

STATE OF AFRICA

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO
AFRICAN WILDLIFE NEWS



Martin Harvey

A SITDOWN WITH THE CEO

AWF CEO Patrick Bergin offers his take on the state of Africa and AWF's role on the continent

Beyond his letter in each issue of *African Wildlife News*, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) members don't often get to hear at length from CEO Patrick Bergin about the greatest issues affecting Africa's wildlife and conservation. As 2013 winds down, we sat down with our CEO to get his take on the past year, the new initiatives AWF has recently launched and more. Here's what he had to say.

Q: How would you characterize the state of AWF and of Africa in 2013?

A: To me, there's this great paradox: Things are going really well for AWF. As an institution, we're getting stronger, better. We're innovating. We're having more success finding friends and supporters.

That's good, because African wildlife needs the strongest friends it can find right now. African wildlife is now under threat from two major sources: One is the pace of modernization and development that's going on in Africa. Two is the—in some ways unexpected—resurgence of poaching.



Noor Khamis

AWF CEO Patrick Bergin

Q: What would you say to those who feel like the poaching situation has become hopeless?

A: In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a terrible epidemic of poaching in Africa. That's when AWF did our "Only Elephants Should Wear Ivory" campaign, and we found a way to slam the brakes on this poaching. We

sent very clear, unambiguous messages to the marketplace that, if you're in the ivory business, you had better pivot and very quickly find something else to do, because this business is going to come to a screeching halt—and that's exactly what happened. With the ivory ban, [the change] was tangible.

So we know what success looks like. Now, it's taken all of us some time to realize the severity and pervasiveness of this second epidemic. Governments, NGOs, everybody has to again send a clear message that the illegal wildlife trade will be shut down.

People would love to see this happen very quickly. Unfortunately, it's a big, complex machine. With the ivory trade, we're talking about 30 to 40 African elephant range states and numerous countries that are source or consumer markets or transit points. It's not as easy as flipping a switch.

But the pressure is mounting. AWF has a number of initiatives underway. The U.S. government is getting involved, former Secretary Clinton has gotten involved, celebrities are participating in our campaigns. We're taking the resources people are giving us, and we are organizing a movement. It's starting as a couple of instruments, but soon we'll have a symphony of voices and measures by international governments that will have the same effect as before and slam the brakes on the illegal wildlife trade.

Q: Can you briefly talk about our new species strategy and our African Apes Initiative?

A: With the current threats to wildlife, [the most effective way of protecting them is to] focus on the most important populations on the continent. This year we've developed a new species protection grant program. The program puts relatively modest resources—

AWF CEO Patrick Bergin believes that, given Africa's considerable size, it should be possible for the continent to modernize but still maintain pristine areas for nature and wildlife.

A SITDOWN WITH THE CEO

(Continued from page S1)

usually between US\$50,000 and US\$100,000—in the hands of players on the ground who need a boost from AWF to help look after a particular wildlife population. This may be a local NGO, government agency, even a private sector player—but they are well placed and frequently can look after that population much better and cheaper than someone coming in from the outside.

Thanks to the support of our members and donors, AWF has been increasingly successful in raising species protection funds and rushing them into the hands of partners on the ground who can use them in a very cost-effective way to enhance protection (see opposite). The grants cover six areas: elephants, rhinos, carnivores, great apes, law enforcement, and awareness.



Martin Harvey

With our focus on savanna and large-plains animals, people sometimes forget about the other most prevalent biome in Africa, which is the tropical forest. The Congo Basin is the second-largest forest in the world after the Amazon, and these forests host four of the world's five great apes. The number of great apes has been plummeting alarmingly for many reasons: the bushmeat trade; the pet trade, which I find particularly disturbing; loss of habitat, logging, and deforestation. Through our African Apes Initiative, AWF is taking our many years of experience working with the two rarest great apes—the bonobo and the mountain gorilla—and trying to bring those lessons to bear on other populations of great apes around West and Central Africa.

Q: Africa is modernizing rapidly. What do you see as AWF's role in such an environment?

A: In most parts of the world, economic modernization and the continued existence of wildlife on large scales have been inversely related: Where modernization comes in, you can say “good-bye” to wildlife.

While modernization is necessary so people can enjoy better standards of living, Africa is huge. So what we advocate with African governments, people, and the private sector is: With vision and political will, it should be possible for Africa to have its cake and eat it too. It should be possible to have modern cities, productive farmlands, decent roads, functioning ports... and still have large, very pristine areas—the equivalent of Yellowstone National Park in the United States—that could be set aside as wildlife areas for many years into the future. These areas would serve as engines of ecological services, like climate change mitigation; be places for human pleasure and recreation; and also provide jobs through tourism.

This is our role, to assist the nations of Africa to navigate the transition to modernity with a significant wildlife resource still intact.

(Continued on page S3)

SPECIES UPDATES

A rundown of what we're doing for species in 2013

Your support and commitment has helped achieve so many things this year. The following is just a sample of what we've done in 2013 through AWF's new Species Protection Grants.

ELEPHANTS

2-year record

Kenya–Tanzania border

A cross-border antipoaching initiative, involving authorities and community scouts from both Kenya and Tanzania and facilitated and supported by AWF, recently celebrated two years without a single elephant being poached in the area.

The value of basic equipment

Faro National Park, Cameroon

An initial investment of US\$20,000 from AWF has gone toward the purchase of basic equipment, including GPS units, compasses, and cameras—items much appreciated by personnel who had previously been operating with very little.

Elephant protection

Lower Zambezi National Park, Zambia

An AWF grant of US\$54,000 will soon provide scout training, field equipment, and rations for 80 wildlife police officers, and support 72 ground patrol deployments and 24 hours of aerial patrols.



Billy Dodson

Shoring up MRC

Manyara Ranch Conservancy, Tanzania

Honeyguide Foundation has assumed security operations at the conservancy under a new grant from AWF. Security has already improved, thanks to new specialized scout training, the employment of tracker dogs, and the purchase of new vehicles.

Field training

Samburu Landscape, Kenya

In February, AWF sent 38 community scouts for comprehensive paramilitary training to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Field Training School.

RHINOS



Martin Harvey

Filling in gaps

Great Fish River Nature Reserve, South Africa

Funding from AWF “has really helped to fill the gaps—not small gaps, but huge gaps” in the reserve’s operations, says Junior Reserve Manager Cathy Dreyer. The reserve built an airplane hangar for aerial surveillance efforts, and will soon purchase four new motorbikes for patrols.

Motorbikes for coverage

Hluhluwe iMfolozi National Park, KwaZulu–Natal

AWF has provided US\$57,000 to buy motorized quad bikes that will allow rangers to better monitor the park.

Rhino movement

Mosi-oa-Tunya and Lusaka National Parks, Zambia

AWF funding is allowing Zambia Wildlife Authority to move two rhinos from Lusaka National Park to Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park to consolidate populations and ensure proper care and monitoring.

CARNIVORES

Predator-proof bomas

Tarangire National Park, Tanzania

AWF, with support from the Indianapolis Zoo, has helped communities install 51 predator-proof bomas this past year, helping to reduce conflicts between the area’s Maasai pastoralists and carnivores.

Tour guides for lions

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Leveraging the power of citizen scientists, an AWF grant to the Kenya Wildlife Trust will soon train tour guides to gather important ecological data on lions as they show tourists around the Mara.



Robyn Gianni

GREAT APES

Training in collecting chimp data

Niokolo–Koba National Park, Senegal

This June, AWF led a five-day training to teach park staff how to use handheld CyberTracker units, which collect field data along with GPS coordinates. This is part of an initial intervention to support antipoaching efforts in the park’s core chimp area.

Bonobo tracking

Congo Landscape, Democratic Republic of Congo

Additional CyberTracker units are being used in Lomako–Yokokala Faunal Reserve to collect bonobo and other wildlife data.

LAW ENFORCEMENT



Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)

Pups against traffickers

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Last year, AWF provided funding to KWS to add to its canine unit, which detects ivory, rhino horn, and weapons in airport and seaport cargo. KWS has since trained these eight adorable pups, shown here.

Africa–Asia enforcement

East and Southern Africa

With the Freeland Foundation, AWF will soon coordinate a joint training between Singapore police and member states of the Lusaka Agreement Task Force on wildlife DNA and evidence collection.

Success of antipoaching task force

Maasai Steppe Landscape, Tanzania

An antipoaching task force arranged this year by AWF and involving authorities from area national parks, the regional crime office, and the state’s attorney’s office has already apprehended several poachers. In two cases, poachers were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

AWARENESS

2 new campaigns

China & Africa

AWF’s public awareness campaign in China is being reinforced with an additional awareness campaign in Africa (see regular issue).

A SITDOWN WITH THE CEO

(Continued from page S2)

Q: Isn't that a bit like developed countries telling developing countries, 'Don't do as we did'?

A: I actually see AWF as an effective platform from which African conservationists—not Americans or Europeans—can advocate with their own governments and their own people, saying, “Here’s what we should do, and I say this as a Kenyan, as a Zambian, as a Zimbabwean.”

AWF also believes very strongly in the need to balance productive economic activity and conservation. This is why such a large part of our program addresses human needs. Here we are, a wildlife conservation organization, and two of our largest programs are about schools and enterprise!

Sometimes, there are complete trade-offs and hard choices do have to be made. But what’s tragic is when you see a situation where people are willing to sacrifice conservation, and it might not even have been necessary.

Q: What do you see as the biggest AWF successes in 2013?

A: AWF Conservation Schools (ACS) really is, I suppose, *the* story of 2013. Many times the best teachers like to live in cities in Africa. So if you have the misfortune of living out in the bush, close to wildlife, probably you’ll get the worst teachers—or you might not get teachers at all. And you’ll have the least access to the educational facilities and technology and electricity.

We want to turn that paradigm on its head: If you’re a community that lives with wildlife, and you are partnering with AWF to conserve wildlife, we want to help your children access the very best educational opportunities. Because we all know that nothing changes the trajectory of lives like early childhood education.

We’re proceeding with the program more rapidly than we expected to. We’ve hired a new director (see p.4 in the regular issue), and our plans to upgrade our two existing schools are well underway. We’re breaking ground on a new school in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And feasibility studies are being done on two additional sites, in Rwanda and Ethiopia.

Q: We're a wildlife organization. How can we think that we can provide education well?

A: From our founding in 1961, education has been a part of what AWF does. Our very first project, the College of African Wildlife Management – Mweka, was in education. Our belief has always been, to a certain extent, if you provide wildlife a safe habitat, it looks after itself. Most of the challenges of conservation are challenges that start and end with people.

We are not going to be running schools or developing curricula. Using the resources and talents our organization has, we are going to help

plan and build appropriate facilities—we know how to do that. We will work with the government educational ministries to find ways to attract the best teachers to the rural areas. One of the ways we’re doing that is by building very nice teacher housing with these schools, which is a wonderful incentive.

Another thing that we know how to do is technology in remote areas. We already do this for ourselves: We’ve found a way to use VSAT dishes and so forth to bring Internet services and voice-over IP to our remote offices and rural areas. We’re going to be able to provide that to these schools to bring them Web-based learning enhancements.

AWF continues to look for some key strategic partners on specific aspects of this program. But what we have found is that there is no one else specifically, systematically focusing on the educational needs of communities living in remote, wildlife-rich areas.

Q: Anything else you'd like our members to know?

A: It’s important for our members to know that we don’t think of this as, “You’re supporting us to do this work”—it’s really that *you’re* doing this work. AWF aspires to be an African organization with a global constituency of support. So our strength comes from people all over the world who love and care about African wildlife. We consider ourselves representatives of our members in implementing these efforts. ■



Billy Dodson

AWF CEO Patrick Bergin observes that most of the challenges with conservation involve people: “If you provide wildlife a safe habitat, it looks after itself,” he says.