies are home to the Porini Camps.

Beyond employment, profit and revenue are also essential ingredients for success and these need to be distributed equitably by agreed structures that are rotational and equitable. But this also requires actual and robust profitability.

Some studies suggest that any community owned venture not generating a sustainable profit within two years is very likely to never succeed. Invariably, problems arise when these projects are owned, managed or wholly supported by Not for Profit, aid or NGO bodies. The non-profit ethos by its very nature immediately conflicts with sustainability and engenders dependency.

In Jordan, one of the world’s top rated eco-lodges, the beautiful Feynan Lodge, is another shining example of community tourism partnerships with local Bedouin people who reap genuine benefit from guests to a stunning, low impact lodge that attracts high value guests seeking genuine desert experiences.

Managing Director Nabil Tarazi has seen many other similar but donor funded ventures fail through externally owned and managed attempts to “empower” communities through tourism. “Often the decision to help is made and budgets are set without a real business plan to identify the target customer, target price, training needs, capacity building or timeline to hand management to the local community”

“While donor money is coming, the project may work. As soon as the money is used up, the project shuts down. Community expectations are set high before the start, and then those dreams come





Feynan is a business enterprise in partnership with local communities.

crashing down. Local communities become resentful, and often turn against tourism".

Lack of sustainability can actually be advantageous for some. Projects managed and overseen by aid workers and expatriate experts often pay well or offer a desirable lifestyle. Keeping the support project running can ensure that new funds are approved, contracts and work permits renewed and a status quo of dependency.

Muna Haddad is an expert in community and sustainable tourism who has worked with Feynan in Jordan and other projects worldwide. She sees this issue as critical. "The need of donor funded projects to produce fast and quantifiable results within brief timelines pushes implementers to go for the low hanging fruit. The beneficiaries tend to be selected based on their ability to provide those fruit. This is what has been referred to as the 'path of least resistance' where we start to see a small pool of the same beneficiaries reappear simply because they know what donor agencies like to see in their proposals. 'Development' becomes cosmetic, and the 'project' becomes the process of going through the motions without achieving real results"

For the communities, this is self-defeating "On paper it reads like a great success, but it collapses as soon as the project is wrapped up. The project is not a tool to create jobs, but it is the job. This is how entitlement and dependency are encouraged, and the locals start expecting these jobs and relying on them and even demanding them for their livelihood"

Kenya, like Jordan, has proved itself a leader at creating genuine and successful community owned and eco-tourism projects, and these should be not just promoted but used as a model for how we develop our future tourism projects, over unsustainable or cosmetic projects.

The cornerstone of our development should be real relationships that have strong foundations of equality- and discussions that are pragmatic and honest. As Muna says, those looking to develop tourism should "view our role as outsiders that have some market expertise and knowledge to bring to the table, but the table is round and everyone sitting on it can contribute. Tourism projects will be more sustainable and successful if local populations are engaged and fully involved. This has to be real involvement; which means that even if the locals decide they don't want tourism, we pack our bags and leave and still consider the project a success".

It's a positive lesson. Sometimes real development means no development.

Kenya
an enduring love affair facing difficult challenges



PHOTO BY: ANDY GOTTS

Virginia McKenna is a Founder Trustee of the Born Free Foundation – co-founded with her late husband Bill Travers MBE, and her eldest son, Will Travers OBE, in 1984. She was awarded the OBE in 2004 for her contribution to the arts and animal welfare. In July 2014 she was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts by the University of Bedfordshire for her outstanding contribution to acting and to the conservation of animals.

What thoughts are in my mind, what images are in my eyes when I think of Kenya? Where to begin?

The clouds that never seem to obscure the sun, with their amazing and ever-changing patterns; the distant mountains and hills, defining the skyline and framing the landscape. The land itself with its deep red or pale sand-coloured soil, often patterned with wild flowers. The warm hospitality of the people and their resilience in the face of challenges – some unexpected, others constant. And the animals. From the winged to the creeping and everything in between. Each fulfilling a purpose in the natural world's struggle for survival.

The difficulties facing Africa seem particularly and increasingly daunting – for humans and animals, who are all clinging to survival in different ways. When you love a country, as I love Kenya, it is hard to read about the seemingly indifferent slaughter of people and wild animals. In the name of religion we are told, or in the name of trophies, of 'medicine', politics and as status symbols. I personally believe that no religion preaches murder, cruelty and suffering; and I cannot accept that a piece of rhino horn, an elephant's tusk, an animal skin or body part is more valuable than the living creature. That money is a greater treasure than a living being. If I am wrong then the society we live in is really a fearful one.

It seemed very different 51 years ago when my late husband, Bill Travers, and I came to Kenya to take part in the film *Born Free*'– based on Joy Adamson's famous book. It took 10 ½ months to film and George Adamson was our lion man. Through him we learned about the nature of lions, and through him we were able to forge real relationships with some of the lionesses that were in the film. A relationship that was impossible to establish with the two ex-circus lionesses initially chosen to play Elsa. We always felt that their many years spent in a circus environment



Bill and Virginia with Boy and Girl

PHOTO BY: COLUMBIA PICTURES

I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT NO RELIGION PREACHES MURDER, CRUELTY AND SUFFERING; AND I CANNOT ACCEPT THAT A PIECE OF RHINO HORN, AN ELEPHANT'S TUSK, AN ANIMAL SKIN OR BODY PART IS MORE VALUABLE THAN THE LIVING CREATURE.

did not really endear humans to them. Much has been written about making the film, but suffice it to say that our experience of being in Kenya created a deep and unbreakable bond that continues to this day.

Bill became a documentary film maker – *The Lions Are Free, An Elephant Called Slowly*, *Christian the Lion at World's End*, a series of films with Hugo van Lawick, and Simon Trevor's 'Bloody Ivory' (with David and Daphne Sheldrick). I was fortunate enough to be in one or two of those and then, when we started our charity, The Born Free Foundation (then known as Zoo Check) in 1984, I began bringing small groups of people to Kenya to show them the beauty of the animals and the landscapes, the dawns and the sunsets, and to meet the kind and welcoming people.

Of course I have stayed in a handful of different camps and lodges – in the Mara, Samburu, Tsavo, Amboseli and Shaba. But I have to admit that, for personal reasons, my very special place is Elsa's Kopje in Meru.



Virginia with Various Cubs



Virginia, Monika the Trainer and Astra the Circus Lioness

PHOTOS BY: BILL TRAVERS



Virginia on the Plains with Mara



Virginia with Astra the Circus Lioness

This is the birthplace of the Born Free story and, as most people know, where the Adamsons returned Elsa the lioness to the wild, where she had her cubs, where she died and where she is buried. It is a very beautiful park, with its ribbons of 13 rivers and its tranquil atmosphere. Joy Adamson brought Pippa the cheetah here also in 1965 and started her re-introduction programme. Tragically Pippa died the year the Adamsons left Meru in 1969. Her grave remains. The area of George Adamson's little camp where he brought three lions we had managed to secure from the Born Free film, lies below the rocky hill where the lodge is situated and, if you look carefully, you can find odd fragments of Land Rover which are poignant memories of those far off days. Also the little grave of the cub, Sam, who was killed by the wild lion, Black Mane. The camp area is a touching reminder of a man who loved lions more than life and lived what he believed. He and Bill were the closest of friends.

I haven't always stayed in lodges and tented camps. One of our most fascinating and memorable holidays was in Kora, east of Meru, to where George moved to in 1970. We, and our children, spent Christmas 1974 with him in his camp – his lions lying just outside the wire fence, and facing us the 'Kora tit' – the landmark pointed-hill formally known as the Kora Hill! We cooked with Hamisi over the little ash fire and shared a very special and unique Christmas meal with George, his brother Terence and his young protégé Tony Fitzjohn, complete with all the trimmings we had brought with us from Nairobi. And then, a few days later, off we drove to the Chyulu Hills ,where we were entranced by clouds of butterflies and the cool silence of the rain forest.

I have learned so much from the people I have met in Kenya – how everything is intertwined, from bug to beast, from tree to flower. It is when one upsets the balance that things go wrong. And we seem to be doing that at an alarming rate.

Many years ago I had the greatest good fortune to meet up with George's godson Jonny Baxendale. Jonny had helped George in his camp in Meru for a long time in the late 1960s, and so he has always been an intrinsic part of George's life. He invited me to go for a few days in 2010 to the Aberdares, to Rhino Retreat, with Colin and Nicole Church. It was a unique experience, introducing me to a Kenya I had never seen before.

The Retreat lies at just under 8,000 feet – dense forest and then, above, the amazing open mountain area beyond the tree line. We didn't see the very rare bongo which hide away deep in the bamboo, but we saw buffalo, elephants and the beautiful Bush buck at the waterhole, as well as bustling groups of Giant forest hogs and their babies. They visited the waterhole at night, together with white-tailed mongoose. A treasure chest of amazing creatures – and not forgetting the colobus monkeys with their flowing fur and long tails and the leopard and her cub that we came across at the meeting of two tracks.

This natural area with its extraordinary wildlife treasures has been fiercely and carefully protected and long may it remain so.

That is the challenge we all face now. Will it remain so? Can our planet survive mankind's increasing need for land, for food and, it would seem, our lack of concern for nature's balance. Each time wild animals – elephants, rhino, lions, primates, birds and so many more species - are killed, poisoned, trapped and exported, the survival of those that remain becomes more difficult and challenging – more uncertain.

At Born Free we are trying to play a small part in conserving the land and creatures we value so much. My eldest son, Will, who first came to Kenya when he was five years old, works with the Born Free team in Nairobi and, if possible, his love of and loyalty to the country increases as time passes. He and I were in Meru last year where we work with the Kenya Wildlife Service, in partnership with Land Rover, and we witnessed first-hand the snares, the grotesque carcase of a young giraffe – evidence of the soaring bush meat trade. It was chilling.

In a way I suppose I am part of the past, just fortunate enough to still be here and care about the present. Will and his colleagues and friends at Born Free are the present and the future – as are all his generation who treasure this beautiful country. He will be telling you his story soon and, hopefully, helping to inspire those who will take on the baton and ensure a compassionate future for all creatures.



PHOTOS BY: BILL TRAVERS

George with Mara



Girl Bringing a Kill to Virginia



PHOTO BY: VIRGINIA MCKENNA

Bill and Girl



George with Mara



George's Lunchbreak with Mara

THE PADDOCK DIARIES PART TWO

Despite migrant slaughter, the list of sightings just gets bigger

Bird enthusiast Brian Finch writes a regular SWARA column based on the birds he sees in the paddock in his back yard. Here is the latest instalment.



Brian Finch is a Kenyan citizen living in Nairobi. He has been interested in birds all his life. He is the author of the sounds component of the recent Birds of East Africa Application available on the ITunes Library as well as a co-author of the field-guide, also co-author of "Birds of the Horn of Africa," and "Birds of New Guinea" as well as many smaller publications including the recent updated checklist for the Birds of Nairobi National Park.

Such wealth at the bottom of the garden. My list of sightings stood at 172 species logged between October and the New Year. But as I write this column in April, the list has swollen to an amazing 212, with 40 new additions and some more surprises.

Of course in 2 ½ acres there are not the 212 species all of the time; in fact there is only a core group of 50 species to be recorded on a near-daily basis (which is still a good variety for such a small area). This means that 75% of the species are visitors, from a wide array of provenances, many of them migrants passing to and from breeding to wintering grounds. Others are nomads that have been driven out of their normal comfort zone by drought or are searching for new territories.

From mid-September until April, and even in early May, we are visited by declining hordes of migrants from the Northern Hemisphere, where they are escaping the coming winter. The numbers are immense, but with the Arab nations freely buying mist nets cheaply from Chinese sources, an estimated 140 million birds are slaughtered every year in Egypt alone; colossal numbers never make it past Morocco, Lebanon or most of the North African Arab nations. Inhuman(e) inhabitants of these regions amuse themselves by shooting every single bird they see,

THE NUMBERS ARE IMMENSE, BUT WITH THE ARAB NATIONS FREELY BUYING MIST NETS CHEAPLY FROM CHINESE SOURCES, AN ESTIMATED 140 MILLION BIRDS ARE SLAUGHTERED EVERY YEAR IN EGYPT ALONE.



Paddock storm brewing.





PHOTO COURTESY OF COMMITTEE AGAINST BIRD SLAUGHTER

TOP LEFT: One swallow doth not a summer make.

TOP RIGHT: Migrant trapped in mist net.

BELOW: Mist nets in Egypt.

and an individual can bring down scores of exhausted migrants in a short time. This is having a dramatic impact on the number of birds reaching sub-Saharan Africa. Almost all the species are insectivores, so the agricultural pests that used to be consumed by these visitors are now treated with poisons. The inhabitants of some Mediterranean islands also slaughter the migrants just for sport as they pass through their islands. The slaughter defies EU directives but some of these countries are members of the EU bloc. How can this happen?

So the birds that pass through the paddock mainly in November and early December are, in many cases, the survivors of a major annihilation of their species that have evaded the 700 km long stretch of mist nets set up for their destruction along the Mediterranean coastline of Egypt. They include Golden Orioles that survive the shotgun slaughtering of all birds around the Arabian wadis, their last opportunity for feeding before the brutal trans-Sahara flight; the Blackcaps that escape being stuffed beyond recognition and served in Cypriot restaurants as delicacies; the Willow Warblers that evade, or maybe are lucky enough to bounce out of, the thousands of kilometres of Egyptian mist nets strung up to catch every migrant bird that lands exhausted and hungry on their shores.

For all of these and more, the Paddock is a safe haven.

I took the opportunity to study these birds. On the southwards passage that takes the Golden Orioles to their winter quarters in southern Africa, I recorded over 150 bird/days. To explain: Bird/days is a useful way of denoting a density or/and frequency of the species concerned. If for instance you record ten African Citrils for five days, and three for ten days, then the bird/days becomes the accruing total of individuals on all days which amounts to 80 (10x5 plus 3x10), over a period of 15 days, so the bird/days figure is 80/15. In the case of the Orioles the passage extended just 25 days, and so the bird/days figure for the paddock was 150/25.

On the return journey as they passed north, I recorded



PHOTO COURTESY OF COMMITTEE AGAINST BIRD SLAUGHTER



PHOTO COURTESY OF FACEBOOK

Displays of captured birds. In red frame, on right Golden Orioles resting on migration in the paddock.

just 5/3 bird-days, I was expecting a fairly similar result to the southward passage, but this certainly supports the theory that Golden Orioles coming from the south take a coastal route. (They are very common on the Kenyan coast March and April). But maybe the figures show an even more dramatic coastal bias than has ever been appreciated.

In October and November, the greenish backed race *acredula* of the widespread palearctic Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), passes through in fairly good numbers. They scour the acacias for insects, but are also partial to the nectar of Grevillea robusta flowers. Most of these move on to other wintering areas, but a few become faithful and stay for the duration, although I suspect that there is still a massive interchange amongst individuals in the area. Towards the end of November and into December, a more robust, pallid grey-backed and white bellied warbler appears and joins the *acredula*, but these are still Willow Warblers from much, much further away, and are of the eastern race *yakutensis*. This form breeds as far East as the Kolymar mountains of Siberia, well to the East of all of China and Japan, migrating north of the Himalayas they head Southwest, probably over Afghanistan, cross the Middle East and then head southwards into East Africa. Now they were enjoying our local insects and nectar. It was whilst watching the birds, and marvelling on how far they had come, that I wondered: "Is this the passerine with the longest migration on the planet?'.

This is an accolade traditionally showered on the Northern Wheatear, a species that breeds across the entire northern latitudes from eastern Canada, Greenland, Iceland, all of Europe, Asia and Alaska. All Northern Wheatears have a final destination on the African continent. It is quite mind boggling that birds raised in eastern Canada, rather than finding a wintering area on the American continents, take this punishing journey to places like the Gambia and westwards into the sub-Sahel, whilst Alaskan birds also ignore the American continents and anything to do with Asia to arrive, for instance, on the lower slopes of Mt Kenya. But what about *yakutensis* Willow Warblers, about half the size of the Willow Warble? When they reach Kenya, they still continue South, many reaching the tip of Africa.

Before we can take back the champion passerine migrant from Willow Warbler, there is a complication. Recent studies using modern technology attached to Wheatears from eastern Canada and western Alaska have shown that some Canadian birds have reached East Africa, and likewise Alaskan birds have made it across to West Africa. So the jury is still out on who is this champion long-distance migrant, but when I see the *yakutensis* passing back north again in late April, it takes away none of the marvel.

When I started the study back in October, there were times when I was out after 6.00pm to see what

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FACEBOOK



TOP: In red frame, all these birds are insectivores, wagtails, warblers, flycatchers and chats on their way to East Africa to assist the people achieve better food production by consuming the agricultural insect pests.

LEFT: There are some evil minds that are more than just ill adjusted. Here are the results of the mentally sickest people I could find, which one wins the prize for the most sadistic acts against virtually anything living?

birds were coming in. I noticed that an Eastern Honeybird was coming in to roost in a small Schrebera tree. Although we are most fortunate in Nairobi to see this bird often, elsewhere in its extensive range it is rare. Even though it is not rare with us here, it is still a species of which virtually nothing is known. Now nearly seven months later, it is still using the same roost, and has most evenings throughout, but, as is typical of Schrebera, the leaves are falling with the arrival of the rains, and it may have to find temporary refuge elsewhere.

During the day, this small warbler-like bird is sleek olive green above, and pale green-grey below, but very white on lower belly and undertail coverts. In flight, the outer-tail feathers from the upperside are a clear white. At the end of the day, it arrives early at its roost. The branch on which it sleeps is completely open to the sky, and would appear too exposed for a small and vulnerable bird to roost, but it has a secret method of making itself almost invisible, by adopting a camouflage the likes of which I have never heard of before and is certainly not recorded anywhere.

The pre-dusk arrival would either be into the crown of the tree or direct to the perch. From here the bird would then commence to dishevel itself, turning from a sleek bird into an untidy mess. To do this it would fluff itself out, then disarrange the breast and rump feathers. I can only describe the bird as “un-preening.” This involved a process



TOP: In red frame, on right Blackcap on migration enjoying wild berries sourced from our indigenous trees, on left Blackcaps terminated on migration and sauced with wild berries. This is how many Cypriots treat the migrants.

BELOW: The amazing nightly transformation of Eastern Honeybird.



of using the bill to expose the pale feather bases. It now appears not as a roosting bird, but as a tangle of leaves blending nicely with bunches either side of it. There it spends the night in its camouflage. In the morning, a few shakes and the former sleek bird returns and it flies off to feed.

The Internet nowadays opens up so many avenues. If you are interested in learning about the perils that Arab and Mediterranean island nations represent to the migrating birds, one of the most dramatic ways is to use Google Image with a combination of key words such as "Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Cyprus, Malta with "Bird, Shooting, Slaughter, Migrant". When you open an image it will lead you to the article concerned. Sickeningly much of this will be grinning idiots,proudly showing off their massacres on Facebook!

As an update on the Yellow White-eye issues, pay a close attention to White-eyes, the Yellow is common in the Nairobi National Park as expected and quite easy to see on the Safari Walk. But more surprisingly, I have now found it on the slopes of Mt Kenya at Lelwel (Timau) and Lolldaiga and also in Borana. This species had suffered the same fate on Mt Kenya, of being assumed to be Kikuyu (Montane) White-eye. So the initial observations in the paddock have had wide reaching consequences, and made many people view their White-eyes more critically in their own back yards!
For the recent studies of Wheatear migration, I found this most interesting: **http://safari-ecology.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/wheatears.**

INVESTING IN AN ANTI-POACHING DOG

This is the second part of an article about the use of dogs in anti-poaching work. The first appeared in SWARA 2015-2



Felix Patton is a rhino ecologist, who writes about the species from Africa and Europe. He has an MSc in Conservation Biology and a PhD based on research on individual rhino identification and social behaviour. He is a frequent contributor to SWARA.

Selecting, training and the upkeep of a dog for anti-poaching work is costly. Few animals display the temperament, aptitude and interest to learn the 'tricks of the trade' and before any specialist training can begin, the dog needs to be trained in basic obedience.

PHOTOS BY: DARYLL PLEASANTS/WHITE PAW TRAINING







PHOTO BY: CATHERINE CORRETT/K9 CONSERVATION

PHOTO BY: COLLEEN HOGG-PHOTOGRAPHY4LIFE/BIG LIFE FOUNDATION



LEFT: Playing and training.

TOP LEFT: Chasing training.

TOP RIGHT: Agility training.

BOTTOM: Attack training.

It is difficult to be precise about the length of a training regime for an anti-poaching dog as breeds and training institutes differ. One claim is that it takes nine weeks for the specific anti-poaching training once the dog is 14 months old. Another regime takes 120 days for dogs that are between 16 and 24 months old.

Initially most dogs were trained in the USA or Europe. A training regime might start with the young dogs getting experience in scent work and ground disturbance using a combination of food tracks and scent trails. Special attention would be placed on getting the dogs to pick up a trail from a simple foot track, as this would be the main scent source in a poaching incident. Once the basic skills were learned, animal distractions would be introduced so that the dogs would have to discriminate between the scent they were following and other scents. Finally the trail layers would emulate poacher behaviours and capture and evasion techniques when laying trails. Altogether the intensive training regime could last around five months of five/six days a week. Once

PHOTO BY: DARYLL PLEASANTS/WHITE PAW TRAINING





PHOTO BY: JAMIE GAYMER/OL JOGI



PHOTO BY: WIKICOMMONS

TOP LEFT: All conditions training.

TOP RIGHT: Line training.

BELOW RIGHT: Specialist kennel facilities.

in Africa, training has to continue in the habitat, climate and obstacles, such as water and fire, which the dog will confront.

Clearly it is of value to have the dogs bred and brought up in the country where they will work so that they are accustomed to the environment from birth. In 1998, Ol Jogi was the first ranch in Kenya to bring in two bloodhound sniffer dogs from the United States. They subsequently brought in a further two from the USA and successfully bred two litters. Ol Jogi have kept some of the pups and donated dogs and training to several other organisations including Lewa Nature Conservancy, Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Oserian Development Company Ltd, Colceccio Ranch, Mugie Ranch, Ol Donyo Waas in the Chyulu Hills, The Mara Triangle, Shompole and the Kenya Wildlife Service. Some of these reserves are now running breeding programmes using imported dogs. This will also help reduce costs.

Of course it is not just the dog that has to be trained, the handler too needs training - both before it meets their dog and afterwards.

The initial training has to cover basic line handling, scent theory, training techniques, reading the dog, environmental impact on trails, and how to set up and mark training trails. In addition, nutrition, grooming, kennel maintenance and basic first aid are essential. Trainee handlers spend time each day feeding and grooming their dogs, learning how to approach and praise them. A critical skill all handlers must learn is to read the dog's body language and to get the feel of how to work a line.

An additional cost of keeping dogs for anti-poaching work is the need to train a number of other people in crime scene preservation so that the dog is not confused by a host of scents that do not belong to the poacher. Park management, lodge managers, field guides/rangers and all resident security personnel need to be taught how to approach and treat a crime scene and to understand the methods of preserving it.

Dedicated kennelling facilities of appropriate size, secure (from predators) with shelter from the elements and a sleeping area are essential. An additional area for health care is advised. Kennels have to be cleaned daily.

Adult working dogs are normally fed commercial dog food

THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY BEING USED IS FIDO HEAD GEAR, A DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA HARNESSED ON THE HEAD WHICH FILMS WHAT THE DOG CAN SEE AND IS DISPLAYED ON A SCREEN WHICH THE HANDLER HAS.

PHOTOS BY:DARYLL PLEASANTS/WHITE PAW TRAINING





PHOTO BY: MADDELIN ANGEBRAND/ WIKKICOMMONS



TOP LEFT: Fido cam.
TOP RIGHT: Veterinary checks.
BELOW: Regular hygiene.

pellets between 450g to 700g, once a day and/or quality fresh dog meat.

Veterinary care is essential to keep working dogs in optimal condition to perform their duties. They need to be vaccinated once per year and de–wormed three times per year. To ensure they are protected against external parasites, such as ticks, lice, flies and fleas, they need to be dipped at least once per week.

Anti-poaching dogs need protective gear to shield them from armed poachers. Ballistic body armour is stab-proof, kick and punch-proof and also ballistic to AK-47 gunfire with plates in it. The latest technology being used is FIDO head gear, a digital video camera harnessed on the head which films what the dog can see and is displayed on a screen which the handler has. It can be equipped with night vision and a GPS system.

What do all these requirements add up to? While there are so many variations in anti-poaching dog units, it is difficult to show an example costings. The figures to the right give an indication of what can be the case.

Clearly the start-up and running costs of a dog unit are a significant investment but their value in anti-poaching work is immense.

COST OF A TRAINED DOG
$3,500 to 9,500 depending on breed/skill required
Cost of handler training
$3,000 to certificate level
Cost of kennel & equipment
$1,500

TOTAL START UP
$8,000 to $14,000

ANNUAL RUNNING COST
Food
$1,000 high quality special dog food
Veterinary and medical
$250 general health, non-emergency
Tick and flea control
$150
Handler salary
$3,700 quoted cost of one handler

TOTAL RECURRING
$5,100 per dog

ADDITIONAL ITEMS
Ballistic Armour
$900 bullet and stab resistant
Patrol kit
$550 for grooming and training
Working dog kit
$1,000
Canine first aid kit
$180 for field use
Camera system
$5,000 back or chest mounted, B&W camera works in low light
Camera system
$1,000 head mounted, B&W low grade
Camera system FIDO
$15,000 head mounted, colour with handler colour monitor

TOTAL ADDITIONAL
$3,000 to $18,000

Anti-poaching dogs at work – some success stories

KENYA

In June 2009, a tracker dog unit was introduced in the Mara Triangle at the Ngiro-are Outpost, near the Tanzanian border. Poaching for the commercial bushmeat trade, indiscriminate killings using illegal snares and hunting with spears and bows and arrows was decimating the wildlife. Cattle theft by rustlers from across the border was also serious. Effective protection required the arrest of all individuals in a poaching gang. The dog unit, now with six bloodhounds, has led to a higher success rate in arrests making poaching and rustling a less viable source of income.

Two ivory and firearms detection dogs have been introduced to inspect incoming and outgoing vehicles for contraband.





PHOTOS BY: LINDA PORTER/CANINE TRAINING ACADEMY

LEFT: Tracking in the Mara Triangle.
RIGHT: Mara Triangle bloodhound and handler.

TANZANIA

Big Life tracker dogs are the first to be used in Tanzania for wildlife conservation and have been a great success. A patrol team found a rhino trail littered with cable snares that had been set the day before. The ground in the area was mainly lava rock and impossible for conventional tracking so the dogs were bought in. Four hours later, the dogs led the rangers to a small hut on a farm. On searching the hut, the rangers found more snares, poisoned arrows and a gin trap. This single operation would have saved many animals.

In another incident, the Chief Park Warden of Tarangire National Park called for support after an elephant had been shot and the park terrain made it difficult to follow the poachers tracks. The dog team arrived in the late afternoon and set off on the trail, which wound in and out of the park, through a village and back again. The scent was lost when a large herd of cattle crossed the path of the poachers' tracks.

Next morning the dogs set off with a new strategy to pass by every village and, through a process of elimination, reduce the possible options. In each village, young men were lined up and the dogs "interrogated" them via scenting, one by one. In the town of Makuyuni, the scent was picked up again but the tracks disappeared where the poachers had boarded a car. Within half an hour, a vehicle was intercepted with three men not from the area. The dogs were called in for another line-up and picked out the men.





PHOTO BY: JEREMY GOSS/BIG LIFE FOUNDATION



PHOTOS BY: COLLEEN HOGG-PHOTOGRAPHY4LIFE/BIG LIFE FOUNDATION

TOP LEFT: Rocky on a track.
TOP RIGHT: Dog tracking.
BELOW: The Dog unit.

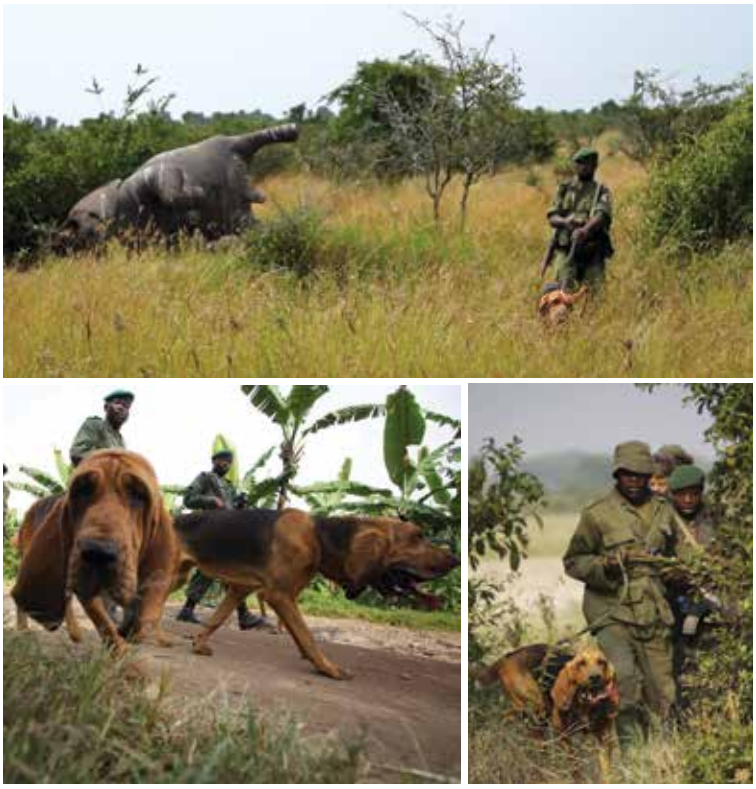
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Virunga National Park, a Unesco World Heritage site in the war-torn eastern region of DR Congo, is home to gorillas, chimpanzees, okapi, forest elephants and buffalo, among other wildlife. Poaching of elephants has been a particular problem.

To assist the ranger team, a bloodhound programme has been introduced with the help of a specialised Swiss centre and volunteers from the German police. The Virunga habitat presents special challenges to bloodhounds in terms of following scents across streams, rivers, and through dense, thorny vegetation, and biting insects.

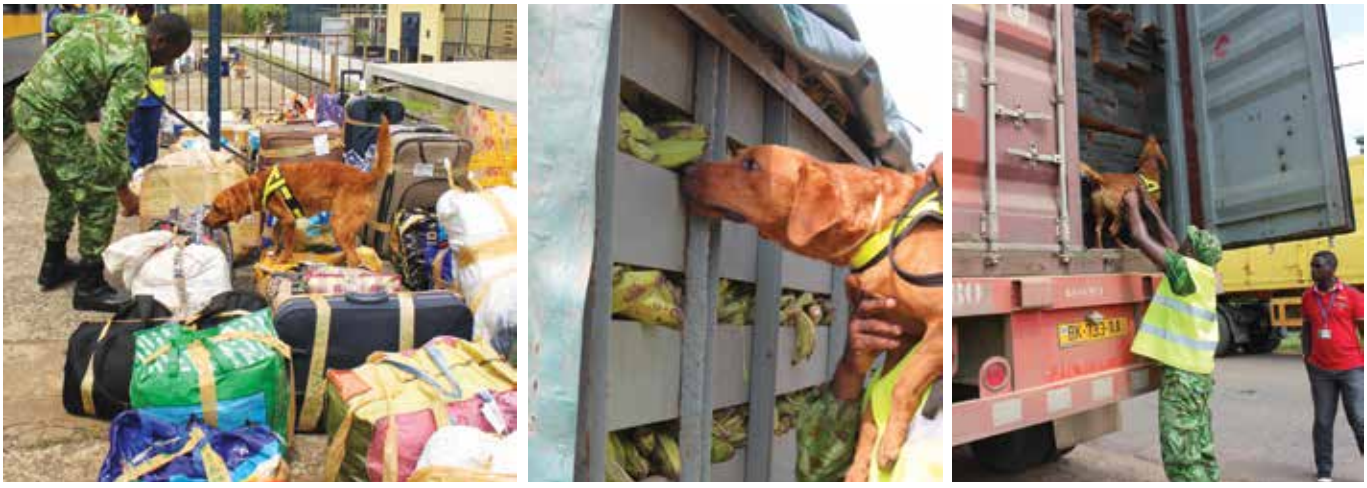
The 'Congohounds Project' has so far resulted in five teams of a handler and dog receiving intensive training for over a year. In one incident, rangers found a poached elephant and two dog teams were deployed to the scene by helicopter. They tracked the poachers scent for seven kilometres to a small fishing village and found the culprits who fled leaving their weapons behind.

Two Springer Spaniels have also been introduced and trained to detect ivory when checking vehicles, buildings or areas. Apart from its anti-poaching work, the programme will greatly improve the ability to find lost and critically injured rangers, many of whom have died needlessly awaiting help.



PHOTOS BY: VIRUNGA.ORG

TOP: congohounds against elephant poaching.
BELOW LEFT: Congohounds on patrol.
BELOW RIGHT: Congohound Lulimbi.



PHOTOS BY: RUTH STARKEY/WCS&ANPN

GABON

Having lost 30% of their forest elephants to poachers, the Gabonese National Park Agency (Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN) along with the Ministry of Water and Forests (MINEF) and Wildlife Conservation Society funded a feasibility study on the effectiveness of using search dogs to detect poached items.

In 2013, a newly formed team started work. The dogs are trained to detect ivory, pangolin scale, leopard skin, shark fin, and iboga tree products and bush meat, with other scents being added as the need arises. They search luggage at the international airport and do checks at the train station, they sniff containers at the city port and they are deployed at roadblocks, picking up scents inside vehicles.

The dogs have been a major success making finds of ivory in checked-in luggage, pangolin hidden inside a truck, several sacks of shark fin hidden within other fish products and large hauls of illegal bush meat from a railway station, and on a road check point.

LEFT: Searching baggage at a railway station.

MIDDLE: Searching vehicles at a roadblock.

RIGHT: Searching a container.

MOUNTAIN LODGE

Serena standards of comfort on the slopes of Mount Kenya

BY ANDY HILL

They sat in the bar area at the close of day, ticking off triumphs from a computer-generated printout read out by their guide. "Number 27, Hartlaub's Turaco. Number 28, Moustached Green Tinkerbird. Anyone get 29 – Oriole Finch?"

This avian bingo was conducted by Markus Wije from South Africa, leading a party of that rare species in Kenya these days – tourists – on a birding safari which included Mountain Lodge and its wonderful Mount Kenya Forest setting.

"We've been bringing people here for years as part of a Kenya tour. You get different species up here so we mix this with other destinations, the Mara, Samburu, Nakuru. It's a great place this," he said. He works with Rockjumpers Worldwide Birding Adventures, which is based in South Africa. Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda are key destinations in its portfolio but it also offers trips to the Antarctic, Galapagos Islands and Mongolia and other exotic locales.

To figure in such company speaks volumes for the wealth of birdlife that lives or passes through a location only 150 km from Nairobi and all of it on good tarmac. Birding is a key attraction offered at Serena's Mountain Lodge, a 41-bed wooden structure overlooking its own salt lick/water hole deep in Mount Kenya National Park and its dense, mysterious forests of indigenous trees.

The park has six of the eight Kenya Mountains Endemic Bird Areas and 54 of the 70 Afrotropical Highlands biome species that occur in Kenya. Bird walks and walking safaris are the favoured viewing mode. Mountain Lodge is a long way from Lamu or the border with Somalia but it has suffered as much as anywhere from the American and British travel advisories against coming to Kenya because of insecurity.

"The travel advisories, the general insecurity since Westgate, it has hit us," says Kathurima Mburugu, the manager. "That and Ebola. Occupancy is low but we are out there actively pursuing the local market."

The British travel advisory was relaxed in July, lifting the warnings about travel to the South Coast, but it remains to be seen if that will relieve the tourism industry, which is reported to have lost as many as 40,000 jobs because of foreign perceptions of Kenya being insecure.

Those advisories never included Mount Kenya, but they hit tourism nonetheless, They did not, and do not,



PHOTO COURTESY OF SERENA MOUNTAIN LODGE



PHOTOS BY: ANDY HILL





EAWLS LIBRARY

TOP: The tree nursery in the grounds of Mountain Lodge.

INSERT: The Editor (Middle) and guests Alberto and Francis Borges plant a tree.

BELOW LEFT: Sulky buffalo checks out humans watching from the viewing platform.

BELOW RIGHT: The Hartlaub's Turaco, one of a wealth of species that attract bird-lovers from near and far to Mountain Lodge.

however deter the many birding groups that routinely include the Lodge in their brochures.

Fittingly for such a location, the lodge's key conservation activity is trees – to date it has planted 2.5 million seedlings to counter the afforestation on Mount Kenya.

But it doesn't stop there. Seedlings are offered free to local communities and schools and, critically, are part of a government scheme to reforest the Mount Kenya slopes while providing income for local people.

This is the *Plantation Establishment and Livelihood Improvement Scheme* (PELIS) of the Kenya Forest Service. Under it, locals are given land on which to plant but are not allowed to build structures.

Under a previous scheme the margins of the park became makeshift homes and semi-permanent settlement, but these have gone now and Serena is part of ensuring that people can grow trees for cash timber.

"We've a nursery here – a whole tree department infact – and we have given out 20,000 seedlings for this rainy season and will give out another 40,000 when the November rains come," says Mburugu

"And you can see yourself that there is nothing on the edges of the park except trees and crops growing. It is beautiful again."

Serena has championed tree planting at all its lodges and it is a major part of the group's conservation credentials. But that's not the reason that people come to Mountain Lodge. It's a small (41-bed) establishment in hundreds of acres of space and has the intimate feel of being part of the surroundings. It has the Serena's high standards of comfort and cooking too. All





rooms overlook the salt lick and there are long and comfortable viewing balconies offering that unique African experience of cocktails and wildlife. I was unlucky not to see the two leopards listed in the game book but enjoyed the interplay of the marauding hyena, sulky buffalo and the many species of buck and gazelle wandering about.

Kenyans enjoy it too. "We've a good record on local tourism and can be very competitive on rates. We were booked solid at Christmas, Easter and Valentines and are making a good start of the conferencing market," Mburugu explains.

The Lodge has seven fly fishing outfits for guests, should they want to try a fly in the chilly waters of the Sagana river, which runs through the grounds. There is fishing above and below a state trout hatchery there, and willing hatchery escapees.

Benson Maina, the Mountain Lodge Naturalist, demonstrated that he is not just good at bird spotting – he has learned to imitate a host of birds to help locate them for clients – but can throw a good fly line too.

"Quite a lot of guests want to try fly fishing and there are several rivers where we can take them. But most people come here for the birds and the animals, and they are extraordinary."

Rare for a forest lodge, this one even has a fully fitted conference room with projector, film screen, breakout rooms and all the facilities you could find in a downtown Nairobi venue.

But you'd be missing a lot if you held your workshop there, especially in the after-dinner department.

Is there another place where you can conference all day and then, glass in hand, buffalo on the ground, watch a Verreaux Eagle Owl swoop like a ghost from a perch overlooking the water hole, grab a morsel from the air and fly back to it's perch?

TOP: Lodge naturalist Benson Maina casts for trout in the Sagana river. The lodge caters for fly fishers and has seven rods.

BELOW: Serena comfort and Kenya's wildlife forest charm in one room with a view.

The SWARA editor's visit was facilitated by Serena Hotels

For more details contact: www.serenahotels.com

Rooted in Kenya's natural past and future – Serena's Bob Oguya

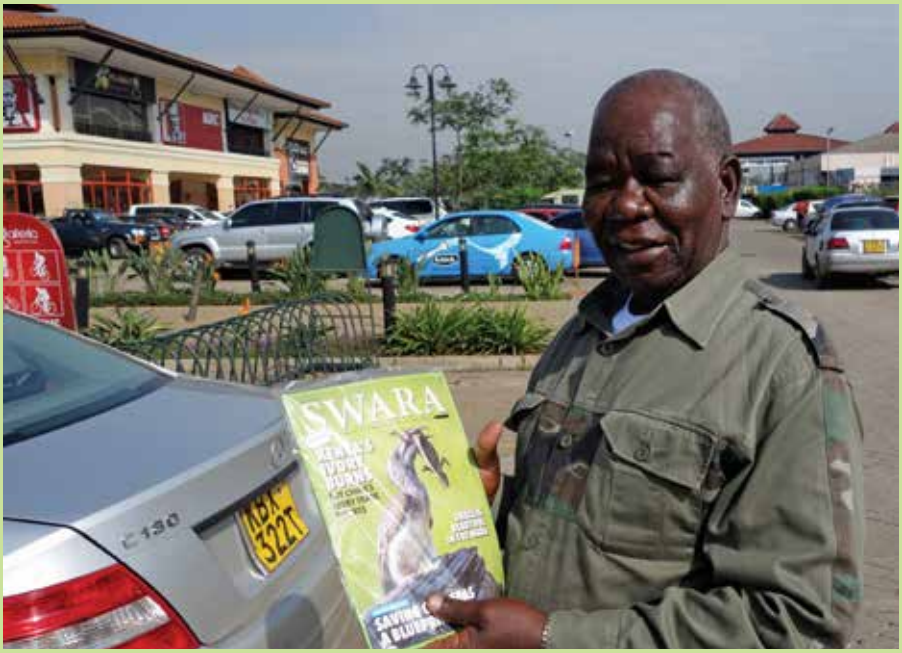


PHOTO BY: ANDY HILL

His CV reads like a travel guide to Kenya. For 21 years he worked in the country's premier game parks – Tsavo West, Nairobi National Park, Shimba Hills, Amboseli, Meru. He even opened Kisite Mpunguti Marine Park at Shimoni.

Then came retirement when the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) was established. At the tender age of 42 he went home to Kisumu and did very little, apart from some voluntary work for the East African Wild Life Society.

Fate and finance intervened. He went to an AGM of the Serena Group in Nairobi and bumped into its current CEO, Jan Mohammed, whom he had known from work days. He said: "What are you doing these days Bob?"

The answer was precious little so Oguya was hired to head the Serena group's Naturalist and Environment office, which Oguya heads to this day. Every Lodge in the Serena group has its own naturalist, something the CEO wanted.

"In those days, when I was hired, game drivers did just that. They drove you. That changed. Now we want drivers who are proper guides. It's not enough to say: 'This is an Elephant.' That day is long gone."

"People want more today. So our guides will help you learn about animals, birds, trees and plants, too, both their medicinal and commercial value. We want our clients to go home knowing much more than they came with, and liking it more."

The drive/guide approach was replicated in an enlightened programme of conservation through all the group's lodges in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, involving both clients and the communities. Tree planting is now carried out throughout the group's establishments.

But a programme that catches the hearts and minds of the clients, as well as putting money back into the community, is the turtle-rearing project centred along the coast and around Serena's flagship beach hotel near Mombasa.

Serena pays fishermen for the turtle eggs they find on the beaches and works with Bamburi Portland cement, which has its own wildlife park, to hatch the turtles. These are then released to the sea and guests can sponsor them.

"This came about because we realised that turtles were breeding where we built the hotel and roundabout, and we had to do something. Local people were very enthusiastic too. They get paid for helping in conservation."

There is a butterfly farm too specialising in collecting the 250 local species and breeding them for release into the wild. Something approaching 200 of those species have been successfully reared.

Oguya's face is animated and beams when he talks about successful programmes, or the hiring of Serena naturalists such as Mountain Lodge's Benson Maina.

"We normally hire university graduates but Benson was already a community leader, self-driven and a believer in conservation. He's done an amazing job for us.

But his face tells a sad and different story when it comes to 21st century challenges.

"It breaks my heart to be at Kilaguni Lodge (in Tsavo) and see so few guests. It breaks my heart to hear of all the people losing their jobs because of the tourism slump."

And he fears for the future unless there is concerted and coordinated action against what he sees as the three main challenges.

"Firstly there is he population explosion. Then there is poaching. I think we need far, far more foot patrols. You cannot fight these people from vehicles."

"And finally corruption. It's become part of our national fabric, part of our lives. But if we don't address these challenges, we will all go down together and the wildlife with it."

The Kinge-Wirth Family



Felix Patton is a rhino ecologist, who writes about the species from Africa and Europe. He has an MSc in Conservation Biology and a PhD based on research on individual rhino identification and social behaviour. He is a frequent contributor to SWARA.

It is not often that you can find eight members of a family all involved in wildlife conservation but this is the claim of the Kinge-Wirths. Father, mother, daughter, two sisters, two brothers and a cousin are all playing their part principally in the Kenyan conservation project Rhino Watch.

Kendy Kinge Wirth is the focal point of the Wirth family. Kenyan-born and brought up in Meru, Kendy spent many weekends at Nairobi National Park and the Animal Orphanage so grew up knowing and loving wildlife. After finishing school, Kendy moved to Nairobi to study for a Diploma in Tourism and Travel after which she worked as a tour guide but, with an independent spirit, she always wanted to be her own boss so established a curio shop in Mombasa. It was here, in 2001, she met Frank Wirth, a German filmmaker, who, on their first meeting, offered Kendy a chance to work in conservation that was to change her life.

Frank was making a film for German television and needed a Swahili-speaking assistant. Seeing something special in Kendy, he employed her on a 'pay per day' basis. Kendy says "it sounded like a real adventure with no strings attached and too good to miss so I said yes!" The new team worked well together and Kendy went on to work with Frank in Germany and on Frank's filmmaking and tourism projects in Portugal and Argentina where whales, not rhinos, were the key feature.



PHOTO BY: FELIX PATTON

TOP: Kendy, Maisha and Frank – the Wirth family.

BELOW: Frank filming penguins.

Frank Wirth has a love for sea mammals and their conservation. Having undertaken a scuba diving course in Diani, Kenya while in the German army, Frank decided to satisfy his love of travel and adventure by becoming a scuba diving instructor, working in Belize and the Galapagos Islands. This was his first experience of marine mammals and led him to develop an interest in under and above water photography.

During a tourist visit to the sperm whales of the Portuguese Azores in 1993, Frank decided to start a diving school there and it was here that he had his first taste of conservation. Fishermen were killing sea mammals, the very resource needed for tourism. As Frank puts it, "I wanted to see animals alive in the water and not dead in fishing



PHOTO BY: F. WIRTH

PHOTOS BY: BETTINA KELM





nets". At the time, the Azoreans were still eating (illegally) dolphin meat and their mindset needed to be changed. Frank employed local watchers to help guide boats to the whales and local skippers for the boats so the community earned income from the tourism trade. Today, the Azores marine mammal tourist industry is booming with whales, dolphins, sharks and Mobula rays the main attraction. "It has taken some 20 years to turn killing into saving and the whole economy has benefitted" says Frank.

Frank researched more marine mammal watching locations. For the southern right whales, Patagonia (Argentina) was ideal and also offered the opportunity to encounter penguins, seals, sea lions and dolphins and a variety of sea birds. At Patagonia and the Azores, conservation education has played as important a role as tourism.

As Frank's guiding businesses and contacts increased, so did his local knowledge and this led to film companies contacting him for information on the best locations and logistics and led him to organising film shoots. He has since acted as Line Producer for over 15 films including a 3D movie with Jean-Michel Cousteau the French explorer, environmentalist, educator, and film producer and first son of ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau.

As Frank and Kendy worked together on the businesses so their relationship changed and, in 2003, they married and, soon after, came their daughter Maisha. With Kendy being responsible for the management of the clients and their self-contained accommodation in the Azores, Maisha got her first taste of travel before she was a year old! By the time she was eleven years old, Maisha was an experienced diver and, by diving among the sharks, she was able to show the local people that sharks were not so dangerous and should be protected and not killed. "I find animals are interesting and fun" says Maisha "and I really like being involved with people like the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and their Orphans Project where elephants are being taught how to cope with being put back into the wild".

Not to be outdone by her parents' involvement in conservation, Maisha became a Climate Justice Ambassador in Kenya for the organisation "Plant-for-the-Planet", a global movement with the goal of fighting the climate crisis by planting trees around the world. By organising "academies" children find out about the problems of climate change with more experienced children spreading their knowledge to other children. Training is given to enable children to give lectures to, and inspire, other children as well as adults. At its heart is a tree planting ceremony with the goal of planting a billion trees worldwide.

The Wirth family sponsored the first Kenyan academy in 2011 and over 20,000 trees have now been planted around Rhino Watch Lodge, the Kinge-Wirth family's principle conservation initiative in Kenya.

With a Kenyan wife and Kenyan daughter, it was clear to Frank that they needed a Kenyan base. It was also clear to Frank and Kendy that many of their marine mammal guests were interested in land mammal safaris if these could be offered. The climate in central Kenya is particularly suitable for Europeans and so they set about searching the Laipikia plateau for a good site for a Lodge coupled with an appropriate conservation theme. This they found with the rhinos at Solio Game Reserve and a wonderful hillside location some five kilometres from its main gate. So it was, in 2007, the construction

TOP LEFT: receiving David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust elephant certificate.

TOP RIGHT: promoting Kenya tourism at ITB Berlin.

BELOW: The three sisters Grace, Kendy and Miriam.

PHOTO BY: FELIX PATTON



PHOTOS BY: F WIRTH



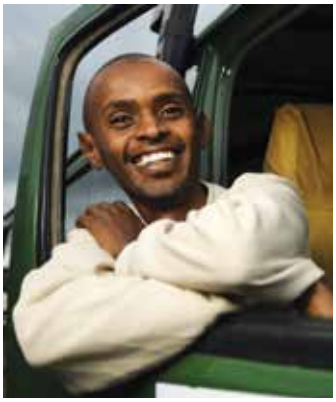




PHOTO BY: FELIX PATTON

work began and the doors to Rhino Watch Safari Lodge were first opened to guests in 2010.

Kendy is the General Manager and handles reservations and marketing, with her extended family also closely involved in the running of the Lodge. Miriam Kinge is one of Kendy's two sisters. Miriam manages operations and guest relations having joined the business with a background in sales and marketing. She is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Lodge and values the job as, as she says, "we have a cause behind what we do, a purpose which is more than just working".

Grace Kinge, Kendy's other sister, is a certified accountant who works for the government. On days off and weekends she can be found at the Lodge looking through the books to give advice on stock and financial management.

With an International Diploma in Food Production, Kendy's brother David carries responsibility for all the Lodge's food and beverages while also producing some of the specialities as lead chef.

Second brother Moses Kinge is head driver/guide. His passion for wildlife conservation is clear as he expresses the reason for his love for nature as "I do what I do in order that my children and their children will see animals in the wild and not just in pictures if they become extinct. I want them to enjoy and experience what I do". Moses has attended several courses in wildlife and was an assistant tour guide with a leading Kenyan tour operator before joining Rhino Watch.

Working alongside Moses as a driver/guide is his cousin Aaron Koome who joined Rhino Watch after completing a Diploma in Tour Guiding and Administration at the Kenya Utalii College in Nairobi. Aaron claims a love of animals, travelling and spirit of adventure.

In 2014, following significant poaching of rhinos in Kenya and Africa wide, Rhino Watch launched a "Rhino Awareness and Protection" conservation programme. At the heart of the programme is the need for education particularly of children about the wildlife and the problems of poaching. Maisha, as a Rhino Awareness Ambassador, will be involved in those programmes designed for children and families. In addition, using funds raised by tourists attending 'rhino camps', teachers are to be employed to deliver lessons on rhino and other wildlife conservation at schools in the local area. Classes would also be offered the opportunity to sponsor an individual rhino and would be taken to visit it and, if new born, give a name to it so as to form an emotional connection.

TOP LEFT: David checking the daily menu.

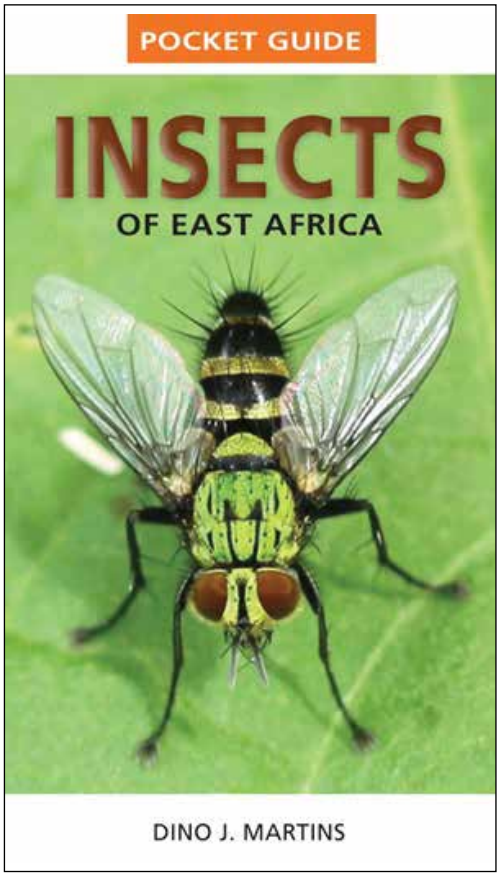
TOP MIDDLE: Moses in his vehicle.

TOP RIGHT: Frank Wirth teaching daughter Maisha.

The 'Rhino Camps' are tourist safaris with a strong educational basis. While guests visit a number of wildlife facilities around Rhino Watch Lodge, they also gain an in-depth understanding of the issues and problems associated with managing a rhino sanctuary and in conserving rhinos.

The conservation story does not end here. A first whale safari in the Norwegian fjords has been completed and Frank has already surveyed a site in the Simien Mountains of Ethiopia for what would be the highest Lodge in Africa with the rare Walya Ibex, Ethiopian wolf and Gelada baboon set in stunning landscape. Such a venture would provide a livelihood for the local community who could then abandon farming which is currently pushing out the wildlife.

The foundation of all the Kinge-Wirth family's work in conservation is summed up by Frank "It is important to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism and to create a platform for research and nature and wildlife conservation. We must engage and educate our children because they have the chance to transform the future of our planet".



Series: Pocket Guide
Paperback: 160 pages
Publisher: Penguin Random House South Africa (May 15, 2015)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1770078940
ISBN-13: 978-1770078949

East Africa is a wonderful region and continues to provide a diligent naturalist with regular discoveries. There is nothing mundane about our natural history, and in recent years we have been so fortunate to have a whole series of publications covering the "lesser fauna." Gone too are the days when interests in mammals, and more recently birds of the region were considered acceptable, but anything else was just a bit eccentric.

Now Dino has made available ready identification for representatives of the entire regional insect fauna. You may think that your interests do not extend to this lower level of natural history appreciation, but I guarantee by purchasing this small book that is so crammed with information you will find yourself wanting to know what group of wasps are feeding on the flower blossom, or the somewhat gruesome insect perched on a stem whilst gorging on an insect, as a Robber-Fly drains the body juices of its victim.

When I first looked at the book, I flicked through the pages as is normal, and there were periods of instant recognition as I thought I have seen that and that, but I did not know what it was called. The very next morning I went out into out paddock with my camera and took numerous images. When I downloaded them I was able to isolate everything into a species group using this miniature masterpiece.

It is called a Pocket Book, and it is exactly that and yet the coverage contained in the pages is quite amazing. Obviously for the large groups such as butterflies and moths and dragonflies the coverage is not comprehensive, but it does give some idea of what group they are, and where to start looking in a dedicated publication for these groups. Until now, we have had not anything regional that has helped us with varied orders covering grasshoppers, flies, ants or beetles and now we have. It may seem rather "over the top" describing a Copper-tailed Blowfly as beautiful, but wait until you appreciate one in good light and see how the stunning iridescent rainbow colours compete with even sunbirds!

The introduction gives an overview of how insects have such an impact on our lives, from food production, food destruction and disease. There are some amazing statistics in this section that bring home the importance roles that insects play in their beneficial work, that without them mankind would find it difficult to survive, but I will let you find out these details yourselves. The simple-to-understand format explains the classification of insects within the animal kingdom and their Anatomy.

As is usual in a Struik Natural History publication, there is a very informative "How to use this Book" which explains the layout format, and there is a glossary of terms used in the back of the book after the main species selection.

All in all this is a superb piece of work, and Dino must be congratulated in bringing what is virtually a whole new world of discovery to our doors.

With the immense field covered it is not possible to cite ommissions,

in fact my only "critter-cism" would be the cover. I can't help feeling that the fly on the cover, could possibly deter some individuals with a curiosity and maybe something more spectacular such as an adult Milkweed Locust with wing cases raised revealing the intense chequerboard pattern of crimson and black might have had a bigger draw, enticing people to open the pages to see what is inside.

However with the publishers recommended retail price of 130 Rand, (very close to Ksh1000), this is a remarkable value for money, that opens up your eyes to an amazing and overlooked fauna.

Reviewed by Brian Finch





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- Kiboko Luxury Camp, Masai Mara
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