



AFRICAN

WILDLIFE

News

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THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY LION POPULATIONS

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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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THE PRAGMATIC CONSERVATION ARGUMENT



Dear AWF Friends,

The discussions and the debate about conservation in Africa encompass ideals, values, and even moral beliefs, but there are also pragmatic considerations such as the benefits that ecosystems provide. We can't survive without the water or food security that healthy ecosystems support, without the plants and fungi that give us life-saving medicines, the trees that sequester carbon, their roots that keep our soil intact.

Ecosystems also support sustainable livelihoods, especially tourism-based enterprises, that are aligned with many Africans' dreams of continued progress on the continent without a sacrifice of biodiversity.

In this newsletter, you'll see a few of the many ways in which wildlife support ecosystem services. Research shows that elephants shape forests in a way that aids carbon sequestration, and a recent report details how lions, as critical apex predators, keep landscapes healthy and productive.

But, as you know, the endangered species that help sustain our life-giving landscapes are under threat. Habitat destruction, poaching, human encroachment on protected areas, human-wildlife conflict — all put Africa's wildlife at serious risk.

While conservation in Africa requires global participation, it ultimately depends on Africa itself. This means drawing on the cultural value that elephants, lions, and other wildlife have in African society and building consensus about the importance of species' survival. Success depends on people, governments, and industry recognizing that conservation imperatives are not just about the innate worth of species and wild lands, but also about a range of other values that are at risk.

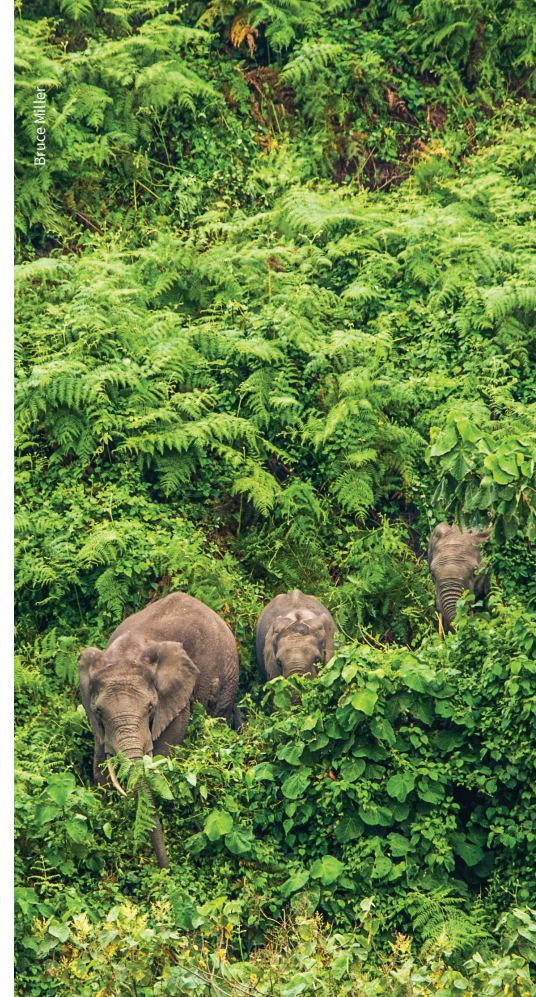
Africa's economic development and conservation are convergent, not conflicting goals. It is a misleading dilemma, supposing that wildlife and wild landscapes must be sacrificed for the continent to modernize and maintain its economic growth. The challenge is, how do we align today's development goals and blueprints and marshal the various interests they represent to ensure wildlife has a robust future in modern Africa?

AWF is tackling this challenge. But ultimately the commitment must come from a multitude of stakeholders — governments, industry leaders, the private sector, and civil society — all working with groups like ours.

I urge everyone to raise their voices for a green, sustainable, creatively inclusive future. Let's demand and fight for a vision of the possible — for yourself and the great continent of Africa.

Sincerely,

Kaddu Sebunya
Chief Executive Officer



ELEPHANTS HELP SHAPE CARBON-STORING FORESTS

Lending new insight into the complex interdependencies of rainforest ecosystems, researchers have found that elephants help forests store carbon.

The researchers modeled the effects of forest-elephant extinction and found that, without elephants, western and central African rainforests would have much less aboveground biomass. This deficit would lead to the release of billions of tons more carbon into the atmosphere.

The researchers say that when elephants are gone, smaller, fast-growing tree species thrive. But when elephants are around to feed on these trees, larger trees with high-density wood are more prevalent. These slower-growing trees are better at storing carbon.

The elephants represent a carbon storage service of \$43 billion, the researchers said. Trees take in carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and use it in photosynthesis,

releasing oxygen. They act as a natural "carbon sink," performing a vital ecosystem service and slowing the rate of climate change.

The study was led by Stephen Blake of Saint Louis University and published in *Nature Geoscience*. "The simulation found that the slow-growing plant species survive better when elephants are present," Blake said. "These species aren't eaten by elephants and, over time, the forest becomes dominated by these slow-growing species. Wood (lignin) has a carbon backbone, meaning it has a large number of carbon molecules in it.

"Slow-growing high wood density species contain more carbon molecules per unit volume than fast-growing low wood density species. As the elephants thin the forest, they increase the number of slow-growing trees, and the forest is capable of storing more carbon."

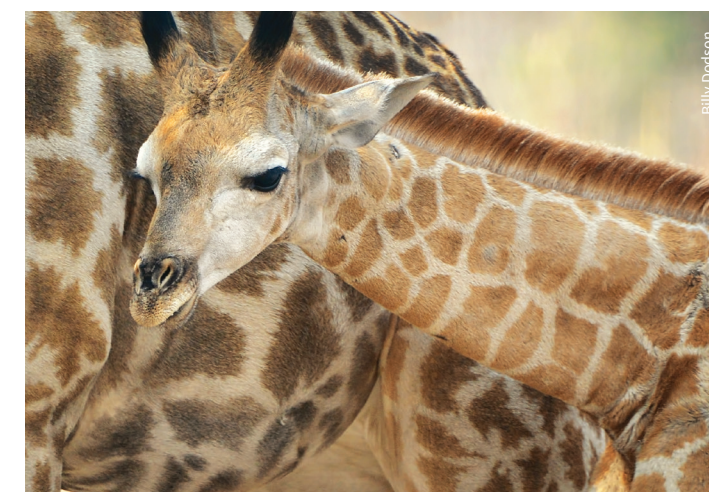
Global body CITES approves first-ever giraffe protections

Threats such as habitat loss and poaching jeopardize the future of Africa's giraffes. Late last summer, member nations of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) transferred all nine subspecies of giraffe to Appendix II, which means that trade in giraffe hides and other parts will be regulated for the first time. It should now be much harder for countries to import or export giraffe products.

The proposal to start regulating giraffe trade received overwhelming support from CITES Parties gathered in Geneva, Switzerland. It was put forward by the Central African Republic, Chad, Kenya, Mali, Niger, and Senegal, who argued that all nine subspecies of giraffes must be protected to counter the species' fast-plummeting numbers.

Scientists are calling giraffe population trends a "silent extinction" occurring right under our noses. Africa has lost 40 percent of its giraffe herd in three decades and now has a total population of less than 100,000.

"We note that, compared to other species, giraffe conservation and management is relatively poorly understood," said Philip Muruthi, AWF's vice president for species conservation and science, and leader of AWF's delegation to CITES. He urged giraffe range states to strengthen protection efforts and to learn from the experiences of Angola and South Africa, which have managed to increase their giraffe numbers.



AWF GLOSSARY

range state

\ rānj stāt\

A country in which any given species lives, or through which it travels as part of its normal migration. Kenya is a giraffe range state, for example.

HEALTHY LION POPULATIONS PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS

One of Africa's most iconic species represents a range of life-giving ecosystem services.

A new report supported by AWF and others details the valuable ecosystem services provided by "lionscapes," or landscapes in which lions thrive as apex predators. Lionscapes offer a larger than average share of:

- direct benefits such as water and food security
- supporting services such as photosynthesis, soil formation, and nutrient cycling
- regulating services such as soil stability and carbon storage
- cultural value in the recreational, historical, aesthetic, and even spiritual realms

The lion is an indicator species: Those in healthy populations often correlate to healthy landscapes, which typically provide a range of benefits not only to human communities but to other species of flora and fauna. Healthy landscapes maintain essential water sources, support food security, mitigate climate change, and create resilience to flooding and other weather-related events.

As one of the "big five" iconic mammals in African cultures and throughout the world, lions also are a significant draw for tourists. The lionscapes report cites a study that estimated that each lion in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park generates close to \$19,000 annually in tourism revenue.



Barbara Vonhoffmann

And yet, lions are in trouble. Africa's populations have declined by half in 20 years. Threats include habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict (as people kill lions that attack their livestock), and poaching — including hunting for a growing lion-bone trade driven by demand for traditional-medicine products in Asia.

"Lions will not survive the 21st century on goodwill alone," said AWF CEO Kaddu Sebunya in the report's foreword. The status quo, which affords lions some protection as a center of wildlife tourism, obviously will not save the lion either, he said. Instead, the survival of big cats "depends on Africa itself," he said. "This means drawing on the huge cultural value that lions have in African society to build consensus about the importance of their survival in the wild."

Numerous conservation organizations contributed to the report, produced by the Lion Recovery Fund and titled *The New Lion Economy*.

AWF's work on behalf of lions is as varied as the landscapes in which lions are found. In the Manyara-Tarangire landscape in northeastern Tanzania, AWF tracks the status and movements of radio-collared lions to understand their needs better, monitor their health and welfare, and intervene if lions approach human settlements.



Paul Runze

370,460

AWF supporters' online actions for wildlife and wild lands in 2019. See back cover for information about one of our recent campaigns on behalf of lions.

In Manyara and Kenya's LUMO Conservancy, we have worked with communities to protect livestock from lion attacks through predator-proof, metal, portable corrals known as *bomas*. In tandem with community outreach to sensitize communities to lions as critical to healthy landscapes, these efforts are changing minds and helping shift historical narratives about lions.

IN ETHIOPIA, FIGHTING TO END THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Over the last several decades, traffickers have steadily robbed Ethiopia of its wildlife heritage. Where tens of thousands of elephants used to range throughout Ethiopia, save in the remotest highlands, today elephants occur only in a few areas and number 1,500 or less. This decline represents a 90 percent loss of the country's elephants.

Addis Ababa Bole International Airport is a transit point for much of the illicit cargo leaving Ethiopia. In recent years authorities have arrested hundreds of individuals smuggling ivory and other contraband to China.

In 2019 the US State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement awarded AWF funds for fighting the illegal wildlife trade in Ethiopia. The project has two emphases: to strengthen wildlife law enforcement/prosecution and to intensify screening at Bole via a Canines for Conservation unit.

AWF will provide training and equipment to support officers, prosecutors, and judges in wildlife crime detection, investigation, prosecution, and sentencing. The goal is to ensure traffickers face penalties that match the seriousness of their crimes. We also will train customs and security officers in contraband detection and concealment techniques.

The canines project involves selecting handlers from the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), training them at our canine center in Tanzania, and helping EWCA establish the unit at Bole. AWF has Africa's leading canine detection program, with highly skilled dog-and-handler teams and a culture of care for the dogs. Deployed and maintained in partnership with wildlife authorities, our canine units not only help nab smugglers — they also serve as deterrents.



A GOOD PARTNER FOR AWF'S CANINES FOR CONSERVATION

Royal Canin recently donated 36,000 euros' worth of food to AWF's Canines for Conservation program. A healthy diet is essential for our detection dogs, who perform a critical task: sniffing thousands of pieces of luggage and tons of cargo for smuggled wildlife goods such as ivory and rhino horns. With their powerful noses, our dogs can sniff out even the tiniest amounts of hidden contraband. Also critical to the fight are the program's tracker dogs, who track down offenders from kill sites and other crime scenes.

Wildlife Watch: HYENA

The hyena is Africa's most common large carnivore, known for its distinctive appearance, vocalizations, and strong jaws

Did you know hyenas are not dogs? They are members of their own family, *Hyaenidae*, but belong to the *Feliformia* suborder of the order *Carnivora*, making them more closely related to cats than dogs.

Hyenas are the most common large carnivore in Africa and are found throughout the continent. Adaptable creatures, they live in a wide variety of habitats: grasslands, woodlands, open savannas, forest edges, deserts, and even low mountain ranges. They live in large clans (up to 80 individuals), which have a strict social hierarchy — females rank higher than males, and an alpha female dominates each clan.

Hyena subspecies include the spotted, striped, and brown hyenas. (The smaller, insect-eating aardwolf is also in the family *Hyaenidae*.) Spotted hyenas are the most common and largest, and the only ones that make the famous "laughing" vocalizations. They "laugh" to alert their clan to a fresh kill or food source — a sound that can be heard up to five kilometers away. Spotted, striped, and brown hyenas do scavenge, but they are fearsome hunters, and about 70 percent of their diet comes



Kim Woluter

from direct kills. They're not picky and will hunt animals large and small, aided by their superb hearing and night vision. Known as "bone crushers," hyenas' bite force is among the highest among mammals. Their scat has such a high calcium content that it is chalky white.

The leading threats to hyenas are human-wildlife conflict and habitat loss. Farmers will kill hyenas, often through poisoning, for preying on livestock. And hyena habitat is shrinking due to agriculture expansion, human settlement, and infrastructure development.

What we do for the hyena: AWF's Large Carnivore Project mitigates human-wildlife conflict by working with communities to construct predator-proof bomas (livestock enclosures) that protect livestock. Throughout Africa, we support holistic conservation solutions such as community land-use planning and sustainable agriculture practices that help maintain all-important habitat and wildlife corridors.

A LODGE THAT HAS HELPED SAVE RWANDA'S GENTLE GIANTS



Annie Katz

Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge has been central to a community's renewal

Though they live in protected areas, mountain gorillas were until quite recently on the edge of extinction. In the early 1980s, at their lowest point, they numbered perhaps 550. But they've rallied, thanks in part to an important ally: Rwanda.

The east African country has made mountain gorillas the centerpiece of a thriving tourism economy, and the Rwandan people take conservation seriously. Since 2005, the government

has hosted an annual "Kwita Izina" celebration in which newborn gorillas are formally named. Every September, tens of thousands gather in Kinigi town, where Mt. Sabyinyo forms a majestic backdrop, to celebrate the gentle giant's return from the brink.

Today, mountain gorilla numbers are on the rise, with populations in one of their primary habitats, the Virunga mountains, at over 600, and the total

population surpassing 1,000 individuals. The enterprises that contribute to this conservation success include Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge.

A BIG DRAW

Mountain gorillas help to drive Rwanda's economy and also generate revenues for their own conservation. In 2018 alone, the Rwandan government issued more than 15,000 trekking permits to tourists looking



to experience mountain gorillas up close in the Virunga's Volcanoes National Park. In total, the permits were worth \$19.2 million.

Sabyinyo Silverback, which hosts many such trekkers, celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2018. Developed by AWF and partners, the world-class lodge was built to support gorilla conservation while improving the lives of local community members.

Governor's Camp Collection operates the lodge, but it is owned by the Sabyinyo Community Livelihoods Association (or SACOLA), which is comprised of people from surrounding communities. Through the SACOLA trust, Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge has delivered over \$3.3 million in revenue since 2006.

Over the years, SACOLA has reached more than 5,800 households in villages outside Volcanoes. Many people displaced by the impacts of the Rwandan genocide

in the early 1990s have been forced to exploit natural resources for subsistence. With income from the SACOLA trust, the economic pressures to clear forest for small farms or to hunt bushmeat for local markets are lessening.

SACOLA helped create two villages for the area's most marginalized people, including genocide survivors, providing new housing to allow them to reintegrate into the wider community on a better footing. So far, SACOLA has constructed 44 houses and donated cows to families with the greatest needs. Lodge guests, inspired by the relationship between ecotourism and community development, often volunteer to provide funds for cows after visiting the community.

Without the burden of rent, new homeowners can invest their money collectively through savings & credit cooperatives administered by community



Anna Behm Masoera



Gorilla's Camp

banks, two of which SACOLA helped construct.

The ultimate goal is to restore the resilience of a critical ecosystem and get a community back on its feet. Apart from supporting an electrification program and building a water supply system that serves thousands, SACOLA subsidizes school fees so more children can get an education. It also recently purchased land for a new technical school to train community members in conservation-friendly livelihoods. The trust has also provided capital investment to local pig and sheep businesses, in addition to donating over 100 animals outright.

With revenues from the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, the SACOLA trust will continue to diversify sustainable livelihood opportunities for community members that, in turn, remove the burden from the park's natural resources and its iconic mountain gorillas.



Asia there's a growing market for lion bones and other products.

As the number of tigers left in the wild dwindles, lions have become the next target. They're being slaughtered for their bones, claws, and teeth. Only to be turned into jewelry, traditional medicine, even bone wine, which is believed to have health benefits. Between 2013-2018, about 150 lion claws and teeth were taken from South Africa to Vietnam and China in legal exports — sadly, the number of illegal exports is thought to be even higher. In November 2018, over just 48 hours, 40 lions were killed by poachers from Vietnam.

The slaughter needs to stop. Stand up for lions and sign AWF's petition telling Vietnam that wildlife laws must be enforced and the killing of lions in the wild must end:

secure.awf.org/tell-vietnam-to-stand-up-for-lions

STAND UP FOR LIONS!

Over the past two decades, the number of lions in Africa has dropped by 43 percent. Estimates place the number left at fewer than 25,000 individuals. The situation is dire; habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict continually push lion numbers lower. But a new threat is mounting and silencing lions' roars: In Vietnam, China, and southeast



*I have spent 25 years talking in circles with politicians, trying to explain the complexities of our poaching war. Now, I can show them **Sides of a Horn**, and 17 minutes later, we are having a productive conversation. That is the power of this film.*

— Kaddu Sebunya, speaking to deadline.com about the film, *Sides of a Horn*, which was made by AWF Council Member Toby Wossko

Learn more at rhinomovie.com

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Select AWF now:
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Community Connection

We love getting mail from our young conservationist friends. Makenzie sent this letter to us about a fundraiser her Girl Scout Brownie troop held for AWF. "I love elephants so I want them to live so long," she wrote.

Thanks Makenzie, we love elephants too!

