



YEARS OF VISIONARY
CONSERVATION
LEADERSHIP

AWF ON THE GROUND

*A roundup of 2021 field highlights
from the African Wildlife Foundation*





ETHIOPIA

SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

One warm Saturday morning in June, a small group of AWF's Ethiopia staff members set out for the Simien Mountains National Park to disburse payments to community members involved in a land-management project funded by German-owned investment and development bank KFW.

Working with the local project coordinator, the team set up its field office as a base from which to pay everyone who helped restore and maintain the park (fixing gullies and controlling erosion). The program provides badly needed income for community members hit hard by COVID-19-related tourism shutdowns.

The payment day was an exercise in synchrony and coordination. One person got the ink pad ready, another lined up community members according to the list, and another set up the pay station. Everyone got in line and stepped forward as their names were called to place their fingers on the ink pad. No signatures for most villagers here, only fingerprints. They swiftly moved through the queue,



picked up their money, and left. They were eager to get to a nearby town where the local Saturday market was already underway.

So far, some 2,332 individuals — 1,654 men and 678 women— have benefitted from this cash-for-work program, enabling them to meet the basic needs for their families while taking care of the park.

KENYA AND TANZANIA

TSAVO-MKOMAZI

Kenya is on the cusp of yet another drought and, as is usually the case, wildlife are among the first casualties. In the Tsavo-Mkomazi landscape, poaching rates have spiked as food-insecure families look to make a living through commercializing game meat. To mitigate these threats, AWF has been working closely with communities and government authorities in Kenya and Tanzania to protect conservation gains. One of the key focus areas is giraffe conservation. These efforts are paying off.

Between April and August, AWF helped establish a rapid-response unit for the Kasigau corridor, which incorporates 11 ranches within the Tsavo landscape. Working in poaching hotspots, AWF-trained scouts arrested 11 suspects with bushmeat from various species, including giraffes. Additionally, the scouts retrieved 23 snares from various ranches. Seventy-eight new wildlife cases were recorded and monitored in courts within the landscape.



“The AWF giraffe conservation project is a big success. This year, we have only witnessed one case of giraffe poaching, and this happened outside our ranch. In contrast, last year there were at least five giraffe poaching incidents,” said Henry Mwaluma, acting manager of Taita Ranch, one of the beneficiary ranches.

TANZANIA

MANYARA RANCH

Twenty-year-old Lemapy Saidi is a herder from the Esilalei Village adjacent to the AWF-managed Manyara Ranch. His goats were among those vaccinated in a drive that AWF organized for livestock belonging to community members neighboring the ranch.

“We appreciate the efforts by AWF to keep our animals healthy, as well as their conservation efforts that have improved the state of Manyara Ranch. We enjoy improved pasture and improved livestock breeds as a result of our partnership with AWF,” Saidi said.

The vaccinations were conducted in June 2021 after Manyara Ranch received 30,000 vaccine doses to protect its livestock from *peste des petits ruminants*, also known as sheep-and-goat plague. The vaccines were handed over to AWF at the ranch offices by Department of Livestock officials from the Monduli District Council for use on the ranch and for distribution to nearby communities.



Manyara Ranch is a mixed-use ranch, hosting key wildlife populations including lions and elephants, while also home to a thriving commercial livestock program boasting some 800 heads of cattle and 500 sheep.

The ranch also supports the livestock herds of two neighboring communities, Oltukai and Esilalei, with improved cattle breeds as well as pasture and water points during the dry season.

TANZANIA

KILOMBERO

AWF joined hands with the Tanzanian government, schools, and other non-governmental organizations to spearhead weeklong World Environment Day celebrations in Kilombero District in June. AWF led tree-planting exercises, forest cleanups, and demonstrations on the biodiversity protection work currently underway in the district.

“We mobilized schools and community organizations to clean up Udzungwa Mountains National Park, as well as plant trees in degraded areas within the region. We also held an exhibition at Mang’ula Primary School to showcase conservation initiatives,” said Pastor Magingi, AWF’s Tanzania country coordinator. “This helped to build community appreciation of the environment and brought everyone together to participate in taking care of our natural resources.”

AWF has been working in Kilombero District to support community conservation and sustainable-development initiatives, including a project that promotes use of sustainable fuel made from rice husks to reduce tree-cutting for charcoal.



In addition, we are encouraging reforestation efforts across the district and providing farmers with high-yield, drought-resistant seeds to improve their rice, cocoa, and sugarcane harvests through climate-smart agriculture. In the past three years, the community has planted 600,000 trees and restored farmland, riverbanks, and the Ruipa Wildlife Corridor, a protected area.

UGANDA

MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK

In Diima Parish on the outskirts of the Murchison Falls National Park, 60-year-old Flavia Akumu was one of 60 farmers AWF selected to grow chili as a supplement for incomes severely depleted by cyclical droughts. Chili is a buffer crop whose sharp smell stops elephants from wandering into farmlands and destroying food crops, thus preventing human-wildlife conflict. Flavia harvested her first chili crop this October, which she sold at a handsome profit.

“We have so far sold chili worth around UGX 1,000,000 (US\$ 280),” she said. “This money is helping us to construct a small chicken house and to expand our passion-fruit growing project. I am also encouraging my son to plant chili because it gives more profit than any other crop.”

For an elderly woman living in one of Uganda’s most arid rural areas, financial independence is integral to survival. Agriculture remains the main source of livelihood for rural women in Africa, but



their efforts are often hampered by severe weather changes, challenges accessing credit for farming inputs, and disputes over land rights. Chili-growing has given women like Flavia a lifeline because chili does not take up too much space in already small family plots and can tolerate long periods of low rain and intense heat.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

LOMAKO

AWF Wemo Nkanyama was a poacher for many years, regularly making excursions into the Lomako-Yokokala Wildlife Reserve to kill wildlife and make a living. But not anymore. In October 2021, Nkanyama was among five poachers who symbolically surrendered their firearms to government authorities and formally denounced poaching. They promised that henceforth they would work with their communities to protect biodiversity in the reserve, which houses a leading research center for the conservation of bonobos.

Nkanyama received an AWF microgrant of US\$ 200, funded through the Arcus Foundation, which he will use to set up a small business to support his family. He is among 270 business owners in the landscape whom AWF trained over three months in entrepreneurship as an alternative to unsustainable natural-resource exploitation.

“I am happy to be among those who will benefit from this AWF grant and happy to no longer be a



Wemo Nkanyama (above)

poacher. Poaching never allowed me to efficiently meet my family’s needs, and it once almost cost me my life, leaving me with this wound on my left arm,” said Nkanyama.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

BILI-UELE

In 2021, a new aircraft was delivered to the AWF office in Bili-Uele in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This plane will be integral to continued operations and logistics in this expansive forest landscape, where travel is fraught, impeded by poor road networks and vast distances.

AWF purchased the aircraft with the support of the European Union under the Preserving Biodiversity and Fragile Ecosystems in Central Africa program. This program aims to improve conservation management and governance of the Bili-Mbomu Core Conservation Area for the benefit of both wildlife and people. It is a collaboration between AWF and l'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (which is the DRC's wildlife authority), Maisha Consulting, and law enforcement partner JURISTRALÉ to implement conservation initiatives including ecological monitoring, anti-poaching patrols, sustainable livelihoods development, and land-use planning in and around the protected area.



“The plane will allow us to visit parts of the landscape that we could not get to for a long time due to the difficulty of access by foot,” said former Bili-Uele technical advisor Matthew Bowen. The new access “will enable us to see and photograph wildlife in the expansive Bili-Uele landscape, which is difficult to do whilst on the ground, and [it] will improve our collection of biomonitoring information. The aerial view will also help us complement our eco-guard patrols. We can tell them what we see from above to strengthen and streamline our fight against poaching activities.”



ZIMBABWE

MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

Zimparks has a new boat patrolling the Zambezi River, courtesy of AWF! The 12-seater, state-of-the-art boat, which we handed over to Zimparks in August, is fitted with sensors that allow it to detect human activity on the river day and night.

“This boat will be a game-changer for conservation work along the Zambezi,” said Zimparks Director General Fulton Mangwanya. “It will allow us to promote cross-boundary collaborations and enhance joint river patrols in the protection of our shared natural resources.”

The boat is named after Agrippa Nhamo, a wildlife ranger killed by poachers in 1989 while protecting rhinos in the Zambezi Valley.





ZIMBABWE

MBIRE DISTRICT

Simon Dumba has lived in Mbire for the past 20 years. After retirement from his work as a shop manager, he moved to Kanyemba Ward in Mbire District and started farming cotton. Unfortunately, he found himself spending most of his time guarding his field from marauding elephants. But help was on the way. In 2018 he joined a team of trainees who volunteered to undertake chili-pepper production, supported by AWF. He has never regretted the decision.

“With money made from the last sale of my chilis, I bought 10 corrugated iron sheets for my house, 10 bags of cement that I used to build my relatives’ graves, paid some guys to dig a pit latrine for me, and paid US\$ 100 to a family that assisted me in picking the chilis,” said Dumba with pride.

Dumba started out with a single chili-seed pack on an acre of his farmland. After harvest, he and 22 other chili farmers from the ward sent their harvest to market, facilitated by AWF. This season, he harvested 250 kilograms, which he sold at 2.30/kg, realizing US\$ 530.



“I will not stop producing chilies, because this is good money,” said the 73-year-old. Dumba no longer must guard his farm against elephants, as his acrid chili crops deter elephants from straying into his farm. He also sells chili to other farmers and the problem-animals control unit in his community. Overall, chili farming is “money-making farming,” he says.



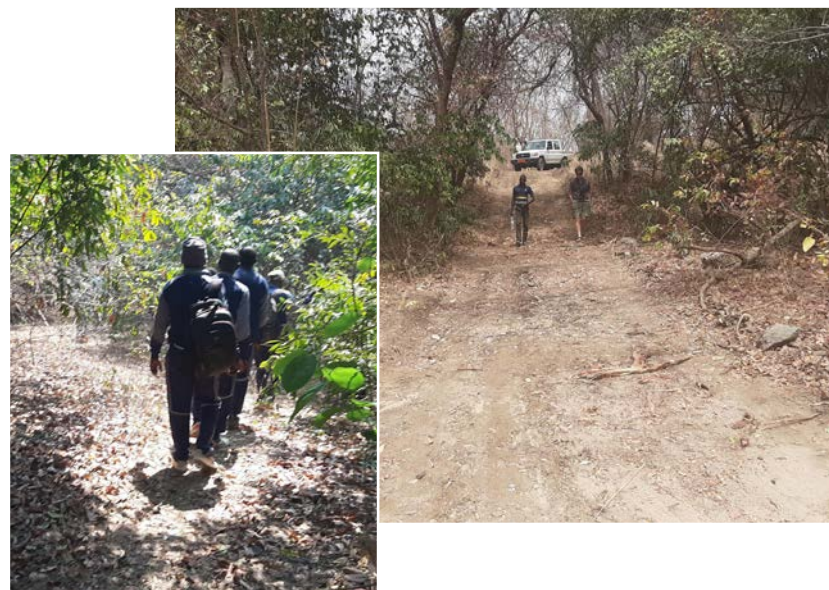
CAMEROON

FARO NATIONAL PARK

Faro has been counting its wildlife — you can't conserve what you can't measure. This year, with technical support from AWF and funding from the European Union, Faro conducted a wildlife inventory that revealed that the park is home to 30 species of mammals, more than 900 hippos, and 72 fish species.

“The wildlife inventory helped identify key species and their threats, and, as a result, we have reoriented our surveillance strategy,” said Sali Moubare Rodrigue, head of the park's antipoaching unit.

AWF has been working with park officials to clear debris and reopen roads overgrown with vegetation. The improved access for rangers and other officials made the inventory possible. “The reopened roads and improved infrastructure have made patrols easier. Rangers now have access to wildlife hotspots and can address transhumance (nomadic movement with livestock) and poaching,” Rodrigue said.



The improvements have also benefited ecotourism, which is a revenue driver for the local community. “Many people have visited this year using roads opened in the park,” he said.



CAMEROON

CAMPO MA'AN

Indigenous women in Campo Ma'an are smiling all the way to the bank. This year, 70 women from local cooperatives made a staggering US\$ 28,633 from the sales of non-timber forest products, an initiative supported by AWF.

AWF conducted campaigns to sensitize the local communities about the value of non-timber forest products both as a source of livelihood and a tool for conservation, reducing reliance on poaching, logging, and other exploitative activities. The women turned to non-timber forest products such as bush mango and seeds, which they process into beauty products. To date, women from nine indigenous communities on the park's periphery have participated. AWF also organized exchange visits so the beneficiaries could learn about how to market their products to improve sales.

These tactics have worked, tripling incomes. Many of the women say they will use their earnings on household needs, food, as well as school fees for their children.





CANINES FOR CONSERVATION

As the travel industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, AWF's tracker dogs have become even more integral in the fight against wildlife trafficking. The dogs, deployed to major transport hubs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Botswana, have been busy, as evidenced by these statistics for the period between July and September 2021.

- In Kenya, the dogs searched 605 flights, 3.8 million pieces of luggage, 80 trucks, and 95 buses. No wildlife contraband was found.
- In Tanzania, the dogs searched 1,245 flights, 36,786 cargo items, and 118,149 pieces of luggage. The teams found 33.5 kilograms of raw ivory and arrested seven suspects.
- In Uganda, the team searched 1,094 flights, 1.5 million cargo items, and 20.2 million pieces of luggage. They also conducted three intelligence operations, resulting in one person arrested and the recovery of 741 kilograms of raw elephant tusks.
- In Botswana, the team searched 1,432 pieces of luggage and 1,362 vehicles. They found elephant tusks, elephant feet, game meat, unlicensed rifles, and expired hunting permits. Thirteen persons were arrested.
- In Mozambique, the team searched 95 flights, 4,890 cargo items, and 42,100 pieces of luggage. No wildlife contraband was found.





CYBERCRIME INVESTIGATIONS

AWF in September released the results of its wildlife cybercrime investigations unit in Uganda, revealing resounding success in the tracking and investigation of wildlife poachers and traffickers through mobile devices.

In a joint debrief meeting with the Uganda Wildlife Authority in Kampala, AWF announced that two successful operations were conducted between May and July 2021, leading to the arrest of 33 suspects and the recovery of contraband including 14.2 kilograms of raw elephant ivory, 3.5 kilograms of dry pangolin scales, 559 kilograms of assorted wildlife meat, 80 green pigeons, two tortoises, two kob (an antelope species), horn, and weapons. Also recovered were two motorcycles, eight fishing nets, 30 wire snares, 10 canoes, six mobile phones and one computer.

In April, AWF had conducted cybercrime forensics training for Authority investigators, successfully certifying the officers in mobile forensic investigations to enhance in-house capacity in the context of illegal wildlife trade. The participants learned how to identify, acquire, store, and move



digital evidence through chains of custody. They were also sensitized on the value of incorporating digital evidence in routine investigations to achieve successful prosecution and deterrent sentencing.

“The training helped us identify and profile wildlife crime suspects. We also [must] get enough evidence, which can be submitted for forensic investigation. This has helped build our capacity to address wildlife cybercrime and better protect our natural resources,” said Joshua Karamagi, wildlife crime and investigations manager at the Authority.