

OCTOBER - DECEMBER | 2020

SWARA



THE EAST AFRICAN
WILDLIFE SOCIETY

THE VOICE OF CONSERVATION IN EAST AFRICA



—
WILDLIFE
PHOTOGRAPHER
FEDERICO
VERONESI
—

CONSERVATION
BARK
THAT
BITES

OXPECKERS
SAINTS OR
SINNERS?

WILDFLOWERS
of NAIROBI'S
GIRAFFE
SANCTUARY

MAHALE
A GREAT APE ESCAPE



You can also
overprint on
our calendars!



Our 2021 wall and desk calendars as well as season's greetings cards will soon be available!

Boost your brand visibility by printing your 2020 calendars with us. You will benefit from our huge selection of wildlife photographs taken by some of East Africa's top wildlife photographers. Give us your contacts/details and leave the rest to us!

Place your order today!



+254 20 3874145 / 20 3871437
+254 20 3871335 / 20 3870837



+254 722 202 473 / 734 600632



info@eawildlife.org

Join the Forest Challenge 2020 Virtual Edition today!

How to participate

1 Join the Corporate Tree Challenge

Post a tree campaign e-poster with your company's logo and tree pledge on your Facebook, Twitter or Instagram page with the hashtag #ForestChallenge2020 and tag @eawildlife. Ask your followers to like your poster and stand a chance to win the Forest Challenge 2020 Virtual Champion Award!

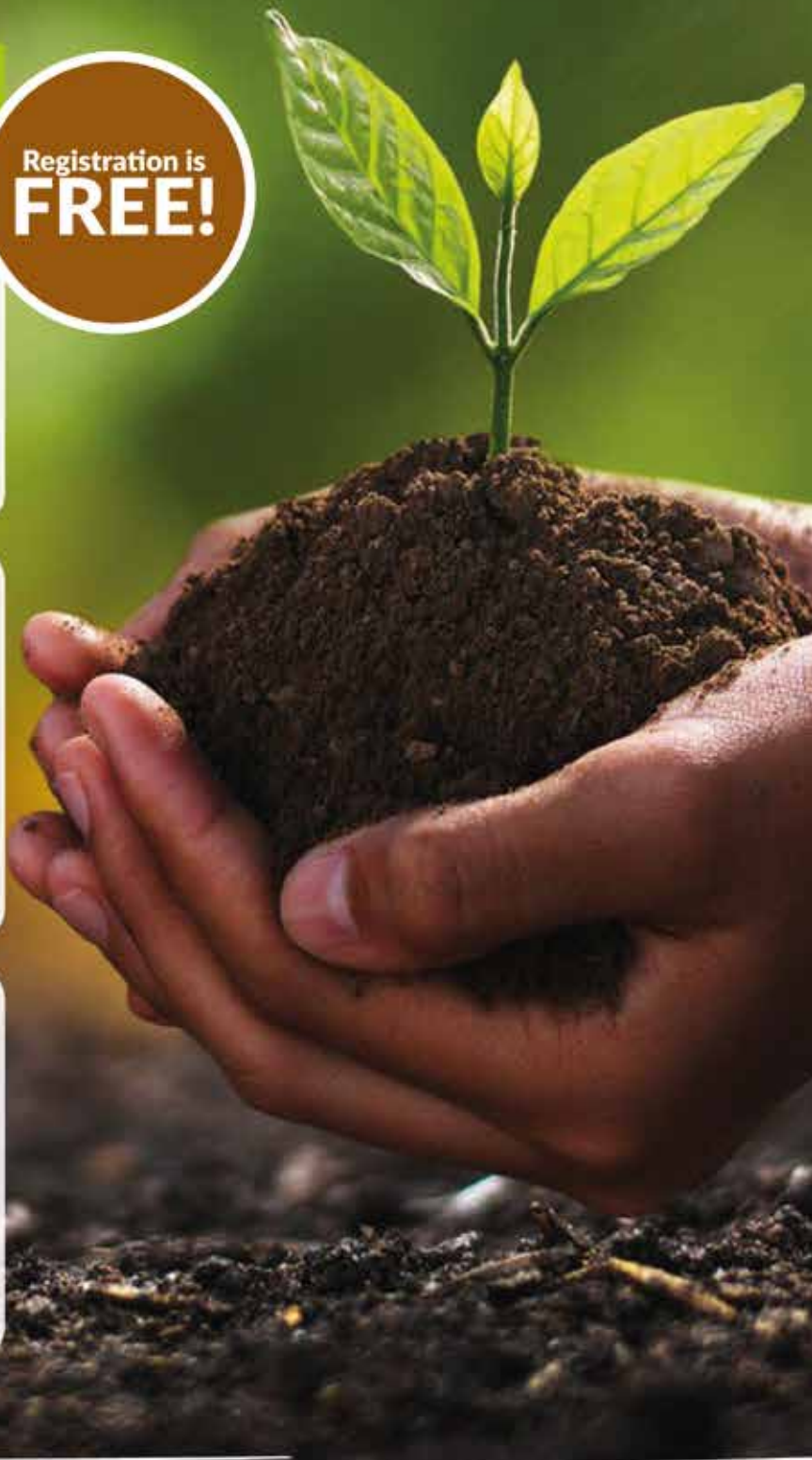
2 Join the Snap Share & Win Tree Photo Challenge

Upload a photograph of a tree, a tree selfie or group photo with tree/s and a caption. Tag @eawildlife on your social media page with #ForestChallenge2020. Persuade your friends to like your photo and stand a chance to win a prize.

3 Join the One-Dollar-One-Tree Seedling Initiative

For every 1 US dollar you invest in our tree nurseries, we will nurture an indigenous tree seedling. The more seedlings you support the more chances you have to win the Forest Challenge 2020 Outstanding Tree Seedling Nurture Award!

Registration is
FREE!



For more information on how to participate visit our website:
www.forestchallenge.com



CONTENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

OCTOBER - DECEMBER | 2020



37



FRONTLINE

- 05 Director's Letter
- 12 News Update

OPINION

- 16 **Richard Gregory Schmid** explains the traits of an ethical safari guide.

CONSERVATION

- 18 **Kaddu Sebunya** highlights the crucial role of dogs in the fight against illegal wildlife trade.
- 21 **Rupi Mangat** throws light into the negative consequences of the planned damming of Uganda's Murchison Falls.
- 25 **Symon Masiaine ole Ranah** tells the story of the northern Kenya pastoralists championing wildlife conservation.
- 28 **Irene Amoke, Laura Deluca and Alex Dudley** highlight innovative community conservation initiatives thriving despite the pandemic.

BIODIVERSITY

- 31 **Abigail Church** details the variety of wildflowers and wildlife in Nairobi's Giraffe Sanctuary.
- 37 **Rupert Watson** explores the dietary habits of oxpeckers and wonders if the birds are saints or sinners.

PADDOCK DIARIES

- 40 **Brian Finch** reports on the fascinating habits of bats occupying his bedroom.

PORTFOLIO

- 42 **Delta Willis** profiles wildlife photographer Federico Veronesi.

ON SAFARI

- 47 **Sandy Wood** goes on a great escape among apes in southwestern Tanzania's Mahale Mountains.
- 50 **Juliet Barnes** explores Kenya's Soysambu Conservancy on camelback.

BOOK REVIEW

- 52 **Sidney Shema** reviews Rupert Watson's book *Peacocks and Picathartes: Reflections on Africa's Birdlife*.
- 53 **Kari Mutu** appraises *Using our Traditions: A Herbal & Nutritional Guide for Kenyan Families* by Tara Fitzgerald for the Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health.

FILM REVIEW

- 54 **Laura Deluca and Alex Dudley** review *Kifaru*, a film by David Hambridge.

TRIBUTE

- 55 **Alex Bell** pays tribute to her father, Tony Archer (1933-2020), a self-taught naturalist.

ON THE COVER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 45 | NUMBER 4



COVER PHOTO: A CARACAL
BY FEDERICO VERONESI

EDITOR

John Nyaga
swaraeditor@gmail.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

Nigel Hunter
William Pike
Lucy Waruingi
Delta Willis
Irene Amoke

DESIGN & LAYOUT

George Okello

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Rose Chemweno

ADVERTISING & SALES

Gideon Bett

PATRONS

The President of Kenya
The President of Tanzania
The President of Uganda

CHAIRPERSON

Elizabeth Gitari

VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Cissy Walker

HON. TREASURER

Davinder Sikand

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Nancy Ogonje

BOARD MEMBERS

Davinder Sikand
William Pike
Otekat John Emily
Cissy Walker
Matt Walpole
Michael Wamithi
Elizabeth Migongo-Bake

EAWLS MISSION

The East African Wild Life Society is a trailblazing conservation organisation dedicated to helping protect the environment and promoting prudent use of natural resources in the region. The Society carries out its mandate mainly through advocacy, implementing conservation programmes, supporting field research, advancing environmental education, promoting sustainable development and inspiring people through vibrant events on wildlife and environmental conservation.

EAWLS WORLDWIDE REPRESENTATIVES USA

Mr & Mrs Harry Ewell
Financial Representatives
200 Lyell Avenue Spencerport
NY 14559-1839

Grant Winther
867 Tauric Pl. NW Bainbridge Island,
WA 98110

UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

Nigel Winsor
The Old Forge, Brook End, Chadlington,
Oxfordshire. OX7 3NF (01608 676 042)
UK mobile - 07495 469941
nigel@winserdialogue.com

NETHERLANDS

Stichting EAWLS
Ridderhoflaan 37 2396 C J Koudekerk A/D RIJN

SWITZERLAND

Bernhard Sorgen
Erlenweg 30 8302 Kloten

FINLAND, SWEDEN & NORWAY

Roseanna Avento
roseanna.avento@kobe.fi
+358405355405

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: wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/aje


SWARA OFFICES

EAWLS Head Office
P O Box 20110 - 00200,
Riara Road, Kilimani, Nairobi
Tel: + 254-(0) 20-3874145
+ 254 (0) 20 3871437
+ 254 (0) 722 202 473
+ 254 (0) 734 600 632



THE EAST AFRICAN WILD LIFE SOCIETY

The Impala is the symbol of the East African Wild Life Society. SWARA is the Swahili word for Antelope

 The East African Wild Life Society

 @eawildlife

WHY SUPPORT US

East Africa is rich in plant and animal biodiversity. A partnership with the East African Wild Life Society is a great way for individuals and organisations to help conserve the region's iconic species. Your contribution will help restore and safeguard habitats, including forests and wetland ecosystems; protect wildlife and marine life while promoting sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. Nature sustains livelihoods and forms the foundation on which our economies thrive. Your membership offers you tangible benefits and allows you to participate in impactful programmes while benefiting from the visibility that the partnership affords.

Copyright©2020

SWARA is a quarterly magazine owned and published by the East African Wild Life Society, a non-profit organisation formed in 1961. Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of the publishers. No part of this publication may be reproduced by any means whatsoever without the written consent of the editor. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily the official view of the Society. SWARA accepts the information given by contributors as correct.



SWARA appreciates the continued support it receives from Fauna & Flora International

On Wildlife and Plastics

Humanity has in 2020 been rattled by anxiety and uncertainty, thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic. For conservationists and businesses that rely on travel and tourism, the going has been especially rough as a result of movement restrictions across the world.

In Kenya, travel international restrictions were eased in August, but visits to the country's national parks and reserves remain greatly subdued.

It was expected that with the low numbers of visitors, tourists would have "exclusive viewing" of wildlife. That did not, however, happen with many tour operators flouting game-viewing rules. There were reports of visitors being allowed to get out of their vehicles, exposing them to the danger of being mauled or killed by nervous wild animals.

In the Maasai Mara National Reserve, migrating wildebeest faced several challenges this year. Larger numbers of gnus drowned in the Mara River than usual. The reason for this phenomenon remains unknown. The migrating wildebeest also found it hard to climb steep riverbanks. But even as the animals struggled to overcome the challenges, human beings in their usual cavalier attitude to natural phenomenon intervened in one area to exacerbate the wildebeests' problems. Staff in one of the tented camps in the Mara were seen herding the animals back into the river. The apparent lodge stands on the path of the migrating gnu and is, therefore a hindrance to their annual movement from the Serengeti plains in Tanzania to Maasai Mara.

After the public uproar that followed the footage of men shooining wildebeest back into the Mara River to prevent them from rampaging through the tented camp, the government ordered that the lodged camp closed. The matter has ended up in court.

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) carried out an environmental audit of all the 31

camps and lodges in the Mara in 2016 and produced a report that was presented to the County Government of Narok. The report had recommended that county government declare a moratorium on the construction of new camps in Maasai Mara. It was also hoped the county administration would be guided by the report that also advised that camps and lodges in the Reserve comply with environmental guidelines.

The conflict between the staff of a safari lodge and migrating wildebeest is a clear indication of failure to heed the advice in the EAWLS report. The onus is now on the County Government of Narok and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) to take action through the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report and to ensure that the draft Maasai Mara National Reserved Management Plan is completed and implemented.

Plastics

Kenya has made three attempts to ban the use of plastic bags. The first one was the 2007 bid to outlaw the manufacture and import of plastic bags up to 0.03 millimetres in thickness. In 2011, Kenya sought to do away with plastic bags up to 0.06 millimetres in thickness. Both attempts failed.

In 2017, the government announced a ban on "the use, manufacture and importation of all plastic bags used for commercial and household packaging." The ban applies to two categories of bags. The carrier bag "constructed with handles, and with or without gussets" and the flat bag "constructed without handles, and with or without gussets."

That ban took effect August 2017 and Kenyans fully complied with the law. Retailers, including supermarkets, that used to churn out over 8 million polythene bags a year, started issuing reusable bags or requiring customers to bring their



own bags. This practice proceeded well until early 2019 when small clear polythene bags started infiltrating the market. At first, they were used secretly but over time, traders stopped hiding them. Information from some traders revealed that they entered the country from Uganda. This proves that when cross-border policies and laws are not in harmony it is difficult to enforce a ban effectively.

EAWLS has pollution as one of its issues of concern in its new Strategic Plan (2020-2024). We will, therefore, be in the forefront to advocate for harmonization of laws across borders, especially between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, to ensure effective enforcement of the ban on single-use plastics.

Besides, EAWLS will join other Civil Society Organisations, both local and global to counter efforts by a lobby from the petroleum industry in the United States to influence Kenya to water down its legislation against plastic waste in a bid to ensure that the East African country continues to import large quantities of plastic garbage from the US. According to a recent report in the *New York Times*, it is feared that the United States will force Kenya to reverse its ban on single-use plastic in a new trade deal. ●

Nancy Ogonje

Executive Director,
East African Wild Life Society



OGO-LAW
The green brief



President Uhuru Kenyatta Supports Leaders' Pledge for Nature

United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development



"It is known that we will only be able to tackle the interrelated people and nature crises through concerted actions from governments, businesses and civil society.

"As we look forward to ushering in the decade for ecosystem restoration, we must recognize this interconnectedness and set nature on the right path of zero biodiversity loss and promote greener and much more sustainable practices.

"The ambition that the world's political leadership is showing today, is a strong indication that we need to do business differently and therefore place sustainability at the core of our societies and economies.

"We need and we must reset our relationship with nature and secure a resilient carbon-neutral, nature-positive world; and therefore ensure the green recovery agenda is on top of our priorities.

"And it is for this reason that Kenya is proud to endorse the 'Leaders Pledge for Nature' as a sign of our steadfast commitment to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and put nature and our ecosystems, on a path to its recovery by 2030."

Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya



Statement by Civil Society in Conservation



"We unreservedly offer our support to President Uhuru Kenyatta in his effort to fulfil the pledge he made on behalf of the Republic of Kenya at the Leaders Event for Nature and People at the United Nations General Assembly on the 28th of September 2020.

"This year, the super year for biodiversity, has seen great challenges to nature. However, now more than ever, citizens of the world are coming together to defend, support and express commitment to the protection of biodiversity.

"We call on all Kenyans to make a #CitizensPledge for a Decade of Action for Nature, Climate and Youth, to focus on efforts to provide stewardship, protection and restoration of nature. Make a personal commitment to reduce our collective carbon footprint, defend our indigenous forests, restore degraded habitats, reduce the use of plastics and refrain from planet polluting habits.

"We pledge to live our lives and conduct our businesses in a nature-positive, carbon-neutral way and to amplify our impact by sharing this commitment broadly. We commit this in order to achieve zero species extinction by 2030 so that our iconic wild life can be enjoyed by all for generations to come."





YOUR FEEDBACK

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AT
swaraeditor@gmail.com
*We reserve the right to edit as necessary

Dear Editor,

On several recent visits to Murchison Falls National Park in Uganda, I have noticed that some animals, whilst close to the road, stayed put as we drove past at 20-30kph, although the majority moved away. The ones that stayed seem to represent a change in behaviour, which has become more common in recent years.

Here are some examples (with distances in metres from the roadside ditch):

- Olive Baboons just sit in the road
- Elephant 8
- Rothschild's giraffe 10
- Uganda Kob 2
- Jackson's Hartebeest 2
- Oribi 1 whilst sitting on the road
- Defassa waterbuck 12
- Warthog 3
- Spotted hyena 20 whilst walking across the road

I should be interested to know if this apparent habituation to moving vehicles is widespread and has been for some time?

Derek Pomeroy

EAWLS is excited to welcome the following new members

KENYA

MRS CELESTINE KING

UK

ELLA ENDERBY
 ARTHUR JEFFERIES
 HARRY WATTON
 TIMMY CRITCHLEY
 JOHN CORKINDALE

USA

MARK HALPERN
 OLIVER SHIELDS
 HOWARD OCONNOR

UGANDA

ESABU GABRIEL
 BARBARA AMESO

Become a Member

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) is the oldest conservation organisation in East Africa working towards enhancing the conservation and wise use of the environment and natural resources for the benefits of current and future generations. By supporting EAWLS, you will be supporting our conservation and advocacy teams' mission to safeguard, protect and conserve the habitat and wildlife. As a member of EAWLS you will be part of an organisation that uses its experience, influence, reputation and respected voice to ensure that there is sound governance of our natural heritage for the good of all.

Categories of Membership & Annual Rates

EAWLS Membership is available for both corporates and individuals and we have special rates for families and students. As a member of EAWLS you are entitled to free copies of the Swara Magazine and discounted rates on events and merchandise. The different categories of membership have different annual rates.

For more information visit: www.eawildlife.org or write to our membership officer at Rose.chemweno@eawildlife.org
Mobile: +254 (0) 722 202 473 / +254 (0) 734 600632
Tel: +254 20 3874145 / +254 20 3871437



Please make me a member of the EAST AFRICAN WILD LIFE SOCIETY today and send me copies of SWARA magazine every quarter
My Membership category: (Tick box)

Corporate Bronze Silver Gold Platinum Individual Bronze Silver Gold Platinum Student

My location: _____ Country: _____

Name (Please print) _____ Address: _____

Email: _____ Postal code: _____

Enclosed is my cheque for _____ made payable to the EAST AFRICAN WILD LIFE SOCIETY
 Please debit my credit card for _____ VISA MASTERCARD *CARD CODE!!

No.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Expiry date: _____

Tel: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____

*Please quote seven (7) digit security number at the back of your card
FOR ONLINE PAYMENTS: Use this link: www.eawildlife.org/join/payonline
MPESA: Pay bill Number: 502300, Enter "NEW" for new members under the account number on the paybill option
Cheques: Be made payable to: East African Wild Life Society

PLATINUM

CORPORATE MEMBERS



SAFARI DISCOUNTS



Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: Reservations@elkaramalodge.com



Sunworld Safaris
www.sunworld-safari.com

Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa on: Our 4 wheel drive vehicle hire and Mara bush camp.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: info@sunworldsafaris.com



Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: sales@heritagehotels.co.ke or www.heritage-eastafrika.com



Offers 15% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays.

Booking can be made through: bernard@wildernesslodges.co.ke
www.wildernesslodges.co.ke



Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays.

Booking can be made through: offbeat@africaonline.co.ke
www.offbeatsafaris.com



SERENA HOTELS
SAFARI LODGES • HOTELS • RESORTS

Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays. This is applicable only if booked directly.

Booking can be made through: cro@serena.co.ke
www.serenahotels.com



Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: bookings@maasai.com
www.maasai.com



Offers 10% discount to East African Wild Life Society members only in East Africa.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: info@sunafricahotels.com
www.sunafricahotels.com



Offers 10% discount on Porini camps and Nairobi tented camp to East African Wild Life Society members.

Discounts not valid over Christmas, Easter and Public holidays or when special offers are given.

Booking can be made through: info@gamewatchers.co.ke
www.porini.com

GOLD

CORPORATE MEMBERS

ANGAMA
MARA



ORCA
THE SAFARI COLLECTION
exceptional experiences in east africa



AFRICAN
FUND for
ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE
(KENYA) LTD.

*Since 1983
in
Conservation
Education*

LEWA USA



LEWA
WILDLIFE
CONSERVANCY



Sunworld Safaris
www.sunworld-safari.com



MADISON GROUP

THE
STAR



SERENA HOTELS
SAFARI LODGES • HOTELS • RESORTS

MR & MRS. T DON HIBNER

SOPD
LODGES



KESTREL CAPITAL (EAST AFRICA) LTD



حديقة حيوان العين
AL AIN ZOO



WWF Call for Action

A new report by the conservation group WWF provides unequivocal evidence that nature is unravelling and that humanity's destruction of the environment is having catastrophic impacts not only on wildlife populations but also on human health and all aspects of people's lives. According to this year's *Living Planet Report*, a deep cultural and systemic shift is urgently needed that requires a transition to an economic system that values nature. World leaders must take urgent action to protect and restore nature as the foundation for a healthy society and a thriving economy. It's time to stop and reverse the loss of nature by 2030 and build a carbon-neutral and nature-positive society.



Trust Fund for Coral Reefs Launched

A new first of its kind fund to protect coral reefs was officially launched on the sidelines of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York. The Global Fund for Coral Reefs seeks to raise and invest \$500 million in coral reef conservation over the next 10 years. The Fund, a financial instrument that blends private and public funding, will also support businesses and finance mechanisms that improve the health and sustainability of coral reefs and associated ecosystems while empowering local communities and enterprises.



Poachers arrested

Poaching in Mara North Conservancy (MNC) in Kenya rare but, two suspects were arrested for bushmeat poaching during a joint operation by MNC, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Mara Elephant Project (MEP) rangers. In total, MEP rangers and their partners confiscated a total of 250kg of bushmeat and arrested 11 bushmeat poaching suspects in May alone. Bushmeat is often obtained using snares. In total, rangers removed 74 snares in the second quarter of this year. MEP and KWS also seized a total of 40kg of ivory and arrested one suspect in two separate operations.



Flipflop to Sail across Lake Victoria

Nearly 18 months after the Flipflop made its first historic journey from Lamu, Kenya, to Zanzibar, Tanzania, the world's first 100 per cent recycled plastic sailing boat (dhow) is all set for another historic voyage. This time to Lake Victoria. The Lake Victoria expedition is supported by the governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), French Development Agency (AFD), UN Live and several private sector entities. Over four weeks in early 2021, the Flipflop will sail around Lake Victoria, Africa's largest freshwater lake, highlighting the impact of pollution on the vital ecosystem, and engaging governments, business leaders, community leaders, conservationists, and students on viable solutions for the pollution menace.



UN Biodiversity Summit

Leaders from nearly 150 countries in September addressed the first-ever summit on biodiversity to build political momentum towards the next meeting of the conference of parties for the Convention on Biodiversity (COP15) in Kunming, China next year. The summit was held alongside the UN General Assembly, which for the first time in the history of the annual event, global leaders were not able to meet in person, but virtually with leaders sending recorded video speeches.

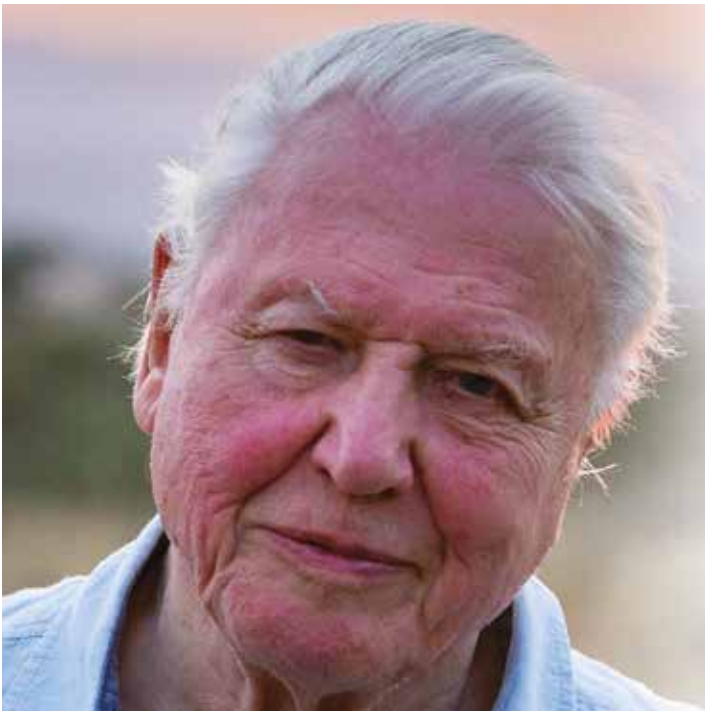
SILVER

CORPORATE MEMBERS



Jostein Nordstrom

Safarilink



**David Attenborough:
A Life On Our Planet**

David Attenborough's feature documentary, *David Attenborough: A Life On Our Planet*, premiered in select theatres in Europe and on Netflix September 28. The film has been described as Attenborough's witness statement for the natural world. It is a unique chance to watch an exclusive conversation between David Attenborough and actor and broadcaster Michael Palin. They share a passion for exploring Earth and a desire to protect it for future generations. In his 94 years, Attenborough has visited every continent on the globe, documenting the living world in all its variety and wonder. In the film, he, for the first time, reflects on both the defining moments of his lifetime as a naturalist, a filmmaker and broadcaster and the devastating changes our planet has gone through over the decades.



Fancy a Foray in the Forest?



The tranquil Retreat Centre in the Kakamega Rain Forest - Kenya's only rain forest - welcomes you to make it your home for a few memorable days, birding or whatever else catches your forest fancies.

+254 733 299 149 / +254 735 894 474 / +254 733 527 702 • rondo@trinityfellowship.or.ke www.rondoretreat.com

BRONZE

CORPORATE MEMBERS

ACACIA ADVENTURE
HOLIDAYS LTD

AFRICAN CONSERVATION CENTRE
AFRICAN QUEST SAFARIS

AFRICAN SAFARI COMPANY

AFRICAN WILD LIFE FOUNDATION

AFRICA HOUSE SAFARIS

AIR TRAVEL AND RELATED

ANNE KENT TAYLOR

ASHNIL HOTELS

ASILIA KENYA LTD

ATUA ENKOP AFRICA LTD

AUTOGRAPH SAFARIS

BARNES D G

BASECAMP EXPLORER

BORANA RANCH

BUSH AND BEYOND

CAMP KENYA LTD

CENTRE FOR WILDLIFE MGT.

STUDIES

CHEMICALS & SOLVENTS (EA) LTD

COTTARS CAMP

CONSERVATION EQUITY LIMITED

DISCOVER KENYA SAFARIS

ELEWANA

EL KARAMA TOURISM &
WILDLIFE LIMITED

FINCH HATTONS LUXURY

TENTED CAMP

FOUR SEASONS SAFARI LODGE
SERENGETI (TZ)

FRIENDS OF MAU WATERSHED
(FOMAWA)

GAMEWATCHERS SAFARIS

GREAT PLAINS

CONSERVATION LTD

HARRY P EWELL

HERITAGE HOTELS

HIGHLIGHT TRAVEL LTD

HILLCREST INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS

HOOPOE ADVENTURE TOURS TZ

IDEAL TOURS AND TRAVEL

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR

ANIMAL WELFARE

JAMES FINLAY (KENYA) LTD

JUJA PREPARATORY SCHOOL

KAREN GABLES

KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE

KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE

INSTITUTE

KER & DOWNEY SAFARIS LTD

KIBO SLOPES SAFARIS LTD

KIBO AFRICA LTD

KICHECHE MARA CAMP

KILIMA CAMP

LAFARGE ECO SYSTEMS

LET'S GO TOURS (SWITZERLAND)

LET'S GO TRAVEL

LLOYD MASIKA LTD

LOISABA CONSERVANCY

MALIBA PHARMACY LIMITED

MAHALI MZURI MANAGEMENT LTD

MARA-MERU CHEETAH PROJECT

MARA CONSERVATION FUND

MASAI MARA WILDLIFE

CONSERVANCIES ASSOCIATION

MICATO SAFARIS

MINET KENYA INSURANCE

BROKERS LTD

MPALA RESEARCH CENTRE

MWEKA COLLEGE OF AFRICA

WILD LIFE MANAGEMENT (TZ)

MUTHAIGA COUNTRY CLUB

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (NEMA)

NAIBOR CAMPS

OFFBEAT SAFARIS LTD

OLONANA

OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY

ORIGINS SAFARIS

PEAK EAST AFRICA LTD

POLLMAN'S TOURS &

SAFARIS LTD

RED LANDS ROSES LTD

ROBIN HURT SAFARIS (K) LTD

RONDO RETREAT CENTRE

SAFE RIDE TOURS AND SAFARIS

LTD SAFARIS UNLIMITED

SARUNI SAFARI CAMP

SATAO CAMP

SATAO ELERAI LIMITED

SEIYA LTD

SOMAK TRAVEL LTD

SOPA LODGES KENYA

SOUTHERN CROSS SAFARIS LTD

SOSIAN LODGE

SIRAI MANAGEMENT LTD

SIRIKOI LTD

SOUTHERN SUN MAYFAIR

NAIROBI

STRATHMORE LAW SCHOOL

SUNRISE OF AFRICA SCHOOL

SWEDISH SCHOOL

TAWI LODGE

TAMARIND MANAGEMENT

UNITED MILLERS LTD

UNGA GROUP LTD

VINTAGE AFRICA LTD

WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL

WILDERNESS LODGES

WILDLIFE SAFARI KENYA

WILLIAMSON TEA (K) LTD

WILDERBEEST TRAVELS LTD



Help us keep the conservation conversation going

Swara Magazine, the journal of the East African Wild Life Society, has championed conservation for over sixty years. We help shape legislation to protect natural resources, galvanize discussion on how best to solve conservation problems and connect networks for advocacy.

Since the onset of Covid-19, advertising revenue for *Swara* has been decimated by lock-downs. The majority of *Swara's* advertising clients in the tourism industry are facing losses and reduced marketing budgets. Print copies help additional sales and can be passed on to young people and schools.

We ask you to help us fill the gap and continue offering our readers essential conservation information.

If you wish to continue supporting us, send your donation via the options below.

Visit our website: www.eawildlife.org



ADVENTURE

Ethical Safari Guiding

Only with knowledge and understanding of ecosystems can guides foster conservation.

BY RICHARD GREGORY SCHMID

Safari guides play an important role in tourism and in advocating for the conservation of nature. That is why their training focuses on the technical aspects of the profession as well as on guest relations. A good guide passes on interesting facts about fauna and flora and tries to impart the knowledge of a local community's culture.

Ethical guiding entails ensuring that correct distances between wild animals and people are maintained. On bush walks, litter is collected for disposal. Game drives follow the tracks so that damage to vegetation is minimized. Many tour companies and guides now realize that new models of tourism are needed because a growing number of tourists expect ecologically and ethically sound tours.

I am of the view that since humans are the visitors, they should avoid behaving like intruders and strive to

ensure that animals are not disturbed. Wildlife tourism should be guided by three principles – knowledge, respect and passion. Only with the knowledge and understanding of ecosystems can guides foster the right attitude to conservation and the respect of nature among their clients.

Often, foreign guests will be visiting Africa for the first time and will probably be overwhelmed by the thrill of a safari, the excursion into the expansive wilderness and the anticipation of coming face to face with wild creatures they would hitherto only have seen on television. They need time to let the impressions sink in. As guides, we have to figure out what clients expect and gauge their feelings.

I recently had an inquiry from a group of photographers whose main interest was taking good wildlife pictures. When I asked them if they were also interested in learning about animal behaviour and ecosystems, they said they were not. I was, however, able to convince them that

their safari would be more fulfilling if they tried to learn something new about the subjects of their photography. This underscores the importance of communication. A tour guide must be able to advise his clients on how to add value to their safari. If I want to bring nature closer to the guests, I have to be a good communicator. This includes being able to give instructions on appropriate behaviour while game viewing.

The job of a tour guide requires patience. In tricky situations, I have to make my guests feel at ease and secure. The latter should be the top priority. Tourists must feel safe and unnecessary risks must be avoided. Essentials include a reliable vehicle and a good driver. Clear rules of engagement and safety apply, especially for walking safaris. If a group is too large, a bushwalk must be split up among several guides or even cancelled if safety cannot be guaranteed. As a rule, the group size, including the guide, should not





LEFT PAGE

A group of tourists in the Maasai Mara guided by the author and a local tour guide.

TOP LEFT

The author with his partner Peter Ekai Lomelo in Maasai Mara.

TOP RIGHT

A morning walk with guests in Samburu National Park.

Walking safaris are also appreciated and are, especially for children, a great way to be introduced to nature.

exceed five people. Guides should keep an eye on the guests and always walk ahead to observe the area, avoid unknown terrain and detect smells and sounds (such as predator presence danger warning sounds from monkeys or birds).

As safari guides, we are challenged in many ways. On the one hand, we work in tourism where economic considerations are central and the aim is to ensure guest enjoyment and satisfaction. On the other hand, we want to explain the animal world and ecosystems to them. This is often a bit of a balancing act, especially as tourists generally want to see large mammals. Smaller animals such as the antlion, rhinoceros beetle, elephant shrew, buffalo weaver, leopard turtle, birds or the importance of plants are often of little interest to the average guest. This, in turn, can put pressure on drivers and guides to show customers the promised “Big Five”. But big cats, especially the leopard, are hard to

find in the wild. I have seen guides drive around frantically until they spot a leopard. A well-trained and ethically honest guide should be able to explain to his or her clients that there are limits to their expectations. One should also not make promises to the guests, such as that the wildebeests might cross the river at a certain point.

I have observed, over time, that the role plants play in sustaining human beings and animals is often ignored in conversations during incursions into the wild. The interregnum between big game viewing and the next thrilling moment in the game parks is a perfect opportunity to explain the ecological role of plants and birds and how climate change could affect ecosystems.

Safari enthusiasts also appreciate being able to make their own discoveries and identify animals. In doing so, they learn to observe interesting facts and experience nature intimately. Walking safaris are also appreciated and are, especially for children, a great way to be introduced to nature. Knowledge can best be conveyed through storytelling in the African bush. In stories, topics such as the various food chains, the ecological role of animals and plants or the protection of endangered

species can be highlighted. As guides, we can draw attention to the importance of tourism for wildlife conservation and also for local communities. Safari guides with an ethical mindset are therefore important ambassadors of African wildlife and for responsible tourism in Kenya and other East African countries.

Finally, the coronavirus crisis will most likely also lead to new challenges and changes in tourism. I hope people will think more about the impact of their activities on nature. People may also not want to travel in large groups with strangers any longer. Physical distancing is difficult to maintain on vehicles. Private safaris in small groups of people, who want to travel sustainably and prudently, could increase. I consider the current challenges an opportunity to focus more on “soft” tourism, embedded in the concept of ethical guiding. ●



RICHARD GREGORY SCHMID is a trained safari guide and photographer. He and a partner in Nairobi run a small safari company, Eco Safari Ltd.



PHOTOS BY: PETER CHIRA

CANINES IN CONSERVATION

The Conservation Bark that Bites

Working in tandem with wildlife authorities, the Canines for Conservation Program deploys “sniffer dogs” to detect illicit wildlife products hidden in cargo or luggage.

BY KADDU SEBUNYA

For decades, man’s best friend has been used to detect drugs, explosives and even lost people. Dogs are built to smell. They have nearly 50 times more scent receptors in their noses than we have, plus a 40-times larger portion of their brain dedicated to smell. Their skills have enabled them to climb the social ladder and become the best of friends not just with man but with the world’s largest mammal - the African elephant.

The demand for ivory has been the greatest driver for ivory, rhino horn and other wildlife products that are smuggled from Africa to markets abroad particularly Asia. With seizures of over 225,000 kilograms of African ivory and over 4,500 African rhino horns in the last 10 years, Asian countries have been the main destination for these products. The question is how are they getting off our

elephants and being transported across the globe? Are law enforcement agencies well equipped to curb the poachers and traffickers?

To address the challenges faced by African law enforcement in detecting and seizing smuggled wildlife products, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) launched its Canines for Conservation Program as one of the tools to fight against the trafficking of wildlife products. The program trains and deploys detection dogs to trafficking chokepoints - airports, seaports, border crossings - to uncover illegal shipments of ivory, rhino horn and other wildlife products.

To date, there are five countries with fully operational canine units: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, Mozambique while others like Cameroon, are at different progress levels of canine unit establishment. A total of 48 dogs were purchased and trained as detection dogs, with 29 deployed and 19 awaiting deployment. Sixty-eight wildlife authority officers were trained on the canine handler

TOP
A KWS ranger (canine handler) with his dog search luggage for wildlife products at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), Nairobi.

2014

African Wildlife Foundation launched Canines for Conservation Program to combat the trafficking of wildlife products.



TOP
Canine handlers from Botswana during graduation ceremony at AWF canine centre in Arusha, Tanzania

Working with wildlife authorities, the Canines for Conservation Program trains and deploys sniffer dogs to sites across Africa.

course, with 62 deployed as canine handlers to date. Some 372 dog finds were recorded as of May 2020. Various dog and handler equipment procured and distributed to the different canine units to help them execute their functions.

As much as most would attribute the sniffer dogs' smell receptors as the main driving force to the success of the Canines for Conservation program, it is not. Hands-on dog-handler training is what stands out. The curriculum focuses on teaching the handlers how to handle, motivate, command and care for their assigned dogs.

Working with wildlife authorities, the Canines for Conservation Program trains and deploys sniffer dogs to sites across Africa.

These canines are specifically trained to detect illicit wildlife products - including ivory, rhino horn and pangolin scales - hidden in cargo or luggage.

Trends of dog finds in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

Corruption has also been an underlying driver that has kept poaching afloat over the years. The fact that dogs are incorruptible has seen an uptake in the number of contraband busts in the region. In the past, the decline of elephant populations was visible but tracking the markets had posed a challenge. Now, researchers and conservationists have been able to map out the hotspots based on where busts are made and are following the money trail.

The illegal syndicates that are running illegal wildlife trade have proven to be doubling in other illicit practices like drug and human trafficking and thus there is a need to synchronize efforts between law enforcement agencies in any given country.

The Canines for Conservation Program is just one step in the right direction to mitigating the trade. There are vital decisions

350+

Illegal wildlife products that have been detected by sniffer dogs at trafficking hotspots in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.



TOP
A canine handler from Cameroon with her working dog during a graduation ceremony.

TOP RIGHT
Canine handler with his dog working at Julius Nyerere international Airport in Dar es Salaam.

BELOW RIGHT
KWS canine handler with her dog searching through luggage in Nairobi.



PHOTO BY: AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



that need to be made on a global scale like closing both domestic and international trade of ivory and rhino horn.

There are no proven benefits of these products and AWF has built on awareness campaigns to the Chinese market by holding successful exhibitions in Beijing and Shanghai educating citizens on the importance of wildlife and the implications of buying ivory.

The decline in the number of busts can only be a good sign if there is a clear correlation with a decline in poaching numbers as well. Where we do not see a decline in numbers and there are no busts, it is easy to deduce that the poachers may have found alternative routes to transport the contraband. It is in this light that AWF seeks to continue expanding the program to areas that are not only hotspots for the trafficking but are transit points within the continent.

At a time where a majority of the world has been pushed to work remotely, our canines alongside their handlers within the Canines for Conservation program have amplified security in regions that have been identified to be highly prone to poaching in Africa. This month, we deployed extra dogs in a bid to continue protecting wildlife that plays an integral part in balancing the ecosystems

within the continent.

The significance of these majestic animals during the Covid-19 pandemic has been downplayed mainly because in a twist of luck, they are not vulnerable to contracting the coronavirus and they are not the cause. However, at AWF, we think of dogs as the Most Valuable Players.

If there is one lesson we need to take from this pandemic, it is the importance of a balanced ecosystem and the need to protect the agents, like the canines and their handlers, who seek to enact this. These dogs are a poacher's worst nightmare and rightfully so. Law enforcement agencies have been working cohesively and now more than ever, nature needs them. As the world seeks more pragmatic solutions to the crisis, we need to acknowledge what has been working and the canines, deserve a standing ovation for their relentless fight against illegal wildlife trade. ●



KADDU K. SEBUNYA is the CEO of African Wildlife Foundation. He has over 20 years' experience in conservation at grassroots, national, and regional levels in the USA, Africa, and Europe.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The Folly Of Damming Murchison Falls

It does not seem to matter to the Ugandan authorities that Murchison Falls is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance.

BY RUPI MANGAT

On a visit in 2017, we enjoyed a leisurely drive to the top of the famous Murchison Falls, dubbed the 'most powerful in the world', on a murram road watching the different species of birds and mammals. En route, we met a road works team that said it was smoothing the road. On a return visit in 2020, the road had been upgraded to a tarmac highway, making it impossible to maintain a slow speed. To top it, the contracted Chinese road construction company had cut down swathes of indigenous trees that once lined the road and was home to the chimpanzees of Budongo Forest, an endangered ape.

I was with a family friend, an 80-year-old woman who, some five decades earlier, had camped in the park. Returning half a century later, she was shocked at the devastation in the park. To add insult to injury, Ugandan authorities plan to build a dam on Murchison Falls.

The government has insisted that it is not damming Murchison Falls but Uhuru Falls. That is laughable because until 1962, the year of Uganda's independence, Uhuru Falls did not even exist.

Many Ugandans suspect that the tarmac road is intended to facilitate oil prospecting activities and to help Bonang Power, a South African company, to do a feasibility study for the proposed dam on Murchison Falls. Bonang Power was formed in 2014, according to its sketchy Facebook page. It applied for a licence in to build a 360MW dam at Uhuru Falls in June 2019.

The little-known Uhuru, which lies in the shadows of its more famous neighbour, came into existence when the Nile burst its banks after heavy rainfall. The flooded river carved out a separate passage a few feet from Murchison Falls. Aerial shots show this phenomena.



PHOTOS BY RUPI MANGAT

TOP LEFT
Abyssinian Ground Hornbills inside Murchison Falls National Park.

TOP RIGHT
Road maintenance in Murchison Fall National Park

BELOW LEFT
Road to the top of Murchison Falls National Park

“We have written to the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) for a copy of the Environmental Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) to inform us whether the road is part of the oil roads,” said Dickens Kamugisha, the current CEO of the Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO). “They, however, have ignored us. Total, the oil company, maintains that it’s not part of the oil roads and it is not a party to it.” Uganda has the approved energy company Total E&P to develop six oilfields in the park.

“So, for now, we do not have any ESIA for the road to see the possible risks,” added Kamugisha, who is also an advocate of the High Court of Uganda and holds a Master of Law degree majoring in Energy Governance from Makerere University. He regularly writes on oil and electricity governance.

“We suspect that the road is to facilitate both the oil activities and to help Bonang to do a feasibility study for the dam. This is the beginning of the curse that will greatly damage biodiversity and nobody will take

responsibility for it in years to come,” said Kamugisha.

Timeline

In 2019, the Ugandan government announced its plans to provide power to its citizens by damming Murchison Falls. A public outcry made the government revise its plans, stating that it was not damming the magnificent Murchison Falls but the less-known Uhuru Falls.

This led to another public protest by investors in tourism, green activists and local communities.

“The Uganda Women’s Birders is not happy about the dam issue,” said Lilian Kamusilime, a member of the group specializing in birding safaris. “Since the road works started many species of birds have disappeared like the three species that were always there to welcome guests to Murchison Falls: the Black and White Casqued Hornbill, the majestic Abyssinian Hornbill and the elegant Saddle-bill Stork, which has the same colours as Uganda’s national colours – red black and yellow.”

In recent years, African governments have been hell-bent on generating power to fast track their Vision 2030 or Vision 2040 development plans. It is mostly at the expense of the environment. The Ugandan government wants to boost the country’s electricity supply to the national grid from 26 per cent to 80 per cent in 20 years. According to the government, the demand is growing at 10 per cent per year.

Already, 80 per cent of Uganda’s electricity is generated on rivers, gobbling waterfalls like Karuma that once boasted a stunning cascade at the edge of Murchison Falls National Park. There are plans for more dams similar to the 840-megawatt plant inside the park that could become the country’s largest hydro energy park.

“If it’s a question for providing power to Ugandans, there are other sources to tap into,” said s Kamusilime. “But if the tarmac

roads continue to be constructed and the dam built, we may as well change Murchison Falls National Park to Murchison Highway National Park.”

“The government wants to swap the iconic falls for a dam that has no market and is too expensive for the citizens to afford. Even the president knows that we currently earn over \$1.6 billion from tourism and it’s the iconic features such as Murchison Falls that attract tourists.”

Murchison Falls and Budongo Forest ecosystems have an economic value of over \$60 billion, compared to the \$2 billion per year from oil for 20 to 30 years that the Ugandan government estimates it will earn.

“Electricity and oil cannot be compared to the biodiversity value of the Murchison Falls National Park and Bugondo Forest,” reads a petition submitted to the government by opponents of the dam.

Kamugisha added: “I still believe that with pressure from the consortium of organisations against the project, the dam plan may fail even when the feasibility study is completed. But the huge roads with no ESIA [have] done [their] damage.”

Already, 80 per cent of Uganda’s electricity is generated on rivers, gobbling waterfalls like Karuma that once boasted a stunning cascade at the edge of Murchison Falls National Park.

Fall of Murchison

NEMA, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) had in August 2019 rejected the proposal to build the hydropower dam. But in November, the president directed his cabinet to review the decision against the project and allow Bonang to conduct a feasibility study.

“If the Ugandan government decides to go ahead with the dam,” said Kamugisha, “AFIEGO will file a case in court [...] to defend our right to a clean and healthy environment including the right to nature.” But, even he acknowledges that the courts are weak on politically-related cases, especially when the president has an interest in it. Public pressure could be more potent, he added.

It does not seem to matter to the Ugandan authorities that Murchison Falls is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance.

In neighbouring Kenya, a similarly cavalier attitude to conservation prevailed in the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway with the railroad cutting through the Tsavo East National Park and Nairobi National Park.

In Tanzania, with the government is pushing ahead with the implementation of the Nyerere Hydropower Project in what was once part of the Selous Game Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

“The biggest problem regarding conservation is not lack of relevant laws but non-compliance,” lamented Kamugisha. “We have many good national laws but corruption and bad governance fail everything. Murchison Falls and others may become victims irrespective of Ramsar. But if all Ugandans stand up the way they did for Mabira Forest, we can stop impunity.”

BELOW

Top of Murchison Falls is always a two-in-one activity for you get the best time watching the birds and also enjoy the spectacular view of the Nile and the landscape.

**\$60
BILLION**

Economic value of Murchison Falls and Budongo Forest ecosystems compared to the \$2 billion per year from oil for 20 to 30 years that the Ugandan government estimates it will earn.





PHOTOS BY RUPI MANGAT

People’s power for Mabira

Mabira, a rainforest covering 300km² near the town of Jinja is home to many endangered species such as the Uganda mangabey.

In 2007, the government announced the degazettement of Mabira Forest Reserve to turn one-third of it into a sugar plantation. It promised 3,500 jobs with the sugar project contributing 11.5 billion Ugandan shillings (\$3.1 million) to the treasury. The Kabaka (king) of the Buganda community opposed the deforestation. A thousand people demonstrated with at least three killed during the ensuing riots. The state’s sugar plantations were set on fire. Besides, the public threatened to boycott the state’s Lugazi sugar band.

Despite the president’s support for the sugar project, the environmental minister in May 2007 suspended the deforestation plans. Mabira has become a symbol of Uganda’s social struggles with citizens demanding accountability from their government.

Fact File

Murchison Falls National Park in north-western Uganda measures 3,893km². The waters of the Nile flow through a narrow gorge that is 23 feet wide before plunging 141

feet to continue its flow to the Mediterranean Sea. The Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) is home to rare species, including the Rothschild giraffe and chimpanzees. The protected area has since 2005 been considered a Lion Conservation Unit.

MFCA is already besieged with oil wells and exploration extending up to Lake Albert (into which the Nile flows from Murchison Falls) with more dams being built along its course, including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a gigantic project on the Blue Nile that when completed will be capable of producing 6,000 megawatts of electricity. Some experts have said that the dam has the potential of causing the drying up of Lake Turkana in Kenya, which is the largest permanent lake in a desert. Construction of the Ethiopian dam has been fiercely resisted by Egypt, which fears that its water supply is at stake. ●

TOP

Endangered Rothschild giraffes in Murchison Falls National Park.

INSERT

Ugandan kob in Murchison Falls National Park. It is endemic in Ugandan and South Sudan.



RUPI MANGAT writes about travel and environmental issues and is the editor of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya magazine, *Komba*.



GRASS-ROOTS CONSERVATION

Twiga Walinzi: Pastoralist Researchers Boost Community Conservation

Enlisting community support is critical to conflict mitigation and the success of conservation efforts.

PHOTOS BY SYMON MASIAINE OLE RANAH

BY SYMON MASIAINE OLE RANAH

Some anthropologists have posed this question to wildlife conservationists: “If in the course of saving biological diversity you destroy cultural diversity, what have you accomplished?”

Human activities such as poaching and land-use conversion are major threats to wildlife populations across the world, as the human population explodes and encroaches natural habitats unchecked. Therefore, with even more people, community participation is key to saving biodiversity.

It is through this dual nature of wildlife conservation that *Twiga Walinzi* (Kiswahili for Giraffe Defenders) was established in northern Kenya. In June 2016, San Diego Zoo Global, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation and other conservation stakeholders, established an initiative to support pastoral communities who live alongside wildlife to secure the last remaining strongholds of the now endangered reticulated giraffe in northern Kenya.

Pastoral communities such as the Maasai, Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Rendile and Borana inhabit the northern Kenya rangelands. These areas are mainly savannah ecosystems that endure nomadic livestock herding of cattle, but also goats, sheep, and camels.

Charismatic species such as elephants, giraffes, lions, Grevy’s zebras, and leopards also exist in the same space. In these rangelands, pastoralists, livestock and wildlife have lived side by side for years, and that coexistence can assist biodiversity, with balance. Interestingly, large numbers of wildlife in northern Kenya, including giraffe, occur outside formally protected areas. However, changing cultural practices, increased human and livestock populations, competition between wildlife and livestock and the growth of agro-pastoralism are all placing great pressure on the land.

Climate change and human activities, including overgrazing and charcoal burning, degrade the rangelands to the detriment of both livestock and wildlife. Over the past 30 years, giraffes have been poached in large

TOP
The 2019 community day in Sarara Valley Namunyak.

1,000,000

Number of wildlife images taken by *Twiga Walinzi*’s network of 100 camera traps in two years of data collection.



At *Twiga Walinzi*, we aim to work with members of the community at all levels, starting with elders, morans young unmarried men, women and children.

numbers for meat. A single giraffe can feed a large family for days. Anecdotal data show that poaching is having a devastating effect on giraffe numbers.

Reticulated giraffe, also known as the Somali giraffe, a top tourist attraction in the north, are now listed as ‘endangered’ on the IUCN Red List of species threatened by extinction. Numbers have declined by 56 per cent in three decades. There are an estimated 15,500 Reticulated giraffes in Kenya. Other subspecies in the country include Maasai giraffe (12,800) and Nubian giraffe (625).

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) launched a Recovery Plan for Giraffe in Kenya I in 2018. The plan entails community involvement.

At *Twiga Walinzi*, we aim to work with members of the community at all levels, starting with elders, morans young unmarried men, women and children. We also strive to engage with herding boys during our daily routines. We hold community engagement

meetings, extremely important for our communities to gain knowledge on relevant conservation topics and also learn about the work we do and how members can participate.

For example, we use camera traps to document the distribution of wildlife in community lands but morans sometimes damage them. One elder explained that some community members felt the cameras were being used to spy on them. We then showed them the images collected and explained their purpose. This significantly reduced camera trap damage. We also conduct routine photographic monitoring and road-kill surveys to document giraffe population numbers and the threats they face.

For our work to be successful, we need to build relationships with different communities. Our teams work to change attitudes towards wildlife, one community at a time. We have a team of passionate and dedicated local researchers led by

**TOP LEFT/
BELOW LEFT**
Women from different units entertain guests during the 2019 community day.

RIGHT
Research assistant Sebastian Lerapayo, interviews a community elder about the use of giraffe parts and meat.

2018
Year Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) launched a Recovery Plan for Giraffe in Kenya. The plan entails community involvement.



Symon Masiaine, the national conservation coordinator.

In Loisaba, we have Lexson Larpei as project coordinator for Laikipia and Anthony Liosoi the research assistant. In Namunyak, we have a team of 11 grassroots researchers headed by Jonathan Lenyakopiro with Johnson Lekushan, Ruth Lekupanae, Joseph Lekalgitele, Joseph Lemirgichan, Maxwell Lororua as his assistants. Several other youths provide security to our teams in areas where dangerous wildlife are present.

We also run questionnaires to document how communities interact with giraffes and other wildlife. Our primary study areas are Loisaba (Laikipia) and Namunyak (Samburu) community wildlife conservancies. Given that human-wildlife conflict is a problem throughout East Africa, it is important to quantify and record community perceptions, attitudes and beliefs concerning giraffe and other wildlife. Enlisting community support is critical to conflict mitigation and the success of conservation efforts. Information from attitude surveys can inform conservation interventions and policy. Community members have provided valuable information that has helped map poaching hotspots, while others have been able to dissuade their peers from trafficking in giraffe meat and other products.

We share our findings through the *Twiga Walinzi* Initiative meetings and community members take ownership of all information

and jointly assess progress. In 2018, we started the Namunyak Twiga Community Day where we bring together members from the Namunyak units of Kalepo, Nalouwon, and Ngilai, the trustees of the conservancy, school clubs, KWS, county government officials and other conservation partners to Sarara Valley. The annual community day aims to discuss progress and challenges experienced over the preceding year and chart the way forward. At that forum, women groups and schools from different communities also use art (songs, drawings, poems) inspired by nature to spread the conservation message.

We strongly believe that we need to protect biodiversity for the benefit of future generations. We have enrolled 17 schools, both in Loisaba and Namunyak, in the conservation education programme. At *Twiga Walinzi* we intend to continue nurturing the enthusiasm of the younger generation for as long as our resources allow. We plan to expand this programme to other counties that have expressed interest.

Twiga Walinzi Initiative: bit.ly/3dk5eBX



SYMON MASI AINE OLE RANAH is the Twiga Walinzi Conservation Coordinator at Loisaba- Namunyak Conservancies.

TOP Ruth Lekupanae (second from Left), research assistant Sebastian Lerapayo and one of the rangers interview a member of the community in one of the villages in Sarara.

COVID-19 AND CONSERVATION

Innovative Community Conservation Initiatives amid a Pandemic

The pandemic provides an opportunity to rethink the prevailing wildlife conservation model to enhance resilience in the absence of foreign tourism.

BY IRENE AMOKE, LAURA DELUCA & ALEX DUDLEY

The 2009 film “*Milking the Rhino*,” a documentary about community-based wildlife conservation, explores the problem of conservation that is too dependent on tourism. In the film, members of the Maasai community challenge James ole Kinyaga, the host of the Il Ngwesi Lodge in Kenya, on the stability of tourism. Revenue from tourism goes pays for schools, buses, and road maintenance. But a community member raises the question: “What if we get a drought of tourism?”

Some 11 years later, with the global travel industry devastated by the novel coronavirus, this question remains prophetic. While the African continent claimed only five per cent of COVID-19 cases reported across the globe by mid-July of 2020, its people and wildlife may feel its fallout more than other regions.

On the eve of the pandemic’s acceleration in March 2020, the authors met while attending the Pathways 2020 Conference, in Limuru, 20km from Nairobi. An array of visionaries from across Africa exchanged ideas, about how to make wildlife conservation a durable enterprise. Since then, we have corresponded with colleagues about the perils brought to East African wildlife conservation by COVID-19.

Socio-economic context

Before the pandemic, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) boasted approximately 2 million tourists visiting the country’s national parks annually, contributing 79 per cent of their budget. Since then, revenue nosedived to 1.2 per cent of this, and operations in 20 parks and reserves went down by 60-70 per cent, according to former KWS’s Director-General, John Waweru.

In June 2020, Tanzania began welcoming tourists back provided they tested negative for COVID-19 on arrival. Meanwhile in Kenya, some domestic travel restrictions were lifted in July, and its borders opened to international tourists in August 2020.

However, to date, tourist numbers, especially during the high season brought about by the wildebeest migration, are at a fraction of normal levels.

On a positive note, the slump in visitation has provided relief to big cats - namely lions, leopards, and cheetahs - long adversely impacted by tourist overcrowding. However, the decline of revenue for KWS, along with loss of jobs in the safari and hospitality industry, raised the odds of increased poaching. In northern Kenya, 2020’s first case of ivory poaching was recorded in April during the lockdown. Meanwhile, the country as a whole witnessed a 56 per cent increase in bushmeat seizures between January and May compared to the same period last year.





These communities required support to successfully address land-use planning, natural resource management, and tackle population growth.

This threatens to reverse key gains in wildlife protection that Kenya earned in recent decades, notably the doubling of its elephant population from 16,000 in 1989 to 34,000 in 2018. To prevent such a scenario, numerous conservation stakeholders see a need to transform conservation into a business model. Here we present notable examples.

Tanzanian case study

Dorobo Safaris has been committed to Tanzanian ecotourism since the 1980s. They realized that expanding human populations and activities such as agriculture and charcoal burning posed a serious threat to northern Tanzania's biodiversity and wildlife.

Dorobo's founders became convinced that a more holistic approach was needed and helped to launch a community-based organisation to assist local Maasai and Hadzabe in resource management and governance. These communities required support to successfully address land-use planning, natural resource management, and tackle population growth.

Several Maasai with deep roots in these were recruited. The Dorobo Fund, a 501(c)(3), was registered in the United States that allows for federal tax exemption of nonprofit organisations. To implement projects on the ground in Tanzania, a local trust, the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT) was born in 1997. Initially, the Dorobo Fund was the sole funder for UCRT, but good work attracted the support of donors from across the world.

UCRT works to empower communities to secure legal rights over their lands and natural resources, building skills, knowledge and management capacity within these villages. In this way, communities become enabled groups of people who can make wise and informed choices about their resources

Meanwhile, in Lamadi, Tanzania, the gateway to the western on the shores of Lake Victoria, the Peace for Conservation (PfC), a non-governmental organization, is working with impoverished rural communities that have long hunted in the Serengeti National Park for bushmeat. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, PfC trained two former poachers



LEFT PAGE

A herd of Grevy's zebra.

TOP

Edward Loure teaching Hadzabe hunter gatherers of northern Tanzania how to secure land rights.

BELOW

The district beekeeping officer from Busega District, outside the western Serengeti, trains reformed poachers on how to construct honey bee fences to deter crop-raiding by elephants.





to become conservation ambassadors, through presentations at primary schools and advocacy among villagers. PFC also used local soccer tournaments as venues to connect Lamadi residents with conservationists, in addition to covering all expenses for the winning team to visit Serengeti National Park. Although the pandemic has halted the tournaments, when school classes resumed in July 2020, the ex-poachers revived their advocacy campaigns.

Kenyan case studies

In the north of Kenya, the Grevy's Zebra Trust (GZT) created the Nkirreten Project (Samburu word for "undergarment") which includes the manufacturing of reusable sanitary pad. The project generates income and ensures that girls do not miss school because of menstruation.

Since the pandemic began, the women diverted their energy to producing 700-1,000 zebra-patterned face masks a week, distributing them free of charge.

At the national level, the Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT) is working in three of Kenya's most important ecosystems – the Greater Mara, Samburu-Laikipia and Amboseli-Tsavo. KWT aims to protect vulnerable predator populations, empower local communities and educate them and other stakeholders about conservation and environmental stewardship.

KWT believes that for predators and other wildlife to thrive, communities who co-exist with them need improved access to healthcare

and education services as well as enhanced livelihood opportunities to enjoy direct and tangible benefits from this wildlife.

Conclusion

Despite causing hardship to East African wildlife conservation, the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to dramatically rethink the model and make it more resilient in the absence of foreign tourism.

Even if visitors from outside resume their trips to Africa in earnest, some communities may have learned the importance of having contingency plans to help themselves and wildlife survive any future disruptions of tourism. ●

TOP

Edward Loure, the 2016 Goldman Prize Recipient for Africa, teaching a Tanzanian Maasai community how to establish traditional land rights.



LAURA DELUCA is a cultural anthropologist who is passionate about community conservation in northern Tanzania.



ALEX DUDLEY is a field researcher and environmental journalist for the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund, a U.S.-based organization.



IRENE AMOKE is currently the Executive Director of Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT).

ECOSYSTEMS

The Wildflowers & Wildlife of Nairobi's Giraffe Sanctuary

The unique haven in the Langata suburb of Nairobi deserves appreciation and I have only begun to share what an extraordinary privilege it has been to witness this ecosystem.

BY ABIGAIL CHURCH

The Giraffe Sanctuary, located in the Nairobi suburb of Langata, covers an area of approximately 120 acres. It lies on the eastern side of the road opposite the Giraffe Centre, and is also owned and managed by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW), a non-profit organisation whose mission is to educate children about wildlife and the importance of conservation.

Whilst many of you may have visited the Giraffe Centre, very few have explored the sanctuary on the other side of Nyumbi Road where the giraffe feed on natural browse at night. In spite of its small size, it is home to a surprising variety of mammals, birds, indigenous trees and flowering plants.

For over 10 years, I have lived in the Giraffe Sanctuary. This is a story of observation, a skill I learnt from my mother, Carol Church, and for which I am eternally grateful to her. Over time, I began to notice more and more about my surroundings and became especially interested in the wildflowers that occur here. I found that the plants are habitat-specific and became curious about the controlling factors on their flowering and appreciated the dramatic seasonal changes between wet and



PHOTO BY ALISON JONES

dry. I began to recognize birds by their calls, and giraffe by the patterns on their coats, and their individual behaviours.

The Giraffe Sanctuary is at an elevation of approximately 1,780m (5,800 feet) just south of the Equator and receives about 650mm (25") of rain annually. Rain normally falls in April/May and November. Humidity is normally between 60-80 per cent and, owing to its latitude, day length is almost constant. The area is comprised of distinctly different habitats; dry upland forest, rocky slopes, open grassy areas (*vleis*) as well as several small seasonal wetlands.

Rocks and soils

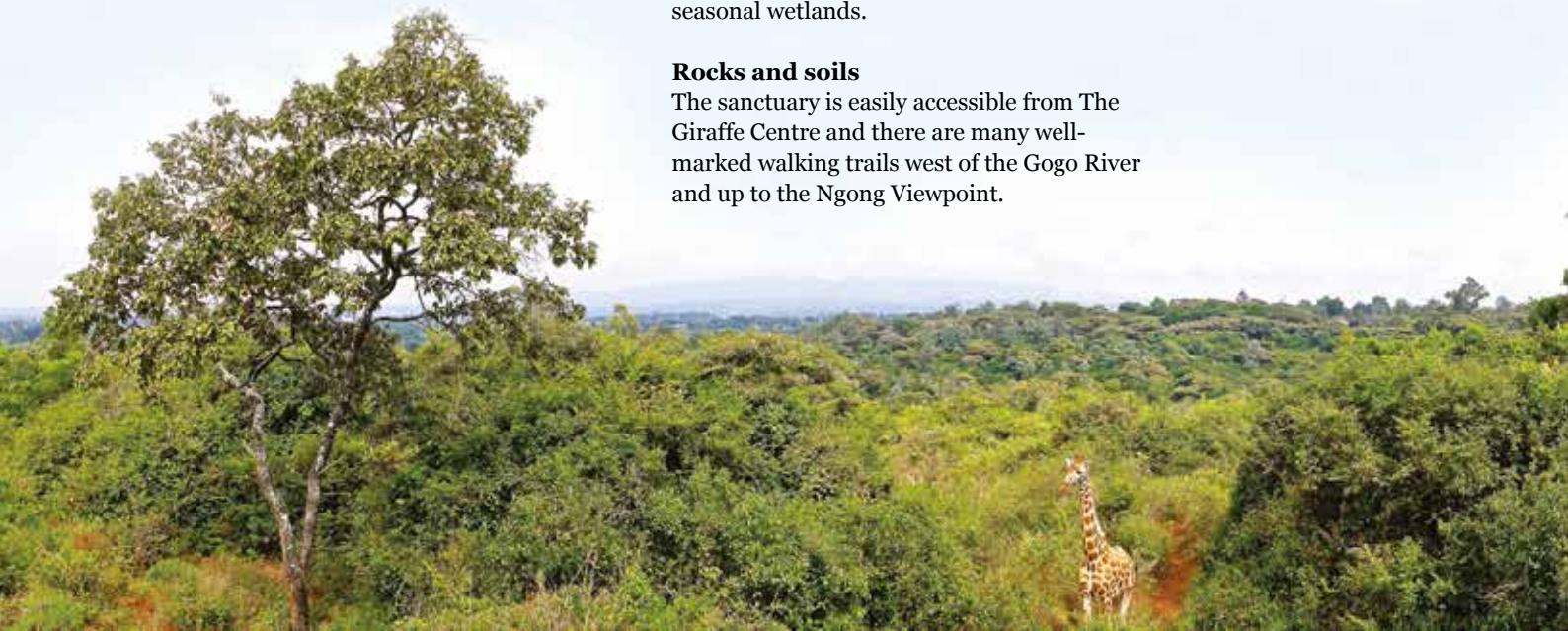
The sanctuary is easily accessible from The Giraffe Centre and there are many well-marked walking trails west of the Gogo River and up to the Ngong Viewpoint.

TOP

The main attraction for both school children and tourists are the Rothschild's giraffe at AFEW's Giraffe Centre.

BELOW

The Giraffe Sanctuary in Langata is a haven of biodiversity and a hidden gem.





TOP
Craterostigma plantagineum

BELOW
Craterostigma hirsuta
Two plants of the same genus that occupy subtly different niches, the former preferring more shady ground whilst the latter thrives in full sun.

Those wishing to explore further can arrange to go with one of the sanctuary rangers who also know the whereabouts of the giraffe. The upper eastern areas adjacent to Mukoma Estate consist of several small grassy *vleis*, bare rocky areas and slopes overlain by red soil, some man-made waterholes and seasonal wetlands. The exposed rocks belong to the Nairobi trachyte formation that erupted around 3.2 million years ago from fissures in the floor of the developing Great Rift Valley. The Ngong Hills, which dominate Nairobi’s western skyline, are the remnants of a large crater that developed a million years later. In some places where water flows during the rainy seasons, there are well-developed ferruginous palaeosols, or old soils better known locally as “murram”, the material used locally on road surfaces. The poorly drained grassy *vleis* are underlain by black cotton soils, notoriously clogging and sticky when wet but shrinking to form deep cracks when dry.

Living here, one cannot fail to notice and appreciate the plethora of flowering plants in every corner of the sanctuary.

Trees

Open areas on the eastern side of the sanctuary host many fine examples of *Combretum molle* and a handful of splendid *Acacia gerrardii*. There is much *Carrissa spinarum*, *Rhus* (now *Searsia*) *natalensis*, *Euclea divinorum* and *Croton dichogamus* in these higher areas too. Near the Ngong Viewpoint, there is a small patch of Leleshwa (*Tarchonanthus camphoratus*) and a few *Albizia amara*. A small forest adjacent to Mukoma Estate near Kikenni Lane is dominated by tall African Olive (*Olea europaea* var. *africana*) and Silver Oak (*Brachyleana huillensis*). The Gogo Valley runs north-south, through which the seasonal Gogo River flows. Soils are well-developed in the valley with some beautiful large mature trees including the aforementioned *Brachyleana*, as well as *Croton megalocarpus*, *Ficus thonningii* and *sycamorus*, *Albizia schimperiana*, *Elaeodendron buchananii* and several of the genus *Vepris*.

Wildflowers

Living here, one cannot fail to notice and appreciate the plethora of flowering plants in every corner of the sanctuary. Of course, it is following the rains that they really come to life. I began photographing the wildflowers back in 2010 and gradually assembled a collection of over 80 different species. Friends and neighbours often found me lying on my stomach trying to photograph some tiny hidden flower at an impossible angle, and encouraged me to put the photos together for us all to share. I wish I knew more about botany, and am lucky enough to have friends who are experts who have helped me enormously with identification.

The most natural way for me to group the plants was based on their habitat. Many of the plants have very specific requirements; shade vs. sunlight, rocky soils vs. black cotton and so on. I became fascinated with just how specific some plants needs are, such as the *Craterostigma*, of which there are two species here: *plantagineum* and *hirsuta*. Both species grow in thin soils underlain by rock, however the former grows in slightly shadier areas with dappled sunlight and the latter in bright



PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL CHURCH



TOP LEFT
Aerangis brachycarpa and **MIDDLE** *Bonatea steudneri*, two magnificent orchids.

TOP RIGHT
Tinnea aethiopica with its delightful maroon velvety petals beneath a green bonnet has yellow stamens resembling tiny eyes.

BELOW LEFT
Ochna ovata bursts into fragrant blossom after even a moderate shower.

BELOW RIGHT
Microcoelia moreauae is an epiphytic orchid that grows on gnarled *Ochna ovata* branches.

sunlight. So, they rarely occur together.

My booklet begins with familiar flowering shrubs; *Carissa spinarum*, *Searsia natalensis* and *Grewia similis*. Less well-known shrubs include *Ochna ovata* – common in the sanctuary and for much of the year pretty unremarkable until it rains. Even a moderate shower can trigger this shrub into flowering, with a sweet-smelling yellow blossom only lasting one day. The following morning the ground beneath is littered with yellow confetti. The young leaves of *Ochna ovata* are a beautiful coppery colour, soft and glossy. Lichen grows on its branches and it is the common host plant of the micro-orchid *Microcoelia moreauae*.

There are at least four other orchids in the Giraffe Sanctuary. The epiphytic *Aerangis brachycarpa*, with its long sprays of white flowers, almost always grows low down, usually less than 2m above the ground. The showy *Bonatea steudneri* is a truly spectacular

ground orchid with green and white flowers usually appearing after the long rains.

The flowers of some plants are strong smelling; *Searsia natalensis* has an unpleasant pungent musty smell whilst *Gnidia cordata* releases its delightful scent around sunset. The *Lippeas*, *Ocimums* and *Plectranthuses* have scented leaves used locally to cure malaria and other maladies.

Tinnea aethiopica is one of my favourites with exquisite dark velvety flowers and tiny yellow eyes peaking out from beneath a greenish “bonnet”. The genus gets its name from the Dutch family, Tinne, patrons of botany in the 19th Century. The intrepid Henrietta Tinne travelled up the Nile with her two daughters on a scientific expedition in 1861, collecting seeds of many plants including this one.

Many of the sanctuary’s flowering plants are small such as the tiny *Justicia calyculata*, the nectar of which is a very



TOP LEFT
Murdannia clarkeana is an uncommon plant whose flowers open in the late morning.

TOP MIDDLE
Drimia calcarata is very tricky to find in rocky areas, visible as narrow dry stems with no leaves and producing tiny white star-shaped flowers.

TOP RIGHT
Likewise, the spiny stems of *Huernia aspera* are also difficult to spot and can be found tucked under other shrubs in the shade, its flowers are a deep maroon five-pointed star.

BELOW LEFT
Gladiolus candida typically flowers with the April rains.

BELOW RIGHT
Moraea stricta, flowers for only about a fortnight each July/August.

Many of the sanctuary's flowering plants are small such as the tiny *Justicia calyculata*, the nectar of which is a very important fodder for bees.

important fodder for bees. Some only open their flowers in late morning such as *Zornia setosa* and *Murdannia clarkeana*. Others have a very limited distribution and qualify as "threatened", including *Nesaea kilimandscharica* which is actually common here. One of my favourites is *Drimia calcarata* – virtually impossible to see, tucked into the most inhospitable rocky places, it has no leaves, must photosynthesize through its spindly stems, and produces a spiral arrangement of tiny white star-shaped flowers. Where its stem meets the soil it curls into a perfect coil just above the bulb. It reminds me of a car radio aerial and I wonder if it has also been engineered to bend rather than snap. *Huernia aspera* is also tough to

find, growing beneath other shrubs in rocky areas but with the most delicate dark maroon bell-shaped flowers finely veined on the outer surface of the petals.

Some of the most pleasing wildflowers grow from bulbs; *Gladiolus candida* (name sadly changed from the much more attractive *ukambensis*), and a personal favourite, the minute iris *Moraea stricta*, which flowers for just a fortnight in July/August most years. Climbers include Kenya's national flower, *Gloriosa superba*, *Thunbergia alata* and many others. Another interesting climbing genus is the *Ceropegias* of which, with help, we have now identified four species: *denticulata*, *albisepta*, *racemosa* and *meyerii-johannes*. These climbers have exquisite flowers resembling lanterns.

Seasonal wetlands are a very special habitat with their own assemblage of plants. *Murdannia simplex*, *Ajuga remota*, *Cynium tubulosum* and the little *Lobelia fervens* all enjoy wetter areas. I must also mention the stunning, and often overlooked grass aloe; *Aloe myriacantha*, which grows on the edge of black cotton *vleis* and perhaps surprisingly is the most widely distributed aloe in Africa occurring



PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL CHURCH

in almost every country south of the Sahara.

I would like to end with a story. We all know that cacti do not occur in Africa. However, we do have one which arrived on the east coast of this continent possibly as recently as a few hundred thousand years ago. This epiphytic cactus, thought to originate in South America most likely found its way here, the long way around island-hopping via Indonesia and the Indian Ocean islands on floating branches. The species in Kenya is the same as that found in South America – *Rhipsalis braccifera* although here we have the subspecies *mauritiana*. The fact that it hasn't yet evolved into a totally separate species indicates that its arrival here is relatively recent. It is also known by the common name "Mistletoe Cactus" and has tiny white flowers which produce spherical white fruit.

Mammals

Other than the introduced Rothschild's giraffe, for which the sanctuary is best known, there are many other mammals: Bushbuck,

Kirk's dik-dik and suni are all regularly seen. Common warthog are prolific, and I have once seen a family of bush pig. Spotted hyena are often heard at night, along with Greater galago or bushbaby. Smaller nocturnal mammals include Dwarf galago, White-tailed mongoose, African hedgehog, the Giant pouched rat and of course the irritatingly vocal Tree hyrax. Slender mongoose are frequently seen as are Ochre bush squirrels. Sykes' monkeys enjoy the forest and Vervet monkeys visit from time to time. We have seen leopard tracks and once encountered a lioness in our garden!

Birds

Over 180 bird species have been recorded in the sanctuary most of which are resident, however numerous migrants and nomadic species also pass through. Raptors are commonly seen above the forest: namely the Great Sparrowhawk, African Goshawk, Long-crested Eagle, African Fish Eagle and the occasional Crowned Eagle. Bat Hawks

TOP LEFT

Aloe myriacantha. This often overlooked Aloe is in fact the most widespread in Africa.

**TOP RIGHT/
BELOW LEFT**

Rhipsalis braccifera *Rhipsalis braccifera* is Africa's only cactus. Originating in South America, it is thought to have arrived on Africa's shores on floating branches not via the shortest route across the Atlantic, but the long way round – island hopping across the Pacific and Indian Oceans.



PHOTO BY ADAM SCOTT KENNEDY



180+

Bird species have been recorded in the sanctuary most of which are resident; however numerous migrants and nomadic species also pass through.

have nested close by and hunt in the twilight. African Wood Owl, Barn Owl and Verreaux's Eagle Owl are all seen here and heard at night.

Hamerkop and Giant Kingfisher frequent the Gogo River and a small dam near our home. Crowned Crane, Hadada, Sacred Ibis, Cattle Egret, Black-headed Heron and Grey Heron are all seen flying over. Scaly Francolin forage the forest floor with Lemon and Tambourine Doves and Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove. Hartlaub's Turacos are numerous, Narina's Trogon is a treat to see, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills occasionally visit. Snowy and Spot-flanked Barbets are common as are Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds.

Cardinal and Brown-backed Woodpeckers, Emerald Cuckoos, Violet-backed Starlings are often seen in the higher parts of the sanctuary. Garden birds include Red-billed Firefinch, Streaky Seedeater, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Purple Grenadier, Common Bulbul, Village Indigbird and Bronze Mannikin. Cabanis's and Yellow-whiskered Greenbuls skulk in the shady areas of the forest along with one of our most beautiful and musical residents; the White-starred Robin.

Flycatchers include the African Paradise, friendly White-eyed Slaty and the Black-throated Wattle-eye. Yellow-breasted and Black-collared Apalis as well as Grey-capped Warblers are often seen around the house. Holub's Golden, Baglafaecht, Village, Spectacled and Grosbeak Weavers are all common. Lesser Striped and Red-rumped Swallows, Black Saw-wings, Rock and Plain Martins and African Palm Swifts all feed busily over the *vleis*.

Common Fiscals, Tropical Boubous and Sulphur-breasted Bushshrikes are all seen frequently; Isabelline, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes migrate through. Red-billed Oxpeckers travel with the giraffe frequently giving away their location. Sunbirds include the Bronze, Amethyst, Variable, Collared, Scarlet-chested and the occasional Golden-

winged and Green-headed. Like all of East Africa, dawn and dusk are special times when a chorus of Rüppell's and Cape Robin-Chats fills the air, to be replaced later by the liquid serenade of the Montane Nightjar.

Knowing one's home environment is pure joy. This unique haven in Langata deserves appreciation and I have only begun to share what an extraordinary privilege it has been to witness this ecosystem. ●

TOP

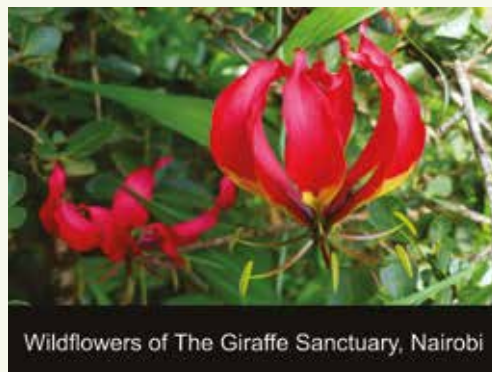
White-starred Robins are especially vocal in the forested parts of the Giraffe Sanctuary.

BELOW

Cover of the Wildflowers of the Giraffe Sanctuary publication.



ABIGAIL CHURCH has a degree in Geology from UCL, and a Ph.D. in Igneous Petrology from the Natural History Museum, London.



Wildflowers of The Giraffe Sanctuary, Nairobi

Wildflowers of the Giraffe Sanctuary, Nairobi is available in paperback. To order from the author at 1,500 Kenyan shillings email: info@jamesrobertson.co.ke

Information on next events at the AFEW Giraffe Centre can be found on: www.giraffecentre.org.

The Social Media links for AFEW Giraffe Centre:

f <https://www.facebook.com/African-Fund-for-Endangered-Wildlife-K-Ltd-Giraffe-Centre>

t <https://twitter.com/GiraffeCenter>

@ <https://www.instagram.com/giraffecentre>

ORNITHOLOGY

Oxpeckers - Saints or Sinners?

It is difficult to know whether a bird eating a blood-swollen tick is after the blood or the tick tissue, but the oxpeckers' love of both cannot be denied.

BY RUPERT WATSON

Birds often take lifts on the back of other animals, usually the better to hawk insects disturbed by their hosts' progress through the grass. Carmine Bee-eaters are frequently photographed riding on Kori Bustards, noisy flocks of Piapiacs perch on elephants in the Ugandan national parks, while Common Drongos can be equally opportunistic.

Cattle Egrets and Wattled Starlings also hunt from the back of an animal, especially in longer grass when it is not easy for them to follow in its footsteps. These birds are all using the animal as a beater to flush out their food. However, for oxpeckers the host provides the food, sometimes even is the food.

Any visitor to one of Africa's great game parks is likely to encounter an oxpecker, with one or other species – sometimes both – occurring through much of the sub-Saharan savanna. At one time included amongst starlings, the Red-billed and Yellow-billed are now deemed different enough from all other birds to be the only members of the genus *Buphagus*, which itself constitutes a family.

The colour of the bill may be difficult to spot, not least because the Yellow-billed also has a red bill tip. And when alarmed by approaching humans, both species are inclined to scabble over to the far flank of their host, and so out of sight. If the bird is flying, the easiest way to distinguish between the two species is by the pale rump of the Yellow-billed.

In general, they have similar habits, differing little in diet, host preference or tree-hole nest sites. However, Yellow-billed prefer thinner-furred animals, particularly buffalo, while Red-billed are more at home on those like giraffes, with thicker hairs on their hides. Otherwise, respective habits give little indication of which of the two is crawling over the

back of a large herbivore, where apparently both courtship and copulation also take place. A 1982 report from Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe describes five oxpeckers observed actually roosting on the back of a kudu, although conventional wisdom has it that oxpeckers usually sleep in tree cavities.

Most observers focus on feeding behaviour, and it would be difficult to improve on Vernon van Someren's description in *A Bird Watcher in Kenya*: 'Oxpeckers are really rather unpleasant birds to watch feeding; they have the persistence of a swarm of [flies] round a piece of meat. They slip and slide all over an animal's hide, often keeping to the side away from the observer, and cling closely to the hair with their long sharp claws. The

beak is held parallel to the

BELOW

The oxpeckers are endemic to sub-Saharan Africa, where they occur in most open habitats. They are absent from the driest deserts and the rainforests. Their distribution is restricted by the presence of their preferred prey, specific species of ticks, and the animal hosts of those ticks.





PHOTOS BY KEITH KINAMBUGA

These are serious charges against oxpeckers: that they are sinner rather than saint, that it is less the ticks they seek, than the host's blood, even flesh – after all, *Buphaga* (their generic name) means 'beef-eating'.

skin, and they wield it in a scissoring motion from side to side through the hair, two or three sweeps being made in one area before moving jerkily off to try elsewhere.'

Somerén could have added that the birds also use their tail to help cling to their host's hide, as does a woodpecker on a tree.

Over time, oxpeckers have evolved along with their natural hosts, and only comparatively recently, at least in evolutionary terms, have domestic animals become available to them. Before the nineteenth century, the large herds of cattle provided ideal feeding grounds, and their African owners generally regarded the birds in a positive light for helping control unwanted ticks. However, newly arrived European farmers could not afford the loss of any animals to tick-borne disease, and so they resorted to chemical control. For oxpeckers, this not only reduced their food supply, but also proved toxic.

While cattle seemed to cope with the presence of oxpeckers, the birds had a very negative impact on softer-skinned donkeys. Writing about nineteenth century Uganda, Frederick Jackson described how 'to pack-donkeys and mules with a sore back ... [the Red-billed] is one of the greatest curses. In the old caravan days, along the road between Teita and Mumias, the number of donkeys rendered unfit for service, the majority of which died, entirely through the attentions of this bird ... must have amounted to many hundreds. The least little abrasion on the skin, when detected by one of these pests, was at once pecked into a ghastly sore.'

In his 1959 *Pirates and Predators*, Richard Meinertzhagen also has plenty to say about oxpeckers, including how 'donkeys resent them and have been seen to roll or run under bushes to rid themselves of the birds'.

These are serious charges against oxpeckers: that they are sinner rather than saint, that it is less the ticks they seek, than the host's blood, even flesh – after all, *Buphaga* (their generic name) means 'beef-eating'. Meinertzhagen recorded the birds visiting slaughterhouses in Kenya and Somaliland to feed off blood from freshly-flayed hides; and during an oxpecker reintroduction programme in South Africa, donkey hosts were spared the aggressive attentions of the birds by a tempting counter-attraction – blood from recently slaughtered animals, treated with an anticoagulant.

TOP

Oxpeckers feed on ticks, flies, lice and worms extracted from the fur of cattle, buffalos, rhinos, giraffes and large antelopes. Despite removing pests, oxpeckers are known as parasites because they also feed on the blood of their hosts.

2

Number of oxpecker species in the world. Yellow-billed oxpecker (*Buphagus africanus*) Red-billed oxpecker (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*).



TOP
Oxpeckers nest in holes, usually in trees but sometimes in other types of cavity, including holes in walls. The nests are lined with grasses and often with hair plucked from their hosts and even livestock such as sheep.

It is difficult to know whether a bird eating a blood-swollen tick is after the blood or the tick tissue, but the oxpeckers' love of both cannot be denied. Evidence for their picking away at existing wounds, especially in drier times when ticks are less abundant, seems overwhelming, although to what extent they actually open new wounds in an animal's hide is less certain; if this were the case one would expect to see them generally giving attention to thinner-skinned game and there is no proof that they do so.

Jackson was convinced that 'beyond all doubt the Oxpecker's favourite food, when it had a chance of obtaining it, is blood and meat, the latter being pecked away in minute particles'. Having examined the crops of several birds collected while they were feeding on both rhino and cattle hides, he became convinced that 'ticks, if at all, only form an infinitesimal portion of its food.'

However, when W L Sclater came to edit Jackson's work after the latter's death he was able to refer to the researches of R.E. Moreau published in the 1933 *Bulletin of Entomological Research*. Here, Moreau

describes how he found a total of 2,291 blood-sucking ticks in 55 out of 58 oxpecker stomachs that he examined from birds taken in Amani in eastern Tanzania. Certainly there were also various fly larvae, mites and probably also ear wax (particularly from buffalo) in the birds' stomachs but Moreau's findings provide strong evidence to support their preference for ticks, and that is the wisdom that prevails today.

There is another dimension to oxpecker behaviour, and that is one of 'watchbird' or alarm sounder, and regardless of whether the bird has eaten ticks or drunk blood straight from the animal, this other role seems of undoubted benefit to the host. So long as humans relied on hunting down their food, the birds must have been regarded as nothing but pests, given their habit of issuing loud hissing alarm calls as a warning of impending danger, before the flock's taking off.

More recently, many hunters for sport rather than sustenance have likewise found the presence of the birds favours the chances of the hunted rather than the hunt.

However, Meinertzhagen, who shot more than his share of game, was not one of these. He felt that the presence of oxpeckers lulled the animals into a sense of security – that they became 'conscious of an extra protection when accompanied by *Buphagus*. A rhinoceros is much more alert when without *Buphagus* than when they accompany him.' He found this might actually favour the hunter who, with his target's natural caution dulled by the oxpecker's presence, could sometimes get much closer than he otherwise would have done.

David Livingstone was fascinated by the natural history of the areas through which he trekked, so let him have the last word on the oxpecker's role as a sentinel, taken from his 1858 *Missionary Travels*. "This bird cannot be said to depend entirely on the insects on [the rhinoceros] for its hard hairless skin is protection against all except a few spotted ticks; and while the buffalo is alarmed by the sudden flying up of its sentinel, the rhinoceros, not having keen sight, but an acute ear, is warned by the cry of its associate, the *Buphaga africana*."

This article is adapted from Rupert Watson's recent book, *Peacocks and Picathartes*, reviewed on page 52. ●



RUPERT WATSON is an advocate, mediator, naturalist and writer and a frequent contributor to *Swara* magazine.

Bats in my bedroom

BY BRIAN FINCH

I was surprised when a Large-eared Slit-faced Bat (*Nycteris macrotis*) spent the day hanging up by the shower in my bathroom some weeks ago. In the ensuing days, it would come back during the late evening and spend time in the bathroom and flying around the bedroom. Then there were two every evening and, after a few weeks, up to five.

That gave me a unique opportunity to see a side of bat-life that few researchers have ever witnessed. It made me realise that their lives are more complex than merely roost-feed-roost. They are more complex than I ever gave them credit for.

Whilst I can hear birds, including high-frequency bird song, strangely, I have not heard anything resembling a sonic call from the bats, and yet they must be using it to navigate around the room in the dark. I might have lost their frequency in my hearing capabilities.

There are two noises I hear clearly every night. The first is their frequent flapping, yet I can watch them flying around the room and there is no flapping noise. They are both rapid and skilful fliers, executing sharp twist turns and sudden change of direction, but all in silence. This makes me think that flapping is communication between individuals. The second noise is a sharp crack. This is usually 1-3 but can be anything up to six successive cracks. I am not sure how this is created. The sound is like lip-smacking and yet it might not be anything to do with a vocalisation.

I had believed that once it got dark, the bats would leave their daytime roost for feeding, then return before it got light. The usual routine is that they first arrive around 7.30 pm, sometimes earlier if it is overcast, and sometimes later. They came straight in through the window and made for the bathroom where they would hang from the ceiling. If I went into

the bathroom, they would vacate and leave through the bedroom window, but it wasn't long before they would just fly into the bedroom, hang themselves from the ceiling and wait. Before I had crossed the threshold they had flown over my head back to their favourite resting place.

This means these bats do not use their daytime roost during the darkest hours, but have additional places they regularly rest at, during the course of the night. All through the night, they are flying in and out of the bedroom window to feed, returning to the bathroom, then before dawn, they all disappear. This leads me to believe other bats are leaving roosts, and have places they return to regularly that is not their main roost. I have not heard of this before.

They are not put off by the room being lighted, not only arriving from the dark into a completely lit room and heading for the bathroom whether it too is lit or not. Although the first order is to go into the bathroom for a short while, they emerge and fly around my bedroom sometimes singly or as a pair. They are adept at taking insects off the wall, and seem happy to fly around the strip light to chase insects attracted to it. On one evening a bat came out of the bathroom, and made a bee-line for a moth right in the recess where the ceiling meets two right-angle sides of the wall. So the three angles that make this corner recess all taper to the point where all three planes meet. It was a small moth and lying still and flat in this corner. The bat flew the five metres across the room towards the still, small and flat moth. To obtain a better perspective of what I am trying to relate, look up and see what the corner of the ceiling looks like. Imagine a moth right in the corner, and you will appreciate how all three converging angles create a problem for something flying to catch anything in that recess. The bat flew straight to the moth and when it reached it, it hovered with wings slapping against the walls and ceiling, stretched its



PHOTOS BY BRIAN FINCH

One of the three times a bat has stayed all day instead of leaving before dawn.

head forward and plucked it neatly out of the recess taking it back into the bathroom to eat.

There are a couple of questions here, if it saw the moth from more than five metres away that is unusually sharp for a bat. More likely it found it by echolocation, however this is even more remarkable when the signals are received of three converging planes, what messages is its brain receiving that can interpret this? Even more so with locating a small nearly flat and stationary object at the apex of this angled confusion... yet it had no trouble. In pairs they fly around the room in a predominately clockwise direction. But this is not just to catch insects, it is a flight display that they perform. One very closely following the leader, in which they perform dips in the flight path, and stalling almost to a hover. This appears to parallel a birds display flight, and there is no vocalisation during this regular event.

In the evening, I work on the computer with a mosquito net covering me. The computer glow attracts insects. Whilst I am working and after I have closed the computer down, the bats come to take insects from the net. So they are doing this

in the dark. However, this is not by sight but must be by echolocation that I cannot hear. Logically you would think that most of the ultrasound emitted must actually penetrate the net and not bounce back, and only the fibres themselves would provide the echo. This means that the picture it builds in its brain is tuned to extreme detail, and it must be perceiving the exact image of the net, as it is able to pluck insects off without colliding with the net. I it is so close that I can feel the air movement created by their wings.

In the morning, they leave plenty of signs in the bathroom, requiring a cleanup. Many moth wings are strewn on the floor, suggesting that they were bringing in takeaways from outside to eat in the bathroom. Then the floor was dusted with the wings of flying long-horned grasshoppers, and these must have all come from outside.

Being a chiropteran neophyte, I thought it essential to have a noted bat expert in bats read through my report. I was fortunate to have the guidance of Meredith Happold, a world-renowned expert on this family. Her work in our region can be seen in the seven-volume “Mammals of Africa,” especially where she and her husband produced Volume 4 Hedgehogs, Shrews and Bats. She commented on my observations.

The reason I never heard any sonar pulses is *nycteris* belongs to a group labelled as “Whispering Bats”.

“You will not be able to hear the echolocation calls of any *nycterids* because they are ‘whispering bats’ whose calls are of very low intensity;” Meredith explained. “We could not pick them up with our ‘Anabat’ bat detector even when the detector was very close to the bats.”

With regard to the wing-cracking that I put down to communication between individuals: “Your observations of the audible sounds your bats make is interesting and, as far as I know, not published. Vocalisations audible to humans have been noted in *Nycteris thebaica* and perhaps other species. They are probably used in communication - not echolocation.”

That these bats have a day roost elsewhere, and I provide a night roost: “A lot of species of bats,



A pair of bats (circled) wait patiently outside the bedroom.

“You will not be able to hear the echolocation calls of any *nycterids* because they are ‘whispering bats’ whose calls are of very low intensity;” Meredith explained.

including *Nycteris* spp. have both day-roosts (where they sleep or go into torpor) and night-roosts where they rest during the night after bouts of feeding. Some bats, including *Nycteris*, also have perches from which they search for food before flying to attack the food. And bats, including *Nycteris*, which do not eat on the wing, take their food to perches or night roosts to eat it. It would be great if you could collect the wings and other remains of the insects your bats eat, at regular intervals, and then find someone to identify what the bats are eating.”

The notes on the impressive flying skills prompted this response: “Nycterids have very broad wings and very low wing-loading, so it takes a lot of energy for them to fly. This is why they must spend most of the time perching.”

In my marvelling at what detailed interpretation the brain is supplying from echolocation, her comment

was what one would expect from a scientist enamoured with their studies: “I want to be reincarnated as a bat, so I could fully understand how they manage to ‘see’ the world with sound instead of light.... Professor Mohres discovered that bats, which emit calls mostly of constant frequency, use Doppler-shifted echos to locate insects fluttering their wings. To prove this, he set up two long parallel rows of microphones and trained his bats to fly, on command, in a straight line midway between the two rows of microphones.”

I know these interesting housemates have much more to share. ●



BRIAN FINCH is the author of the sounds component of the recent *Birds of East Africa* application available on the iTunes Library.



Artist profile

Federico Veronesi

BY DELTA WILLIS

This October, a magnificent book will debut, featuring the photography of Federico Veronesi. That the project found funding during a pandemic is partly a credit to Margot Raggett's *Remembering Wildlife* initiative, as featured in a profile in the January-March 2019 issue of *Swara*. Veronesi contributed to that series, with one of his photos featured on the cover of *Remembering Elephants*, another on the cover of *Remembering Lions*, and applied the same online appeal and advance book sales to his new book, called *One Life*.

His Kickstarter campaign recruited pledges for copies of the book, prints, tutoring sessions in photography, and private safaris with him as guide. Fifty limited editions of *One Life* sold out before the book was

printed. The book contains few colour photographs, but 180 pages dominated by black and white images. Over 400 people pledged to help bring this project to life. The online campaign achieved 348 per cent of its goal.

Born in Milan in 1975, Veronesi was raised in a family of keen photographers and naturalists, taking his first safari to Kenya with his family at the age of six. Using a small Polaroid camera, something inside told him that he had found his place in the world. He cried when the family left Kenya to return to Italy. By the age of 13, he had his first SLR camera, an old Minolta inherited from his grandfather.

After completing university studies in 2002, he moved to Nairobi. Initially he worked for a development agency, traveling to remote parts of Kenya and Somalia, but went on wildlife safaris as often as possible. In

2007 he realized this was not enough. He gave up his job to set up a small semi-permanent tent on the banks of the Talek River in the Maasai Mara.

Every morning he left his tent before dawn to look for lions, leopards, and cheetahs, photographing their lives through the years. In 2009 he encountered the most elusive of Africa's wild felines, the caracal. He documented the life of two different females and their young. Some of these images and stories were captured in his first book published in 2015. Photographer Art Wolfe wrote, "Sometimes I come across a book that just blows me away. *Light and Dust* by Federico Veronesi does just that. At 26 Federico relocated to Kenya and has been photographing there intensively ever since.

"His book is a testament to what great photographers can do when they have a true passion and focus









on a particular part of the world.” It is hard to find and only a few copies remain unsold.

Then he ventured south to Tanzania, and found another corner of heaven in the Serengeti, where rocky outcrops known as *kopjes* rise from the grasslands in magnificent shapes and forms. The Dutch word means “little head” but he describes them as “islands of rocks in a sea of grass.” He loves photographing lions in this setting, and two particular photographs evoked strong feelings. Photographing a lion cub on a kopje, he recognised the background to remember that he had photographed a mature male lion there previously. Thinking this might be the cub’s father, he reflected on the recent birth of his own son, and the idea of *One Life* was born. “Through this journey we have an opportunity to encounter different animals,” he said, “but we all share the same feelings and emotions,” he said; “but we all share the same planet.”

Backlight or dramatic lighting became his trademark style. His decision to shoot photographs in black and white adds to the mood of an image. “In the play between light, dust, mist, there is a key to convey

the personality of each animal;” Veronesi wrote; “The intensity in their eyes can reflect deep emotions for the viewer.”

Elephants became one of his primary subjects. In Amboseli in 2010 encountered one Africa’s last big tuskers, a bull known as Tim. (See Cynthia Moss’s tribute to Tim in the April-June 2020 issue of *Swara*.) Veronesi photographed Tim and other elephants in Amboseli, and these black and white works became some of his most successful fine-art prints. His limited-edition prints are sought after by collectors worldwide, and are available through select galleries in Europe. His photos have featured in previous issues of *Swara* and *BBC Wildlife*.

Contributing to wildlife conservation is a priority, and his work has supported the East African Wildlife Society (which publishes this journal,) the African Wildlife Foundation, Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Cheetah Conservation Fund, the *Remembering Wildlife* initiative, and most recently, African Parks.

A member of the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (KPSGA, Bronze Level) Veronesi photo safaris follow

his methods; guests focus on the behaviour of individual species, spending time with specific animals. During his years in the Maasai Mara, he followed closely the life of the leopard Olive and her seven offspring, and the female caracal and her four cubs in three different litters. “I was continually delighted with Federico’s expertise, passion, artistry, warmth, and care;” said one client; “I can see why so much of his business is repeating clients—for the serious wildlife photographer, it simply can’t get any better.”

“I love Federico Veronesi’s work,” wrote Margot Raggett; “Its intensity is a reflection of the man himself. He cares deeply about wildlife and that shines through in his stunning imagery.” ●

The book *One Life* released on October 31st will be available for purchase from his website: www.federicoveronesi.com



DELTA WILLIS is an author and photographer who promoted Alan & Joan Root films.



PHOTOS BY NOMAD TANZANIA

ADVENTURE

Mahale: A Great Ape Escape

It is immediately obvious that you are in very remote location with no roads nearby and only mountains and chimps for company.

BY SANDY WOOD

Mahale; the mere word conjures up mystery, I thought as I prepared for my visit to Greystoke Camp in the Mahale Mountains, southwest Tanzania. It's a bit of a trek to get here; three hours in a light aircraft with a fuel stop en route, followed by a 90 minute voyage by dhow across Lake Tanganyika, (Africa's deepest lake) but it is so worth the journey.

As I stepped off the dhow, to be greeted by the friendly, smiling faces of the Greystoke team, I felt as if I had been here before. Perhaps this is because as humans, our roots were discovered on this continent. The Mahale Mountains are home to our closest relative, the chimpanzee. Greystoke is named after the fictional character in Tarzan.

The site of the camp was chosen by Roland Purcell, one of the founders of Nomad Tanzania, back in the 1988. Having worked with Diane Fossey's gorillas, Purcell had become fascinated by primates and was

intrigued as to why the Japanese researching chimps in Mahale were getting no press.

Chimpanzee research in the Mahale Mountains began in 1965. Conservation efforts and the financial support of the Japanese government led to the designation of Mahale as a national park in 1985.

The Mahale project is the second-longest continuous field study of chimps after Jane Goodall's initiative begun in 1960. Purcell described the setting as a "lost world" and happily, in many ways it still is. As soon as you arrive, it is immediately obvious that you are in very remote location with no roads nearby and only mountains and chimps for company. In fact, Purcell chose the campsite because it was 60 miles from the nearest road, and very close to the Congo. In the 1,613km² of Mahale Mountains there are still no roads.

Visitors to Greystoke are responsible travellers, who love an adventure, looking to do something off the beaten track and away from crowded safari routes. "The air is scented with jasmine, the forest rich, the water of the lake gin-clear and slightly chilled," Purcell reflected upon his discovery: "If I dare put an

TOP LEFT

Trekking through the forest in pursuit of chimps.

TOP MIDDLE

A Greystoke dressing room.

TOP RIGHT

Sunlight bathing the bedroom.

BELOW LEFT

The iconic view of Greystoke from the lake.

BELOW RIGHT

Deck chairs and views for days.



The key activity here is trekking to find the chimps, seeing eye to eye with one of our closest relatives.

imprint on this paradise, I had better get it right.” The original camp was a Moorish style tent and the current thatched structure is not dissimilar in design. Set at the back of a small stretch of white sandy beach, with the Mahale Mountains rising high directly behind, it is an impressive, yet simple castaway camp.

The six A frame chalets are equally simple in style, built from dhow wood and set discreetly amongst the trees on the edge of the beach. Each offers barefoot luxury at its best; an en suite shower and flush loo, as well as a chill out area upstairs where guests can relax.

Meals are taken in the main mess or on the beach under the stars and guests tend to gather for a pre-dinner drink in open-air bar, set on the rocks overlooking the extraordinarily clear waters of Lake Tanganyika. Food is freshly made and simply delicious. I never cease to be amazed by the incredibly high standard of meals that are produced from remote African camp kitchens and the chef at Greystoke proves his to be no exception. English breakfasts, homemade muesli and tropical fruits are

offered in the morning. A variety of salads and assorted kebabs, frittatas and pastas are served at lunch. Afternoon tea is available as are "bitings"; snacks before the three-course dinners.

I am grateful for the promise of a good hike tomorrow to work off some of this deliciousness.

The key activity here is trekking to find the chimps, seeing eye to eye with one of our closest relatives. Greystoke is one of only a handful of places in the world where one can enjoy a very close encounter with these wonderful apes. The experience is made even more interesting by the team of guides here, who having been amongst these chimps for years, know them better than most of us know some of our own family members.

When the Japanese researchers arrived in Mahale in the 1962 they were welcomed by the Tongwe, local people with origins in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but who came to Tanzania centuries ago. The Tongwe have lived peacefully with the chimpanzees and never hunted them as they believed

LEFT
In the company of great apes.

TOP RIGHT
Masks are compulsory when visiting chimps.

BELOW RIGHT
Relaxed, happy and lounging in the undergrowth.

their ancestors lived on in the chimps. The Japanese were very impressed by the Tongwe people and their knowledge of the chimpanzees. So they worked together on habituating the chimpanzees.

The whereabouts of the chimps are radioed to camp, and only six guests at a time are escorted to see them. As you venture close to them, you are requested to don a mask, which is for their protection more than yours. You cannot use a camera flash so adjust your settings for low light if need be. An hour is the maximum time that may be spent with the chimps.

The guides even have a language with which they communicate with the chimps although I can attest to the fact that they understand us. I remarked that one of the males looked a bit grumpy; by way of a response, I had a small branch chucked my way with remarkable accuracy. Clearly, my comment was not appreciated!

Trekking the chimps is not for sissys and you need to be reasonably fit. In the latter months of the year, they are generally found close to the lake shore but at other times, they are higher up the mountains, foraging for food, so it can be a long and quite hard walk. Additionally there is a minimum age restriction of 12 (I was pleased to discover no upper age limit) and if you are sick, you will not be allowed to trek. Chimps, like gorillas are very vulnerable to human diseases; a dose of flu can be fatal to them.

Trekking is generally done in the mornings, leaving the afternoons free for other activities. Greystoke lends itself to the gentle art of doing nothing. No technological influences such as WiFi or cell phone service here to distract you; just Mother Nature at her best.

If you have to trek further into the mountains to find the chimps, you may be looking for something a bit more relaxing to do next. You have plenty of choices. I loved the late afternoon sail on the dhow to do a spot of birding, or catch a glimpse of the Colobus monkeys followed by a refreshing deep water swim in the lake. Kayaking is also available and guests can visit the local village



TOP
A thorough guide briefing in progress.

to see how life is in such a remote part of the world. Guests generally stay for three or four nights but I felt I could have stayed an age.

I don't believe Purcell had any idea, when he hit upon this site for his camp, what a favour he was doing those of us who have been to experience Greystoke Mahale, including Bill Gates and Harrison Ford. This could easily be combined with other Nomad destinations in Tanzania, including Ruaha or Selous. ●



SANDY WOOD was born in Kenya, and travels widely as CEO of Pulse Africa based in Johannesburg.

www.pulseafrica.com

When to go

During the wet season, from November until May, the chimpanzees spend much of their time in the trees and can be difficult to find. In the dry season, June to October, the undergrowth is less dense and the chimps frequently come down near the main lodge to feed. Entry fees at Mahale Mountains Park are \$80 per adult per day. There are no additional advance permit fees as happens with gorilla treks.



ADVENTURE

To Walk with Camels: On Soysambu Conservancy

We were serenaded by the bray of zebra and a percussion of birds and insects, all drowned periodically by a resounding repertoire of camel noises.

BY JULIET BARNES

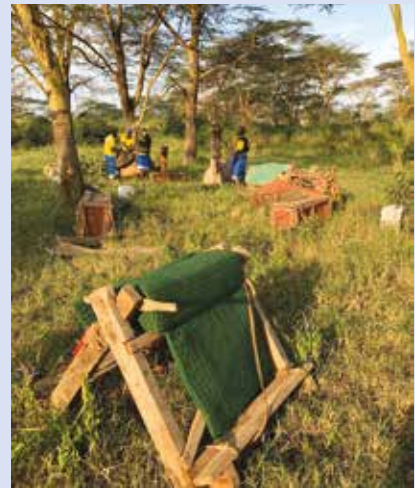
I find it hard to put my finger on the exact reasons it is so therapeutic to do a walking safari with camels. Laughter, they say, is medicine, and there is plenty of that thanks to these comical four-legged porters, who bellow, gurgle, rumble, spit and contort their faces into expressions that would inspire even Mr Bean.

Or perhaps it is the peace of walking in harmony with these huge beasts as their handlers sing ancient songs, onomatopoeic words that invoke poetry, and conjure up images of inhospitable places with desert, canyons, caverns and curiously shaped mountains. Fortunately, on this occasion, we weren't facing such daunting terrain on our short expedition on Soysambu Conservancy.

We met our team of four handlers beneath a fever tree (*Vachellia xanthophloea*) in the early afternoon. Everything was set up for lunch; tables, chairs, even wine glasses, and (at a discreet distance) a

bush loo and portable washbasin. We were overlooking the area of Soysambu, which is a Ramsar site, an Important Bird Area, and part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which includes Lake Elmenteita. The conservancy protects a diverse range of habitats and a wealth of flora and fauna. Mammal species that depend on Soysambu include threatened Rothschild's giraffe, Colobus monkeys, Side-striped jackal, Striped hyena, Aardvark and Spring hare, while some of its more unusual antelope include the Bohor and Mountain (Chandler's) reedbuck, Steinbuck (or Steenbok) and Klipspringer.

Our camels were from Bobong Ranch, north of Rumuruti, owned by John and Amanda Perrot, in the camel safari business since 1982. They are also willing to accompany you on a fully-catered and tailored camel safari, but on this occasion, my son and I opted for a simpler self-catering option, our needs being pretty basic. For us, it was enough to nibble at biscuits and sip water while admiring the views of Lake Elmenteita, shining blue in



Resting in the evening.

the distance, framed by the eastern walls of the Great Rift Valley, their dramatic steps rising indigo on the near horizon.

Our Land Rover had long departed and our modes of transport were now ready, see-sawing to their feet, making throaty protests. Rasta, we soon learned, was the big, noisy, stropky guy, while Macharia, the leader, was the one with a range of jaw-wrenching toothy grins.

The soda flats of Lake Elmenteita.

PHOTO BY MIKE BELL



‘Follow Barabara,’ announced our guide as we set off, referring not to the road (there wasn’t one) but to his name. We could hear the snorting of Impala, which soon came into view, unconcerned by us as the two males sparred.

Barabara proved to be well-versed with the sights, sounds and spoors in this wild kingdom where we were mere trespassers. We’d been assured there would be no need for alarm if we encountered lions. The camels would stay close to us. Big cats and buffalo could be deterred if necessary by Hassan with his whip, fashioned out of stick and rope, demonstrated with great flair, its cracking as loud as gunshots; enough to make any lone bull run a mile. But there was no need for such dramas as we strode through the thickets of *Vachellia seyal* and sharp scented Leleshwa (*Tarchonanthus camphoratus*), emerging onto the plains below to join large herds of Burchell’s zebra, Thompson’s and Grant’s gazelles, and in the distance, three Cape buffalo, all grazing peacefully. We kept up a good camel pace, getting into their rhythm, pausing occasionally to drink water or look at an Augur Buzzard circling above, admiring a playful Zebra foal, and skirting a ridge partly encircled by a large thicket of prehistoric-looking *Euphorbia candelabrum*. As we navigated another rocky ridge, the camels coaxed on by whistles and snatches of songs, Barabara entertained us with his mimicking of bird calls. Amongst the many birds we spotted were three Ground Hornbills, a pair of Crowned Crane, a Red-fronted Tinkerbird and a Red-faced Crombec.

We emerged onto dusty soda flats, breathing in the slightly rotten smell of the lake’s alkaline waters. Tiny Kirk’s dik-dik peered out of the scrub and giant Eland moved away to our left. These flats gave the lake its Maasai name – *ol muteita*, mispronounced in Colonial times and thus named Elmenteita. There have been interesting bird sightings here during the migration season, including a Greater-spotted Eagle and a Russian Peregrine, but for now, these birds having returned north, we were content with a Long-crested Eagle, a great many Greater



PHOTOS JULIET BARNES

and Lesser Flamingos, Spoonbills, Great-white Pelicans, Black-winged Stilts, Pied Avocets and waders that fed along the shores. I rode a camel for a while, less for comfort and more for the views, which were breathtaking, the sun gilding the hill known as *Delamere’s nose*, harking back to the 3rd Baron Delamere who leased this land at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Our camp was quickly set up in the shade of a large *Vachellia seyal* and sheltered from the wind, offering us a glimpse of the pink-fringed lake. A herd of Defassa waterbuck stood watching us. The men boiled water for tea, laced with wood smoke. The camels moved away to browse, having been relieved of our luggage.

After a very welcome hot shower beneath the stars and our fire-roasted dinner, we sat around our campfire until we were ready to sleep in comfortable camp beds. I fell asleep inhaling the comforting wafts of camel sweat and smoke, waking periodically to the muttering of flamingos or the occasional Spotted hyaena yip.

As we walked out from our camp after an early breakfast, a chilly July wind saw us wrapped in shukas. There were footprints of Hyaena and Lion on the soda flats and a Buffalo snorted from the nearby sedge grass, startling us before he retreated. The waterfowl continued to feed calmly and I felt reluctant to walk out from this magical world without mod cons. One into which we’d slipped so easily. ●

TOP

Adjacent to Lake Nakuru National Park, the Soysambu Conservancy is home to one of the largest populations of Rothschild’s Giraffe in Kenya.

How to get to Soysambu

The main entrance to Soysambu is 141km from Nairobi, northwest along the A104 highway to Nakuru. It’s worth allowing up to 3 hours for the drive because of traffic, which can be extremely heavy on Friday and Sunday evenings. Details of how to get to your starting point will be provided by Bobong Camels.

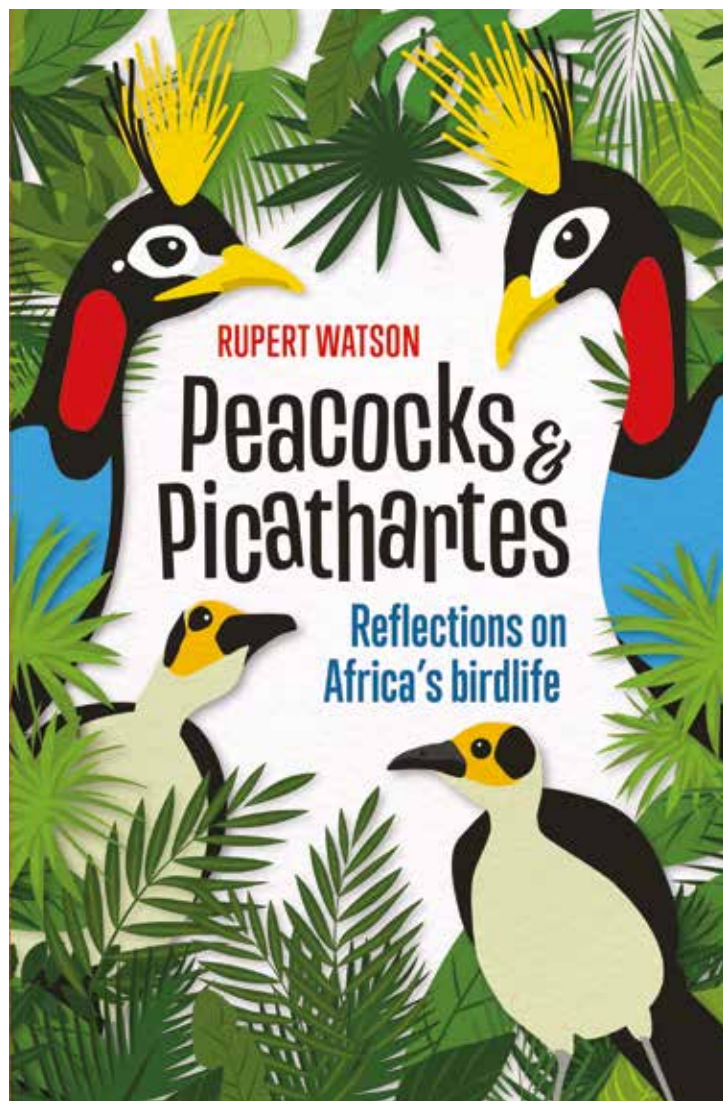
(Check out the vlogs: **Camel Trekking on Soysambu Parts 1 and 2**, on the Soysambu playlist of Mufasa Mike’s YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/2S07KHm>)

Box 5, Rumuruti 20321
Tel: 254 735 243073

Whatsapp
254 715 437492/722 936177
www.bobongcamels.com



JULIET BARNES, a writer and conservationist, has lived on Soysambu for 21 years.



This book has been nothing but a pure joy to read. Watson explains in the preface that it is about birds that are “quintessentially African”, and that his aim is to expand the interest of the reader in Africa’s birdlife by both informing and entertaining.

The focus is primarily on sub-Saharan Africa of which he covers all the major regions without any bias in favour of East Africa. Some of the birds featured are extremely rare, or at least inaccessible to most birders, while others are common and widespread. What I particularly liked about this book is that even common birds are presented in a captivating light, with interesting and little-known facts about them. I certainly learned something new about each of the featured birds.

The first chapter opens with an engaging and captivating introduction to the African continent’s zoogeographic regions, geography, vegetation and climate, as well as the history of its birds and their evolutionary origins. The author fully recognizes the complex and ever-changing nature of bird taxonomy, avoiding getting caught up in the nuances of whether this or that bird is a subspecies of a full species. Instead, he chooses a single taxonomic authority as his reference point throughout the book.

The book’s chapters blend well into each other.

Following the introduction, there is a chapter that is fully dedicated to the 24 bird families endemic to Africa. Amongst these are several of the continent’s most iconic birds like the Shoebill, Secretarybird, Turacos and Picathartes.

Then comes a chapter on the near-endemic bird families, with the majority of their species in Africa. Most of these families probably evolved in Africa and have only recently radiated outwards - like cisticolas, sandgrouse, honeyguides and weavers.

The following chapter covers six special species belonging to widespread families, but which have themselves come to epitomize Africa. With Africa hosting the highest number of raptor species of any continent, I was glad to see two raptors finally featured here - Bateleur and Fish Eagle.

The author avoids dwelling too much on conservation problems, choosing instead to highlight the wonder of the birds themselves and what makes them unique, fascinating and worth protecting as part of Africa’s natural heritage.

He does however include a chapter on “Conservation and Celebration” covering initiatives such as BirdLife International’s Important Bird Areas network, Beesley’s Lark Conservation Program and citizen science projects like the Kenya Bird Map. He raises some of the current concerns facing Africa’s birds, such as the decline in vulture populations, but is more focused on conservation success stories.

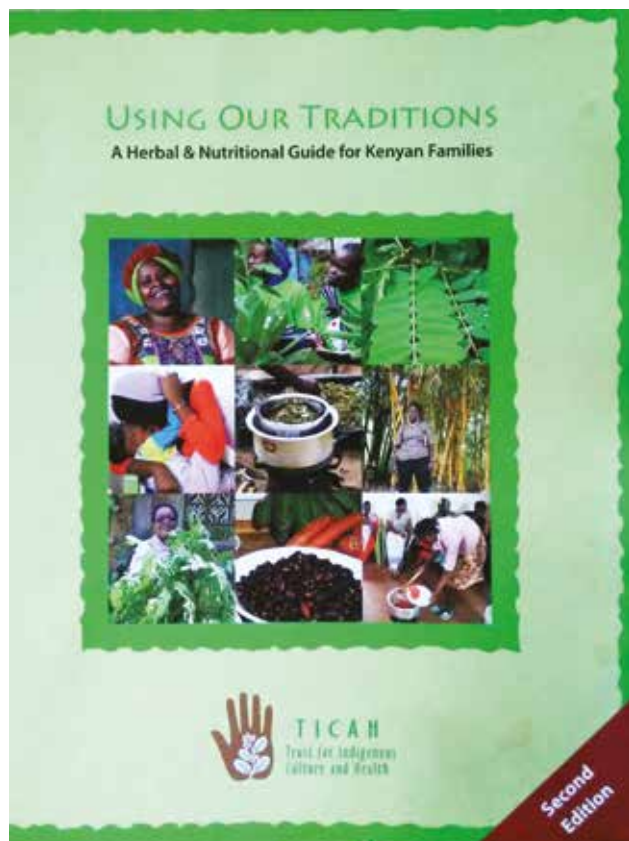
The final chapter is a fascinating look into the history of ornithology in Africa, where Watson highlights key individuals who have inspired him and whose work he has drawn from to write this book. He includes several entertaining anecdotes about pioneering European naturalists in Africa and explains early research in interesting detail.

Short stories of several interesting early discoveries are included, such as how Frederick Jackson’s Kenyan assistant, Baraka, is to thank for revealing that the Pin-tailed Whydah is a brood parasite.

It is a well-researched and enthralling book written in language that the layman would find easy to understand, with little scientific jargon used. I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone who has an interest in the avifauna of Africa. ●

**Reviewed by Sidney Shema
Manager & Coordinator,
Kenya Bird Map Project**

The book is available on Amazon.com, or in Nairobi at Bookstop, Yaya Centre, Between the Lines, Village Market or from the author - rupertwatson48@gmail.com - 0722 237138



There is good news for people interested in herbal remedies and the medicinal plants of Kenya. TICAHA (Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health) has published a book in this area called *Using our Traditions: A Herbal & Nutritional Guide for Kenyan Families*. TICAHA is a Kenya-based non-profit health organisation that focuses on linking health, cultures and indigenous wisdom.

Herbal treatments have long been viewed with suspicion in modern Kenya, classified as anything from grandma potions to witchcraft. Nevertheless, the practice has continued, albeit surreptitiously, particularly in rural areas and low-income urban communities. Attitudes are slowly changing, especially among the middle class, as more people develop an interest in healthy eating and organic foods.

The four-part book begins with the chapter on Healthy Living, covering general self-care, hygiene, the food groups, kitchen pharmacy ingredients and growing herbs at home.

The second chapter discusses the process of harvesting and preserving medicinal plants, with instructions on how to gather different plant parts and the best time for collecting. There is also cautionary note on harvesting in a sustainable manner and avoiding plants from unclean places such as roadsides.

The better part of the book is the third chapter entitled Conditions and Treatments. It reviews more than 60 illness, named in both English and Kiswahili. A synopsis of each condition is given, including the causes, modes of transmission, herbal and nutritional therapies. Body map images show diseases grouped according to parts of the anatomy, making for a quick visual reference.

Besides the usual colds, digestive ailments and minor accidents, the book features significant conditions such as bronchitis, eye and ear infections, childhood ailments, and sexually transmitted diseases. Throughout, readers are advised to seek professional medical help for 'red flag' conditions, or illnesses showing specific symptoms or conditions that are not responding to herbal treatments.

The information is well organised, easy to follow and presented in a practical style. There are colour-coded headings and symbols showing the age suitability of each plant treatment especially for babies and children. Recipes are described for homemade herbal brews, tinctures, infusions, compresses and ointments, with recommendations on how best to consume or apply them. Useful as well are the suggested dosage for infants, children and adults.

The final section contains the index of over 127 plants with the Latin botanical terms and accompanying photographs. The plants are also named in English, Kiswahili and seven local languages, making it easy to look up a species from different angles.

TICAHA deliberately avoided some well-known but endangered medicinal plants. The roots of the mukombera (*Mondia whitei*) plant are believed to have aphrodisiac qualities and it is rapidly being consumed out of existence. The stem of *Prunus Africana* tree is used to treat prostate diseases both in traditional and modern medicine, but overharvesting for local use and export has left the species vulnerable in many parts of Africa.

This is the second edition of *Using Our Traditions*. The first guide, published in 2006, was produced in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the need for affordable nutrition to enhance immunity and the absorption of antiretroviral medication. It was during community outreach workshops and programmes with HIV positive people that the TICAHA team began hearing about traditional therapies and health-supporting foods. With this subsequent edition, there are new remedies and more topical ointments not previously captured.

Ironically, edition two comes in the wake of another insidious virus. "Knowledge about our bodies and our food, about ways to strengthen our immune systems and prevent or manage disease...is just as important as it ever was," writes TICAHA founder and executive director, Mary Ann Burris, in the forward.

Tara Fitzgerald, community development and communications specialist, wrote both books. She collected all the plant information, recorded the traditional treatments and spent hours listening to people's practical experiences of dealing with general health issues. The herbs and remedies come from different cultures across Kenya but much of the knowledge is cross-cultural. ●

Reviewed by Kari Mutu

In Nairobi, the book is available in One Stop Bookstore, Yaya Centre, Karen Provision Stores and Text Book Centre. You can also contact TICAHA direct to order: Tel. 0710 272175 - Mpesa Paybill No: 994347; Account name: Guide



Kifaru is a 2019 documentary that follows the lives of two young Kenyan rhino caretakers at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya. The film is in English and has Kiswahili subtitles. *Kifaru* is the Kiswahili word for rhino. James Mwenda and Joseph Wachira (‘Jojo’) care for ‘Sudan,’ the last known male northern white rhinoceros in the world that died in March 2018 at age of 45.

The film is a portrayal of Sudan’s life through the eyes of his caregivers who observe that “the more he grows old, the more it grows worrying.” The director, David Hambridge, focuses on the joys and sorrows of wildlife conservation through the eyes of these Kenyan rhino caretakers.

From an East African wildlife perspective, *Kifaru*, which won ‘Best Impact Film’ and multiple audience awards, is important for three reasons:

First, it raises awareness about the threat of extinction and the plight of rhinos. Rhinos are slaughtered solely for their

horns, prized as a purported remedy for cancer in Vietnam and a cure for high fever in China (despite the lack of scientific evidence of any medicinal value). The film warns that at current poaching rates, all five rhino species worldwide could disappear within the next decade.

Secondly, it focuses on the human dimension of wildlife conservation by sharing the stories of Kenyan caregivers who lived with Sudan for 10 months of every year, away from their families. The film also explores the philosophical meaning of extinction. Something must have gone wrong for wild animals to require the care of humans. “[It] is a burden given us by the world to save what another man has destroyed,” says Jojo. The other keeper, James Mwenda, describes Sudan as his good friend.

Kifaru depicts the life of Sudan, captive northern white rhinoceros that lived at the Dvůr Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic from 1975 to 2009 and then relocated to Kenya for the rest of his life. In December 2009, Sudan was moved to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy for a “last chance to survive” breeding programme,

along with three other northern white rhinos. It was hoped that Ol Pejeta would provide a more natural habitat and better hormonal balance for the animals to induce breeding.

In the film, Jojo, wonders how he can find hope in a hopeless situation. His job is to take care of Sudan who is struggling to walk, incapacitated by ‘bed sores’. Already in his final years, Sudan’s death looms over Jojo and his other game wardens, who can only do their best to make him comfortable while guarding against poachers.

Even though it is heartbreaking to witness the story of a subspecies becoming extinct, the film simultaneously motivates viewers to help conserve the other rhino subspecies. Sudan leaves behind a daughter Najin and granddaughter Fatu --the only two surviving females of the northern white rhinoceros subspecies. ●

Reviewed by Laura DeLuca and Alex Dudley



ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN KINGDON

TRIBUTE

The Discoveries of Self-Taught Naturalist Antony Archer

(1933-2020)

BY ALEX BELL

Tony Archer passed away on 23rd February 2020, one week after his 87th birthday. From a young age, my father had a passion for natural history, in particular ornithology.

Archer was mentored by John Williams (then ornithologist at Nairobi's Coryndon Museum), who taught him how to collect and prepare a study specimen.

In 1957, Tony embarked on a British Museum expedition to Angola during which he collected an unusual form of the Angola Lark *Mirafra angolensis*. In 1958, Pat Hall (then Head of the British Museum's Bird Room and leader of that 1957 expedition) named it *Mirafra angolensis antonii* after the collector, Antony Archer.

During this same expedition to Angola in 1957, he collected an interesting butterfly that he gave to Bob Carcasson at the Coryndon Museum, who later named it after

him *Ariadne archeri*, a striking Nymphalid. It is currently known as *Ariadne enotrea archeri*. It's one of the Castor Butterflies.

In 1961, Tony Archer collected a small Red-billed Oxpecker near Archer's post (named after Sir Geoffrey Archer, no relation of Tony's) which he gave to John Williams for the Coryndon Museum bird collection. This specimen was later described and named by G.R. Cunningham Van Someren (then ornithologist at

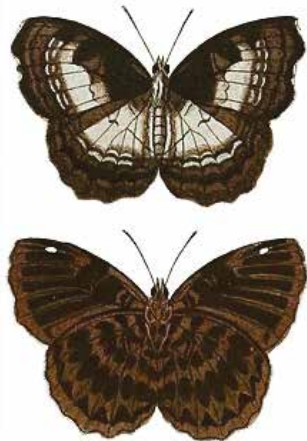


ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN KINGDON

Illustration of *Ariadne enotrea*.

the National Museums of Kenya) as *Buphagus erythrorhuchus archeri*, after the collector. Although the name remains, it is no longer considered a valid subspecies.

In 1963 and from 1967 to 1969, John Williams and Herbert Friedmann (Director of the Los Angeles County Museum) organised a series of expeditions to the western Ugandan forests where Tony headed up a team of collectors. During these expeditions, Tony collected birds in the Bugoma, Bwamba, Kibale, Malabigambo and Sango Bay forests, creating some of the finest collections of birds which are currently housed in the Los Angeles County Museum in California.

He advised and led Carnegie Museum expeditions to the Impenetrable Forest in southwestern Uganda and the Budongo and Siba Forests in Bunyoro. There was no place too far or too difficult for Tony Archer. His many scientific safaris included forests from Kakamega to the Arabuko, Cherangani Hills and the Mau in Kenya among others. Tony conducted ornithological expeditions in 1976 to Madagascar and the Comoro Islands at a time when avifauna was poorly documented among Indian Ocean islands.

Archer's wildlife expertise was all-embracing. Take for instance the Zanzibar Servaline genet of Unguja (Zanzibar) Island in the Tanzanian archipelago. Although known to Zanzibaris, zoologists were unaware of its existence until 1995. When Tony was working in Zanzibar on the Indian House crow programme, he acquired a dried genet skin and skull at Kitogani village that was



Accompanying Tony Archer in the photo, taken during his early safari days, is Abakuna, his trusted gun bearer and life-long friend. Abakuna was a member of the Watta people, immortalised in Major W. Robert Foran's book "The Elephant Hunters of Lado". Abakuna gave up his elephant hunting days to become Tony's gun-bearer and accompanied him on all his expeditions throughout Africa and even to Nepal.

subsequently described as a new subspecies named in his honor, *Genetta servalina archeri*.

It was not until 2003 that servaline genets were photographed in groundwater forest and dry scrub by camera traps at Jozani-Chawaka Bay National Park for the first time. The survival of the Servaline genet on the island parallels Tony's interest and study in other island species such as Aders duiker (*Cephalophus adersi*), which he researched for a conservation management plan. He was even involved in a dispiriting quest for the Zanzibar leopard (*Panthera pardus adersi*). In Kenya, Tony Archer's enthusiasm for science led him to study the distribution and habitats of Roosevelt's sable antelopes. He also observed the least known felid, the African Golden Cat *Caracal aurata* on Mount Kenya.

For five years, from 1990 to 1995, Tony Archer led an incredibly successful programme to eradicate the invasive and destructive Indian House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, funded by FINNIDA (the Finnish International Development Agency) and the Commission of Lands and Environment, Zanzibar. The

programme managed to eliminate over 80 per cent of the crows. Sadly, due to political upheavals after 1995, FINNIDA pulled out of Zanzibar and the programme collapsed.

Crow eradication on the Kenyan coast was successful into the mid-1990s until interference by the government put a stop to the programme. Archer is widely applauded for his efforts in this field by all who remember what he achieved. He consulted on similar programmes in Djibouti, Mauritius and Durban in South Africa. His definitive paper 'Control of the Indian House Crow in Eastern Africa' presented at the 10th Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Kampala, Uganda in 2000, laid the cornerstone for all later House Crow control programmes along the Kenya and Tanzania coasts.

My deepest thanks to Don Turner and Brian Herne for information included in this tribute. ●



ALEX BELL, daughter of Tony Archer, is a Landscape Architect and CEO Ecoscapes Kenya Limited.



TSHIRTS



KIDS TSHIRTS



WATER BOTTLES



HOODIES



MAASAI SHUKAS WITH FLEECE



ECO BAGS



SAFARI HATS



PEBBLE BAGS



JUTE BAGS

Shop to support!

East African Wild Life Society new designs now available.

Don't miss out!

www.eawildlife.org



+254 203874145 / 203871437
+254 203871335 / 203870837



+254 722 202 473 / 734 600 632



Base Titanium's Kwale Mine is Kenya's first large-scale mining project and accounts for 65% of Kenya's mineral sector. Mindful of the future land use, Base has heavily invested in rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation. Rehabilitation is only part of a broader post mining land use programme.

The Kwale Mine has:

- Minimised any residual environmental impacts resulting from mining operations,
- Utilised regular monitoring to assess rehabilitation success and established vegetation in rehabilitated areas,
- Created and nurtured a biodiversity corridor to link the remnant patches of indigenous forest occurring within the mining lease to the existing Gongoni Forest Reserve,
- Converted former silt traps into functional wetland areas with propagation and introduction of wetland vegetation such as sedges, reeds, water-lilies and rushes,
- Planted over 38,000 trees including over 7,000 trees of conservation significance and 1,800 critically endangered species.

