

# African Wildlife News

Billy Dodson

Shana Laurson

1961-2010

YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK IN THE AFRICAN HEARTLANDS

AWF

Home to elephants, rhinos and more, African Heartlands are conservation

landscapes large enough to sustain a diversity of species for centuries to come. In these landscapes—places like Kilimanjaro and Samburu—AWF and its partners are pioneering lasting conservation strategies that benefit wildlife and people alike.

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A jewelry giant gives back.



These giraffes are members of the only viable population of West African giraffe remaining in the wild. A few herds live in a small area in Niger outside Regional Parc W.

## A Giant's Comeback

It looks like a giraffe, walks like a giraffe, eats like a giraffe and is indeed a giraffe. But *Giraffa camelopardalis peralta* (the scientific name for the West African giraffe) is a distinct subspecies of mother nature's tallest mammal, having split from a common ancestral population some 35,000 years ago. This genetic distinction is apparent in its large orange-brown skin pattern, which is more lightly-colored than that of other giraffes.

The West African giraffe also tends to form looser herds (with members changing frequently) and travel farther distances than other giraffe subspecies, behavioral differences scientists attribute to the fairly dry climate in which they live.

In the early 1900s some 3,000 West African giraffe roamed from Senegal to Chad. Today, only a few herds are left in the wild,

totaling a scant 190-200 individuals. All live in a small area—dubbed “the Giraffe Zone”—outside the W National Parc in Niger, one of the three national parks that lie in AWF's new transboundary Heartland in West Africa (see pp. 4-5).

### Entering the Zone

Located southeast of Niamey, Niger's capital, the Giraffe Zone spans just a few hundred square miles. Considered part of the Parc W/Niger ecosystem, the zone is not formally protected, and the giraffes share the area with many villages. The animals move seasonally in search of food and water, between the zone's plateau in the rainy season (Fakara) and the fossil valley (Dallol Bosso) during dry periods. Inevitably, giraffes turn to farmer's fields in search of food and water.

Over the past few decades, human

*continued on page 3*



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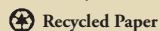
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**Machache ~ A FEW WORDS****Big News**

It's not possible for me to attend every Heartland event, but I'm pleased to tell you I was among the 300+ coffee farmers, conservationists, students, and other people who helped inaugurate the Coffee-Quality Laboratory AWF opened in partnership with Starbucks Coffee Company just outside Nyeri (see p. 6).

The lab marks the latest milestone in the Kenya Coffee Heartland Project, launched with Starbucks to help farmers produce better coffee while bolstering wildlife habitat. I even learned a thing or two about 'cupping'—a practice that allows tasters to evaluate the qualities of a particular brew.

This may sound like a small thing—tasting coffee—but that's only because many people don't realize many farmers in Africa lack access to tasting and roasting facilities, important tools for refining coffee growing techniques. The lab has changed that for hundreds of farmers.

I wanted to highlight the Coffee-Quality Laboratory because it is such an innovative example of how AWF works to benefit people as well as wildlife.

And here's even bigger news: AWF has officially launched its first large-landscape program in West Africa, positioning itself as a truly pan-African organization.

This is an important step forward for AWF—a huge programmatic advance made possible with your support.

AWF, of course, has been assessing landscapes and wildlife in West Africa for a long time. Given our mission to conserve landscapes across the continent, there was never really any question of whether we would work to save wildlife in this part of Africa. The questions were more 'when' and 'where.'

About a year ago, when I was scoping projects in West Africa with AWF's Board Chair Dennis Keller, we ran into a conservation official AWF had supported years ago. I was gratified to see he had stuck with conservation and was obviously advancing in his field. After thanking us for our support, he somewhat beseechingly asked when AWF would begin to work in West Africa. I knew then and there the time was right.

AWF staff, meanwhile, had long been working on the 'where.' One landscape stood out in terms of its fit with our Heartland model—the Regional Parc W, a vast transboundary landscape that reaches into Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger and is home to the largest tract of protected savanna in West Africa.

I'm extremely proud to announce the launch of the Regional Parc W Heartland. This important programmatic advance affirms that AWF is on the right path with the right community of supporters.

Thank you for making this possible.

Patrick J. Bergin, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer

African Wildlife Foundation



Shana Laursen

Building upon the rich cultural heritage of West Africa, such as the Dogon villages of Mali, AWF believes that a combined wildlife/tourism package can enhance support for conservation efforts throughout West Africa.



Though still critically endangered, the West African giraffe has bounced back from the brink of extinction.

populations have encroached increasingly upon areas where the giraffe lives, destroying natural vegetation as land is cleared for crop cultivation. This shrinking habitat, along with poaching and land desertification, has triggered a rapid decline in the giraffe population.

Conservationists, fortunately, have worked closely with villagers to manage the giraffe populations, secure giraffe movement areas, and minimize human-giraffe conflict. Those efforts have paid off. While still critically endangered, the West African giraffe population has increased nearly four-fold since 1996.

### Counting Critters

At its lowest point, the West African giraffe population plummeted to 50 individuals. Today, it has increased to 200 individuals

—an encouraging if far from robust size. With your generous support, AWF is joining conservation efforts and raising global awareness about this important remnant population.

With its launch of the Regional Parc W Heartland, AWF is pleased to support the latest annual census of the West African giraffe. This year the Association for the Safeguard of the Giraffes of Niger—the local NGO heading up the census—hopes to count more than 200 animals. In the initial phase, now under way, researchers have already identified 85 giraffes, including 10 calves. ■

To learn more about how you can help AWF conserve the West African giraffe, visit [www.awf.org/giraffe](http://www.awf.org/giraffe).

### Fast Fact: Why the long neck?

The giraffe is famous for its long neck, which allows this elegant giant to browse easily in the tops of trees. But while the length of the giraffe's neck is distinctive, the bone structure of its neck is a lot like any other mammal's; each vertebrae just happens to be a lot larger. Stacked one on top of the other, these seven very large bones typically make up half the total height of a giraffe.

## News in Brief

### AWF Announces Charlotte Fellows

AWF has named its 2009-10 Charlotte Conservation Fellows, six emerging scholars who all come from West Africa and several of whom work in and around the Regional Parc W, home of AWF's newest Heartland.

**Etotepe A. Sogbohossou**, a native of Benin, has conducted lion research in Benin, South Africa, Cameroon, and Kenya and is currently working towards a Ph.D. in Conservation Biology at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

**Issa Nassourou** is pursuing a Ph.D. in Geography at the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger. His research focuses on management and rehabilitation of tourism sites and the development of ecotourism, a highly undeveloped sector in Niger.

**Boubacar Boureima**, a native of Niger, is earning a Master's in Natural Resource Management at the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger. He is studying manatees of the Niger River and hopes to use his study results to guide conservation strategies of these large aquatic mammals.

**Mohamadou Habibou Gabou** is earning a Master's in Natural Resource Management at the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger. He will identify ways in which communities around Parc W can be more involved in the park's management and what impact the traditional use of natural resources has on the environment.

**Isidore Ogoudje Amahowe** is researching the impact of elephants on vegetation in the Djona Hunting Area of Benin for a Master's degree in Analysis of Wildlife Populations at the Rural Development Institute, Bobo-Dioulasso University Polytechnic.

**Amelie Traore Hien** is conducting research on ecosystem degradation in the Kou sub-basin in Burkina Faso while studying for a Master's in Protected Area Management at the International Institute of Water Engineering and Environment in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso. ■



# AWF Launches First Heartland in West Africa

**W**hen AWF founded its African Heartlands program in 1999, the large-landscape model was designed to be replicated in conservation landscapes across Africa.

Yet when AWF first began assessing conservation projects in West Africa—often referred to as “the bulge” of Africa—some of our supporters were surprised. That’s likely because when people think of West Africa, many think of the region’s cultural and historical attractions. Places like the ancient city of Timbuktu in Mali; the riches of the Ashanti Kingdom and its trade in gold in Ghana; the robed, nomadic Tuareg people that ride camels on the fringes of the Sahara Desert; or the rich musical tradition of Senegal. Despite being less well-known as a wildlife-viewing destination than East or Southern Africa, West Africa is home to vast conservation landscapes that host both regionally and globally important wildlife populations.

AWF has learned much about these areas in its nearly 50 years

of work in Africa. And after 10 years of replicating Heartland successes in three distinct regions of sub-Saharan Africa, we knew we had the tools to save wildlife in one more.

The scoping process was intensive: over many months, AWF experts identified landscapes throughout West Africa, assessing whether AWF’s programmatic approaches could be utilized to strengthen ecosystems, conserve wildlife, and benefit people. Potential projects stacked up; and it wasn’t long before skeptics stopped asking “whether” to enter West Africa and started asking “in which landscape.”

AWF then mapped a suite of conservation priorities in each landscape alongside AWF’s principal technical competencies—land conservation, applied science and research, conservation enterprise, capacity building, and policy improvement. Using this exercise, AWF identified the tri-national Regional Parc W as its priority site in West Africa.

### Fast Fact: *The “W” in Parc W.*

The Niger River marks the boundary of Parc W/Niger in the north-east, making several sharp turns that form the ‘W’ from which the park takes its name.

## The Regional Parc W

The Regional Parc W Heartland is located in the western part of the Sahel (the semi-tropical savanna that lies just below the Sahara) where Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger meet. It consists of three contiguous national protected areas, each of which is called Parc W, and several adjacent reserves and buffer zones. Together, the W parks and their buffer zones consist of nearly 2 million hectares of land and are host to the largest tract of protected savanna in West Africa.

This Heartland’s rich vegetation is mostly wooded savanna—a mix of shrubland, savanna woodland, deciduous and evergreen gallery forest and flooded plains. The Niger River, with other water sources, runs like a lifeline through the park complex. Along the floodplains of the river’s banks, there are ephemeral pools, wetlands and upland gallery forests that border the river’s main tributaries.

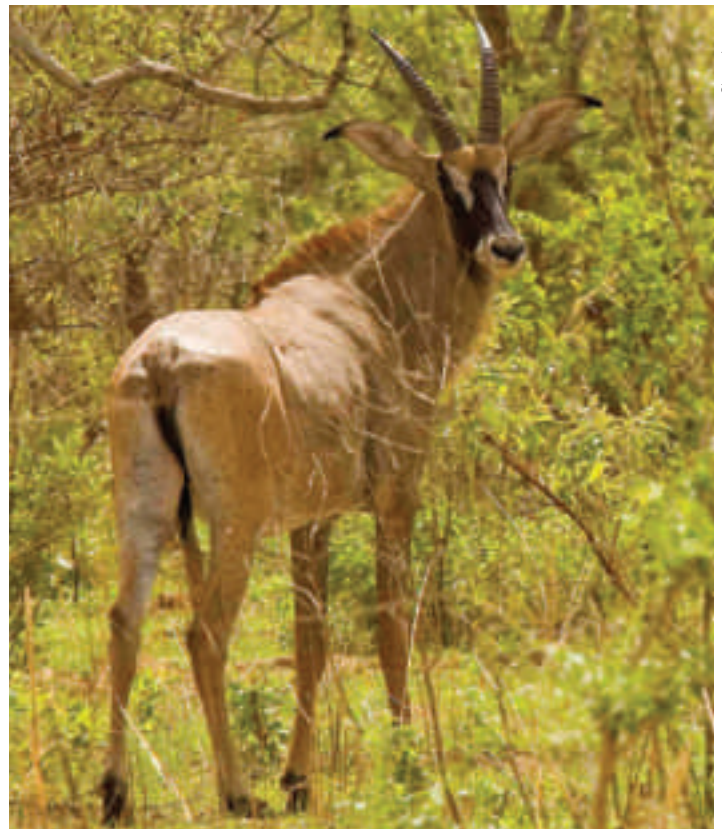
AWF/Patrick Bergin



These elephants are part of the largest remaining population of elephants in West Africa.

The landscape is home to a multitude of mammal species, including West Africa’s largest remaining elephant population; the region’s largest populations of ungulates; sizeable populations of large carnivores; and the only remaining population of giraffes in all of West Africa (see cover story). The Regional Parc W also serves as a stopover for birds migrating from Africa to Europe and Asia.

This rich conservation landscape and the three national park authorities have benefited from a special eight-year program administered by the European Union (EU). Supplementing this investment, AWF will work to build capacity, improve the management and conservation of resources at a community level, mitigate human-wildlife conflict, and help develop conservation-friendly enterprises to enhance local livelihoods. In all four areas, AWF will draw on the models it has pioneered in its eight other Heartland programs.



Shana Laurson

The roan is one of the Regional Parc W complex’s rich assemblage of antelopes, which also includes western kob, oribi, western hartebeest, and red-fronted gazelle.

## Across the Landscape

Actions planned months ago are now springing to life across the Heartland. AWF recently handed over uniforms, bicycles, and GPS units to Parc W/Niger’s cadre of 20 eco-guardians. In Niger, it has also partnered with a local NGO to conserve and raise awareness about the West African giraffe.

In neighboring Benin, AWF is supporting capacity building components of the national elephant strategy. Solidifying its local presence, AWF has signed agreements with two of the countries that share the park complex and is on track to formalize the third soon. And across all three countries AWF has been building partnerships with the park authorities and other agencies. At a leadership level, Dr. Moumouni Ouédraogo of Burkina Faso recently joined AWF as Senior Program Officer, bringing extensive experience in agronomy, vegetative ecology, pastoralism, and the study of the interrelation of people and wildlife in the Sahel.

“AWF brings tested, replicable models and lessons learned elsewhere in Africa to the Regional Parc W landscape,” says Dr. Ouédraogo. “As a longtime conservationist in the region, it is a privilege to lead AWF’s conservation efforts and emerging partnerships with the park authorities, local communities, and NGOs committed to conserving the important resources of this underserved ecoregion.” ■

### A Note of Thanks:

AWF thanks Lundin for Africa for providing startup funding for the Regional Parc W Heartland.

# All the Buzz

## Coffee-Quality Laboratory Marks the Latest Milestone in AWF-Starbucks Partnership

**A**WF and Starbucks Coffee Company are still hearing buzz about the Coffee-Quality Laboratory we opened a few months ago outside Nyeri, Kenya, in partnership with Kimathi University. Many coffee drinkers tell us they didn't know most coffee farmers never drink or even taste the coffee they grow. With the opening of the Coffee-Quality Laboratory, hundreds of Kenyan farmers will now be able to do just that.

"Until now most local farmers lacked access to tasting and roasting facilities, an important tool in refining growing practices," said Chris von Zastrow, director of agronomy at Starbucks Farmer Support Center based in Rwanda. "By evaluating the coffee aroma and flavor profile of their beans, farmers can glean information about their planting and harvesting techniques and continually introduce quality improvements."

Recognizing the need to protect the natural resources that support good growing practices and conserve habitat for the region's world-renowned wildlife, the Kenya Heartland Coffee Project also supports reforestation and other activities designed to safeguard the ecological integrity of the region. In addition to opening the Coffee-Quality Lab and training thousands of farmers in C.A.F.É. (Coffee and Farmer Equity) Practices, AWF, with Starbucks' support, has upgraded local coffee factories to improve efficiency and reduce water usage, stewarded the planting of more than 10,000 trees to restore forest cover and protect watersheds, and created a state-of-the-art dam to conserve water resources and benefit local people.

Along with AWF, Starbucks, and Kimathi University reps, upwards of 300 farmers, coffee cooperative reps, students and others helped open the lab! AWF thanks Starbucks and all our supporters who helped make the lab possible! ■



AWF/John Butler

An estimated 200 farmers are expected to use the new lab each month. In addition to "cupping" practices, they will learn about sustainable coffee production, storage and moisture management, parchment drying processes, data management, and product marketing. At the opening, participants learned about coffee quality and the connection between the Kenya Heartland Coffee project and landscape conservation in the region.



AWF/Paul Thomson

These farmers are being trained in Starbucks C.A.F.É. Practices, an independently verified system designed to ensure high-quality coffee is grown and processed in a socially and environmentally responsible way.

## AWF 2010 Membership Safari — A Winning Ticket

**SAFARI NAME:** Kenya's Best -- Height of the Great Migration

**DATES:** July 26-August 7, 2010

**ITINERARY:** Travel through the famed Amboseli region to the termite-mound-riddled landscape of Kenya's Northern Frontier, arriving at the Masai Mara during the seasonal cycle that is typically the height of the wildebeest and zebra migration

**OPTIONAL EXTENSION:** Rwanda Mountain Gorilla Expedition, August 7-12

**Contact: Stephen Ham, 202-939-3318 or email [sham@awf.org](mailto:sham@awf.org).**

## Say More than I Love You This Valentine's Day!

Everyone loves chocolate on Valentine's Day and now you can give your sweetheart even more to smile about thanks to Adoption Collections from AWF and Endangered Species Chocolate. Through this very special partnership, wildlife lovers can sweeten the deal with all-natural premium chocolate whenever they adopt African wildlife through AWF. Each adoption includes a donation to support AWF's work to protect Africa's magnificent and imperiled wildlife. Adoption Collections include Endangered Species Chocolate bars, a plush animal that matches the collection's name, and an e-membership to AWF. Adoption Collections start at only \$30 and make the perfect Valentine's Day gift!

**Just visit [www.awf.org/chocolate](http://www.awf.org/chocolate) today!**



## From Botswana to Zambia: The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Helps Conserve Key Elephant Corridors

For world-class jewelry giant Tiffany & Co., it's not enough to make beautiful things; each lovely 'piece' must be made in a responsible and ecologically sustainable way. As the company's Chairman and CEO Michael J. Kowalski pointedly states, "Tiffany is committed to obtaining precious metals and gemstones and crafting our jewelry in ways that are socially and environmentally responsible. It is simply the right thing to do; and our customers expect and deserve nothing less."

True to these words, in 2000 the company formed The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, charged with making grants to nonprofit organizations dedicated to design and the decorative arts, environmental and cultural preservation, coral conservation, and responsible mining. In 2008 the Foundation provided a grant in support of AWF conservation initiatives in Botswana. Here and in the broader Kazungula Heartland, a marvelously rich ecological area that also encompasses parts of neighboring Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, AWF has partnered with The Tiffany & Co. Foundation to protect important wildlife corridors. Not just any corridors, but two of the preferred travel routes of the single greatest concentration of elephants on the African continent—an estimated 135,000 elephants in all.

**"The Foundation is proud to support African Wildlife Foundation as it ensures the survival and safe passage of wildlife in Botswana."**

—Fernanda Kellogg, President,  
The Tiffany & Co. Foundation

For many species and elephants in particular, the ability to roam unimpeded between protected lands is intrinsic to their security and prospects for long-term survival. Especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where people and wild animals often live side-by-side, maintaining the integrity of wildlife corridors is critical. A profusion of elephants (and people) can lead to increased conflict between the two, with severe consequences for human livelihoods and lives on the one hand, and destruction of vital animal habitat and corridors on the other.

Therefore, retaining the connectivity of historical movement corridors—while concurrently working with local communities to discourage development in these key travel routes—is essential for the peaceful coexistence of people and elephants.

With The Tiffany & Co. Foundation's support, AWF is making marked progress toward this goal. Most notably we have formalized a conservation partnership with the Sekute Chiefdom, whose extensive communal lands include areas heavily used by elephants. Consistent with AWF and the Foundation's interest in striking a human-wildlife-conservation balance, the partnership features not only tangible land protection measures but also investment in this underserved area's social development.

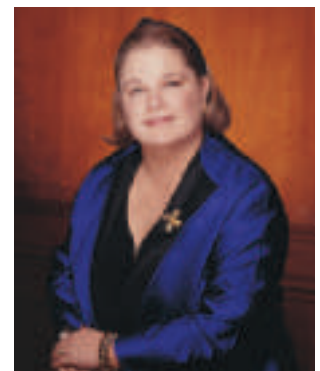
In addition to this critical elephant work, the Foundation is supporting AWF's Large Carnivore Conservation Project in Botswana. With conflict between humans and large carnivores on the rise (to the peril of both), this project seeks to gain a better understanding of the movement patterns of lions and hyenas. AWF will use these insights to develop strategies with local communities to minimize such interactions and conserve Africa's imperiled carnivores.

"The Tiffany & Co. Foundation works internationally to promote land conservation of environmentally and culturally significant sites in a locally appropriate manner. The Foundation is proud to support African Wildlife Foundation as it ensures the survival and safe passage of wildlife in Botswana," says Fernanda Kellogg, President, The Tiffany & Co. Foundation.

All told, AWF and The Tiffany & Co. Foundation are making great strides in protecting land and wildlife in Botswana and the Kazungula Heartland. "We are grateful for the Foundation's partnership and look forward to continued, tangible conservation achievements," says Dr. Francis Mkanda, Kazungula Heartland Director. ■



To learn more about this partnership and related conservation projects, email Kurt Redenbo, Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations, at [kredenbo@awf.org](mailto:kredenbo@awf.org).



Fernanda Kellogg

# Wildlife Watch

## Pygmy Hippopotamus

hallam creations



**Pygmy hippos are semi-aquatic mammals that move easily on land.**

The pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) is native to West Africa—in fact, its scientific name actually means ‘of Liberia,’ which is the primary location where this largely nocturnal forest mammal makes its home.

Being of the same family (*Hippopotamidae*), the pygmy hippo and its more well-known relative, the Nile hippo (*Hippopotamus amphibius*, aka the common hippo) are somewhat similar. But as its name suggests, the pygmy hippo is much smaller, measuring about half the size of the common hippo and, at 550-600 lbs, weighing only a fraction of the average hippo’s 4 tons.

The two cousins have other major differences as well. Common hippos live in large groups called bloats and spend most of the day in the water. Pygmy hippos are reclusive forest animals, living either in pairs or singly, and are better adapted to land than their larger relatives. For example, they have longer legs and more separate toes, allowing them to push easily through thick forest vegetation.

While more land loving than the common hippo, the pygmy hippo is still pretty aquatic—more so than any other even-toed ungulate. Like its larger cousin, it is an herbivore, feeding on ferns, broad-leaved plants, and fruits that fall from trees.

The pygmy hippo wasn’t documented outside of West Africa until the early 19th century and because of its nocturnal nature, little is known about these semi-aquatic mammals in the wild. That which is known has been gleaned from scientists’ observations of them in captivity: there are approximately 180 pygmy hippos in zoos throughout the world, with most of them born to parents born in zoos.

While the pygmy hippo has done well in captivity, the population in the wild is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List. It is estimated that only 2,000-3,000 individuals remain in the wild, primarily isolated to Liberia, with smaller populations found in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. Found in areas still recovering from civil conflict, the pygmy hippo is mainly threatened by trophy hunting, the bush meat trade, and loss of habitat from deforestation. ■

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[www.awf.org/legacygifts](http://www.awf.org/legacygifts)

### Did You Know?

- ✓ A recent study of 170,000 households found that 42% of Americans had already created a will while 57% were considering it
- ✓ Making a will bequest to a charity is one of the easiest ways to make a meaningful and impactful donation in support of a cause you care about
- ✓ A charitable gift in your will may help eliminate and/or reduce estate and other taxes
- ✓ There are different types of bequests, from a residuary bequest to a specific bequest, giving you greater control over your estate planning