



AFRICAN WILDLIFE

News

FALL 2020

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YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK ACROSS AFRICA'S LANDSCAPES

Our mission is to ensure wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.

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WE SAY GOODBYE TO A DEAR FRIEND



Dear AWF Friends,

In July, the world lost a very kind, gentle, and giving soul. H.E. Benjamin Mkapa — former president of Tanzania, visionary statesman, dedicated conservationist, and vice-chair of AWF’s Board of Trustees — was taken from us suddenly and much too soon.

President Mkapa’s commitment to wildlife conservation and brilliant diplomatic statesmanship were second to none, and his portfolio and impact certainly transcended his time as Tanzania’s president (1995-2005).

He was one of the continent’s most celebrated critical thinkers, a pragmatic leader, and a diplomat and negotiator who brought peace to troubled countries in Africa. He championed plans and policies that blend Africa’s development aspirations with conservation priorities. He wanted Africa to be a shining example of a sustainable green economy centered on the affiliation of conservation and human development.

As vice-chair of AWF’s board, President Mkapa was instrumental in framing our new 10-year strategic vision. One of our primary 10-year goals is promoting African conservation leadership and ownership — inherently the best approach and, we believe, the only path to long-term success. In his own life and accomplishments, President Mkapa was the exemplar of this value and its rationale.

He also was dedicated to nurturing young leaders. Most recently, he helped AWF complete a foreword for a conservation book written by fifth-graders in Brooklyn, New York — *One Special Lion: The Story of Sion* (see page 8). I’m so happy not only that we have some of President Mkapa’s last public messages, but also that one of his last actions for us bridged the generations to create conservation awareness.

Mzee Mkapa was not only interested in conservation from a political perspective. He loved the land and its wildlife. On safari, he would grow as excited as a child to see elephants, lions, and other wild species.

Please see page 3 for an article that tells you a bit more about President Mkapa’s life. And please join me in a spirit of determination to take up the mantle where President Mkapa left it. Let us foster and meaningfully support Africa’s future conservation leaders and be generous of heart in the conviction that Africa belongs not just to its people but also to its irreplaceable wildlife.

Sincerely,

Kaddu Sebunya
Chief Executive Officer

IN MEMORIAM: H.E. BENJAMIN MKAPA

Few people exemplified visionary leadership and the goodness in humanity the way the late H.E Benjamin Mkapa did.

He journeyed from working as a journalist to serving as Tanzania’s president. As president, he led the country in a transition to a free-market economy designed to attract greater foreign investment. And he worked to further conservation and sustainable development, strengthen Tanzanian democracy, entrench civil rights, and reduce poverty.

Once retired from the presidency, Mkapa engaged actively in public life and continued to influence politics and public affairs in Africa. He joined AWF’s board of trustees in 2006, and in 2011 he began serving as AWF board’s vice-chair, a role he continued until his sudden death, making him AWF’s longest-serving trustee.

He was a passionate conservationist, but always viewed issues with a pragmatic eye. He championed the need for wildlife and wildlands conservation in a developing Africa and saw the best future in empowering and engaging communities in conservation.

Mkapa believed in nurturing young leaders, and in 2014 he conceptualized the African Leadership Forum in collaboration with the Uongozi Institute. This forum creates a space for Africa’s influential elders to interact with young leaders around challenges facing the continent and help develop sustainable solutions.

At 81, he still worked to help create a better future — promoting political stability, mentoring others, and championing conservation efforts across the continent.



As the AWF family, we extend our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and the people of Tanzania. The work he performed in his lifetime is a reminder of what authentic leadership can be. We will miss Mzee Mkapa’s cheer, gentle humor, passion for conservation, and his rare wisdom.

Mobilizing a wide-ranging pandemic response — for people and wildlife

Among the many potential costs of the COVID-19 pandemic is the prospect of losing decades’ worth of hard-won conservation gains. Given the links between pandemics and exploitation of wildlife for meat, traditional “medicines,” and other products, it’s critical to address both the ecological and human impacts.

More than ever, protecting wildlife and wild lands means supporting local communities that urgently need assistance because the tourism they depend on has virtually stopped.

Without jobs and income, people may escalate levels of bushmeat hunting and poaching to provide for their families.

This past spring, AWF mobilized a comprehensive crisis response to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce its impact. We’re helping communities scale up prevention measures, providing resources to conservation authorities, and directly supporting communities.

As of mid-August, we had reached more than 13,000 people with COVID-19 awareness and prevention messaging and distributed more than 30,000 hygiene kits (masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer). So that rangers can continue their anti-poaching patrols, we’re providing critically needed fuel as well as food rations and personal protective equipment.



BLACK RHINO NUMBERS ARE ON THE RISE

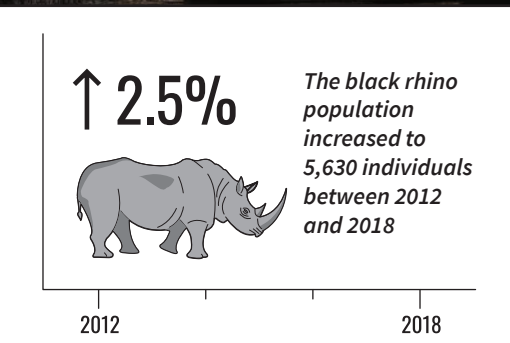
Some good news for rhinos: The black rhino population increased by 2.5 percent (to 5,630 individuals) between 2012 and 2018, according to a March 2020 report by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Poaching is the main threat to black rhinos — much of it fueled by demand for Traditional Chinese Medicine. This demand persists even though rhino horn is made of keratin (the same substance found in hair and fingernails) and offers no health benefits. People also buy rhino horns to display as trophies, signaling wealth and status.

AWF is on the frontline in the battle to save black rhinos. Our detection and tracker dogs help authorities capture rhino-horn smugglers and also serve as deterrents to rhino poaching. We support critical rhino

conservation in sanctuaries, including the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary and Intensive Protection Zone in Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, and the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, the largest black rhino sanctuary in East Africa.

AWF also assists in training and equipping scouts and rangers in skills such as ecological monitoring, allowing authorities to keep track of rhino population numbers, status, and key threats, and to devise



mitigation measures. And, to halt demand for rhino horn, we engage the public in awareness efforts about the illegal rhino-horn trade and the horrors of poaching.

Giraffe social networks are changing due to human interactions

Over the past few decades, giraffe populations across the continent have declined by 40 percent, suffering from significant habitat loss as land is converted to accommodate Africa's growing population of people.

This leads to increased interactions between humans and giraffes, which may be affecting the fundamental social structure of the species. New research, published in June in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*, suggests that despite the absence of major conflict, the simple act of living close to human settlements can be harmful to giraffes.

Researchers studied adult female Maasai giraffes in Tanzania for six years. They observed that proximity to human activity negatively affected social structures

within giraffe populations, leading to weaker relationships and higher levels of isolation. Developing social relationships and maintaining genetic diversity are vital for species to survive. Relationships within populations affect how individuals feed, defend themselves against predators, raise their young, and respond to environmental changes.

Interestingly, mothers with calves tended to gravitate towards human activity more than those without, as the presence of humans leads to lower predation levels.

AWF is engaged in giraffe conservation in several African countries. In Kenya, we're helping to actualize the National Recovery and Action Plan for Giraffes, a strategy developed with AWF's support.



A DREAM BECOMES A LEGACY

By Harriette Frank, AWF Kilimanjaro Society Member

From childhood, I always loved animals and Africa, but I never imagined I would ever visit through anything but books and documentaries. Fortunately, my children always loved travel and wildlife as much as I did. My very first safari was with my daughter Lara, in fact, after she finished college, I took her to the Serengeti to see the “dream Africa” we had always longed for. Within three years, I had gone on safaris with my sons, Lawrence, Miles, and John, too.

Now, I've been to Africa 15 times and every time I have fallen more in love with it. So has my family—my daughter-in-law has even taken her MBA students to help develop small businesses in Cape Town! On our most recent trip, we got to see the seeds of that legacy, as well as continue our own. In December, my

children and grandchildren and I all returned to where Lara and I visited that first time, 27 years ago. We went down to the Tarangire River and spread some of my late husband's ashes.

The legacy of African conservation is best ensured by understanding that it is just that: a legacy. I appreciate that AWF works with governments to help them see that wildlife can contribute to their economies as much as agriculture can, investing in local communities with that understanding in mind. I am proud and grateful to be supporting that legacy, both to get to leave AWF a percentage of my estate and to get to share this knowledge and passion with my family.

Find out how you can leave a legacy for wildlife at awf.org/legacy



Wildlife Watch: AFRICAN CLAWLESS OTTER

Short and stocky with back legs longer than their front legs, the African clawless otter might have an awkward gait, but in the water they're incredibly graceful. Around two and a half feet long and 40 pounds, they're larger than many of their relatives in the weasel family.

African clawless otters are found throughout sub-Saharan Africa. As aquatic animals, they build their dens to have easy access to water. They'll share these dens with up to five other otters, leaving at dawn and dusk to hunt. Primarily, though, they're solitary animals.

Mothers and their young are the exception — family groups will stay together for the first year after birth before parting ways. During that year, pups will learn how to swim and hunt and will frolic with their siblings — play-fighting, swimming, and sliding. Pups have even been observed playing fetch with pebbles.

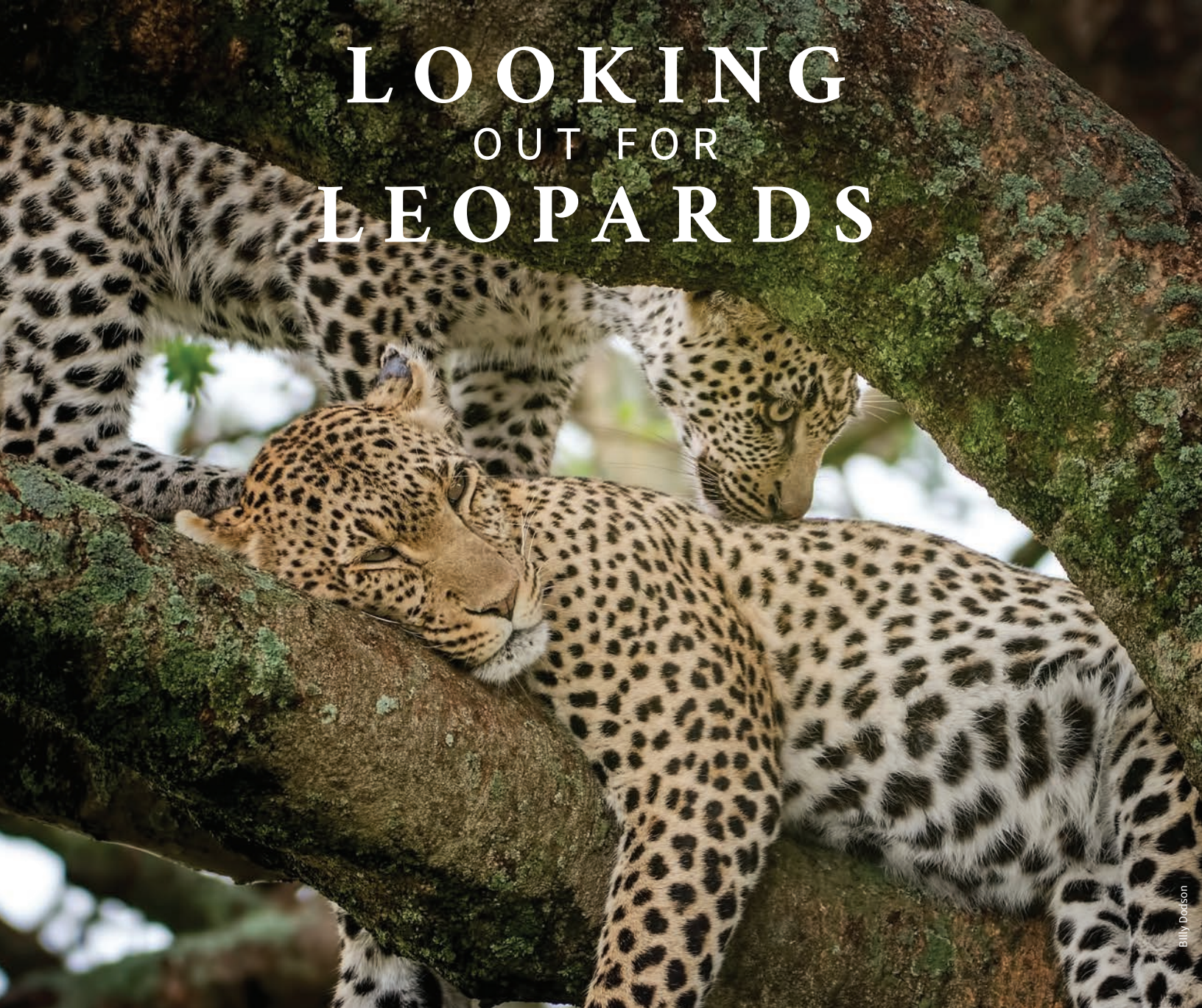
The number of these otters is dropping and their conservation status is near-threatened. Habitat loss, retaliatory killings, and poaching endanger the otter. Recently it was discovered that rat poison has made



its way into various watercourses and subsequently the bloodstream of the African clawless otter.

AWF supports the ecosystem of the African clawless otter and other aquatic creatures. In southern Tanzania AWF's hydrologist helps keep waterways clear of pollution, teaching communities efficient ways of managing their water sources and overseeing community-led river monitoring initiatives.

LOOKING OUT FOR LEOPARDS



They're gorgeous creatures. Solid black dots on their faces, chests, and feet that break into the signature cracked rosettes along their backs, each of their coats bearing a unique pattern of spots.

The leopards' rosettes are a familiar pattern, but in the wild, they can be difficult to see. This difficulty is not only due to the camouflage the markings provide — helping to break up the predator's outline — or to the creature's remarkable stealth, the silence with which it's able to stalk its prey through the night. It's because the leopard's numbers are in decline. But the leopard is far too remarkable and valuable a creature to lose.

With a long frame, short legs, and a broad head with a powerful jaw, this muscular feline makes a powerful predator. An agile and studious hunter, the leopard will shadow its prey before pouncing, breaking out into a sprint at speeds up to 36 miles per hour. If the target is caught, it's quickly dispatched via a bite to the neck; if the prey evades initial capture, the leopard moves on, lacking the stamina to continue the chase.

The cat may carry its meal into a tree, climbing up to 50 feet while hoisting an animal that may be larger or heavier than itself. Leopards are the largest member of the cat family to climb trees regularly, but there's good reason for them to do so. Storing their food aloft keeps it away from scavengers and gives leopards a few extra days to eat.



Leopards are highly capable climbers, using their long tails to help them balance on narrow branches. But these aren't the only feats that make leopards so impressive. They can jump 10 feet vertically and leap 20 feet forward, can hear five times more sounds than humans, and can even go 10 days without drinking, as they get most of their hydration from their prey.

They might be the smallest of the big cats, but they're also the species with the widest range. A creature of great diversity, leopards are the quintessential variety pack. While they're found throughout Africa and Asia, it's not just the geography that separates subspecies — the leopard's habitat is unlimited. Mountainsides, rainforests, savannas, deserts, even suburbs and cities, the leopard is a species determined to survive. And within each of these environments, over the course of hundreds of thousands of years, leopards have adapted to fit into each in the precise ways they must to survive.

Their fur color changes with the background they're set against — a yellow-brown for dry savannas and deserts, a reddish-orange for forests and dense vegetative cover. And the spots change too: circular in East Africa and squarish in South Africa. All of these adaptations enable the leopards to fit into their environments and thrive.

But no amount of adaptations can keep leopards safe from the mounting pressures pushing them closer to extinction



BIG THREATS TO THE SMALLEST OF THE ORIGINAL BIG FIVE

Categorized as "vulnerable" by the IUCN, leopards have disappeared from 65 percent of their historic range in Africa. Despite their status, no comprehensive estimate of their population exists.

What is known is the multitude of threats facing leopards — the same human factors pushing many other species closer to extinction: habitat loss and fragmentation, prey depletion, human-wildlife conflict, and the illegal wildlife trade.

It's believed that between 1970 and 2005, leopard populations in West and East Africa fell over 50 percent due to decreases in prey base. It's also estimated that in the last three generations alone (about 22 years), the leopard population has fallen over 30 percent. Humans are putting an incredible strain on leopards.

A recent study found that in overexploited leopard populations (those in which humans caused over half of the deaths), the killing of males upset the social structure and led to greater inbreeding — threatening the genetic makeup of the offspring. When adult males are no longer present to force younger males to disperse, the young males stay close. Then, siblings are more likely to mate, and the gene pool, in turn, is more likely to suffer, leaving leopards more susceptible to genetic defects and illnesses.

"In mountainsides, rainforests, savannas, deserts, even suburbs and cities — the leopard is a species determined to survive."

LEOPARD SPOTS FOR YEARS TO COME

But, both despite and because of these threats, AWF remains at the forefront of fighting for leopards. Whether we are building predator-proof *bomas* to prevent human-wildlife conflict, providing rangers with ample resources for anti-poaching patrols, or advocating for leopards and other animals that get stolen from their homes for the illegal pet trade, we're protecting leopards across the continent.

At Soysambu Ranch, a key wildlife corridor in Kenya, leopards were driven out by agricultural over-expansion. But when a community conservancy was developed, and the land recovered, the predators returned — an important indicator of the improving ecosystem health. AWF is now working with conservancy leaders to develop a sustainable tourism plan. Revenue generated from tourism will incentivize conservation and promote responsible land use — benefiting both the people and the animals.

In Cameroon's Campo Ma'an National Park, AWF works with Tropical Forest and Rural Development. This local organization trains women and helps them develop sustainable incomes by selling non-timber forest products like honey and hazelnuts. Activities like these are revitalizing the rainforest and allowing the leopards and other animals within to thrive.

There are so many more leopards yet to be spotted, and they will be — for years to come.

- EXPERIENCE -
**THE MAGNIFICENCE
 OF AFRICA IN 2021**

Good news: We are in the midst of planning an exciting array of safari adventures to begin in **May 2021**, with trips scheduled for **Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Ethiopia**. With AWF's presence of six decades on the continent and 20 years of crafting stellar safari experiences, AWF is uniquely positioned to offer exceptional itineraries that blend wildlife viewing with chances to see AWF's projects and learn about critical conservation issues.

To learn more about our safaris, please reach out to our safari program manager

Carter Smith
 csmith@awf.org

or on Twitter
 @CarterSafari



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SAY NO TO THE BIG CAT TRADE

Protect Africa's lions, leopards, and cheetahs from the big cat trade

Roadside zoos and cub-petting operations — like those seen by millions in Netflix's *Tiger King* series — are directly contributing to the wildlife trade. And the truth is that many people who love big cats are often unknowing contributors to the big cat trade by taking part in activities like cub-petting and keeping big cats as pets.

Even as their numbers decrease in the wild, unscrupulous cub-petting operations, claiming to be sanctuaries and zoos, are reaping profits as they contribute to big cats' decline. And so do big cat "pet" owners who keep these wild animals in their homes.

In the United States, you can support the Big Cat Public Safety Act by sending a message to your member of Congress:

AWF.ORG/STAND-UP-FOR-CATS

And whether or not you're in the U.S., please take our pledge to never partake in cub-petting or the big cat trade:

AWF.ORG/NO-TRADE



One Special Lion: The Story of Sion

Fifth-graders at P.S. 107 John W. Kimball Learning Center, an elementary school in Brooklyn, New York, collaborated with AWF to produce this book featuring the kid's original artwork and writing. It also includes a foreword by the late former President of Tanzania, H. E. Benjamin W. Mkapa. All proceeds support AWF's lion conservation work at the Manyara Ranch in Tanzania, where Sion lives with her pride.

Go to awf.org/sion to get your copy of this inspirational book!

