

African Wildlife News

1961-2012

YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK IN THE AFRICAN HEARTLANDS



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.



An environmental easement signed by Kenyan landowner John Keen and his family will provide additional open land around Nairobi National Park for wildlife, like these plains zebras, to roam.

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Poaching skyrockets, putting rhinos at peril.



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AWF recognizes those who leave an extraordinary legacy for wildlife.



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A distant cousin of the savanna elephant gets noticed in the Congo.

Room for Hope and Wildlife

Groundbreaking easement secures wildlife habitat next to Nairobi National Park, providing new model for private land conservation in Kenya

By Kathleen Fitzgerald

Last December, while others were finishing up their gift shopping and planning their holiday travels, John Keen and his family gave an extraordinary holiday gift to the people of Kenya. They signed the country's first environmental easement, protecting an important natural habitat adjacent to Nairobi National Park and providing an example for other landowners interested in conserving Kenya's natural heritage.

Keen and his family own a parcel of land adjacent to Nairobi National Park, one of Kenya's most visited parks and one of the world's only national parks that sits on the edge of a major city. Founded in 1946, Nairobi National Park offers visitors a respite from the city's 6 million citizens and world-renowned traffic jams. It also operates as Nairobi's green lung—an air filter to the city—and an educational resource for millions of Kenyans who come to experience nature.

The first park gazetted in Kenya, Nairobi National Park spans 28,963 acres and hosts a diversity of wildlife, including the black rhino, lion, leopard, hyena, cheetah, eland, and wildebeest, plus more than 400 migratory and endemic bird species. As with many protected areas in Kenya, the wildlife of Nairobi National Park depends upon adjacent lands for survival—lands that are mainly privately owned.

(continued on page 6)

Billy Dodson



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A Lasting Legacy for Africa

If only there were more people like John Keen. As you may have read in our cover story, John Keen is a native Kenyan who owns property just outside of Nairobi National Park. Because the park is so small, wildlife depend on adjoining land, like Keen's, for migration and as a permanent home. But these plots have increasingly become fenced and developed in recent years, leaving few survival options for the park's wildlife.

Keen and his family, however, took an extraordinary step in the other direction: They signed Kenya's first-ever environmental easement agreement.

Through this easement with AWF and Kenya Wildlife Service, the Keens retain ownership of their land but voluntarily agree to restrict certain uses of it so that it remains open for wildlife. We applaud the Keens for their foresight and commitment to Kenya's future. It's a tremendous legacy to leave for the entire continent of Africa.

But you don't have to be a property owner in Africa to leave a lasting legacy to the continent, its people, and its wildlife. As you'll read on p. 4, AWF members of all stripes and income levels have become legacy supporters, simply by naming AWF as a beneficiary in their wills.

That's what Barbara von Hoffman did. A lover of Africa, she frequently spreads the conservation message by capturing and sharing her stunning photos of Africa's wildlife. (That's one of her photographs below.) She also has been a longtime supporter of AWF... but wanted to do something more.

That's why she became a Kilimanjaro Society member, changing her will to name AWF a beneficiary and ensuring that she will leave a legacy for all of Africa's wildlife.

Whether you are a Kilimanjaro Society member or not, I am grateful and appreciative for your generous support of AWF. But I also challenge you to consider extending your support for Africa's wildlife into the future, by becoming an AWF legacy supporter.

What will *your* legacy be?

Patrick Bergin, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer (and Kilimanjaro Society member)



John Butler

Barbara von Hoffmann



Wildlife photographer Barbara von Hoffmann has contributed dozens of photos for AWF's use, but as an AWF legacy supporter has given us something even more valuable: the ability to continue our wildlife conservation efforts into the future. Learn how you can include AWF in your long-term estate or financial plans, at awf.org/legacy.

Mythical Medicine Causes Deadly Side Effects

Rhino poaching spikes as Asian demand for “medicinal” horns increases

By Lewis Crary

Wildlife poaching has always provided a dramatic storyline for the media but rarely posed as great a threat to wildlife’s survival as the more chronic issues of human–wildlife conflict and habitat degradation.

Then came 2011. Suddenly reports surfaced of poachers equipped with night-vision goggles, semi-automatic weapons, and chainsaws, targeting defenseless rhinos under cover of night. In South Africa alone, a record 448 rhinos were killed in 2011, an increase of 33 percent from 2010—and a staggering *1,200 percent* from 2005. In early January 2012, eight rhinos were poached in a single day in Kruger National Park.

Controversial Strategies

These atrocities are thought to be occurring because of a booming Asian economy and resurgence in demand for rhino horn. The rhino horn market is a lucrative one, fetching more than US\$60,000 per kilogram—more than the price of gold. In Vietnam and China, horns are prized for their supposed medicinal properties, including

curing cancer. This, despite rhino horn being made of keratin, the same protein found in human hair and fingernails.

1:1 Ratio

Countries throughout the African continent are employing a variety of strategies to prevent poaching, from dehorning—tranquilizing a rhino and removing the superficial part of the horn annually—to injecting rhinos’ horns with a toxic compound that’s benign to the species but causes convulsions among humans if ingested. Some nations even argue that the rhino horn trade should be legalized to reduce the demand motivating poachers. Critics contend energy may be better spent in education, dispelling the myths that horns contain any nutritional worth.

Until the merits of various approaches are further explored, AWF continues to rebuild rhino populations in specific locations, such as Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary in Kenya, and train and equip rangers in our Heartlands. Additional funding could even allow for greater ranger availability, according to AWF Ecologist Jones Masonde.

“A reserve should ideally allocate at least one ranger per every sq. km, or maintain a 1:1 ratio between rangers and rhinos,” says Masonde. “Poachers often overwhelm wildlife staff with superior numbers and resources. Having a scout patrol a more limited area would allow us to level the playing field.”

Ultimately, though, the key to halting the horn trade lies in changing minds. AWF is in talks with partners to possibly conduct a media campaign in Asia focused on dispelling rhino horn myths—hopefully ending the rhino horn trade once and for all. ■



Kathleen Fitzgerald

Nine percent of Africa’s forest cover was lost between 1995 and 2005, an average loss of 40,000 sq. km of forest per year across sub-Saharan Africa—and deforestation is accelerating.

Hot Issue Branches into Africa

AWF steers environmentalists toward Africa’s falling forests

By Lewis Crary

Containing almost one-fifth of the world’s forestland and suffering from deforestation rates that are four times the world average, Africa is the site of pivotal ecological battles. This is what AWF President Helen Gichohi contended during a keynote speech at Forest Day last December, part of the international climate change conference COP 17 in Durban, South Africa.

Nearly two-thirds of the people in sub-Saharan Africa depend on woodlands for food, fuel wood, building material, and more. Wildlife is also dependent on these ecosystems.

“We often do not link the great wildebeest migrations of the Serengeti–Mara ecosystem to the well-being of forests, yet the Mau Forests are the source of the great Mara River,” Gichohi pointed out. “The forests are linked to the plains of Africa, and the greatness of the wildlife of those plains depends on the integrity of the forest systems.”

And, given that forests are critical for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and that Africa is vulnerable to climate change effects, deforestation on the continent is a significant issue. AWF is employing on-the-ground programs that emphasize preserving forestland while fostering local development.

Natural Wonders at Risk

One example is the Sustainable Opportunities for Improving Livelihoods (SOIL) program, which AWF launched in northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In three years under SOIL, AWF has helped formalize voluntary agreements with communities, explicitly linking the conservation of certain areas of forest in return for agricultural investment in other areas. These agreements led to participatory community zoning and delivered livelihood programs for more than 25,000 people in 27 villages.

Meanwhile, however, Gichohi challenged other parts of the world to reprioritize the conservation of forest resources. Otherwise, Africa’s natural wonders will be at risk. “Imagine Africa without the migrations, great apes, and diverse wildlife,” she said. ■

Paul Muoria



A growing middle class in Asia, coupled with outsized myths about the medicinal properties of rhino horn, have led to an alarming exponential increase in rhino poaching.

Of Lenses and

A photographer conserves Africa with her camera and with her

By Kathleen Garrigan

You could say photography and adventure run in Barbara von Hoffmann's blood. The Coloradan's father, who once represented the United States in a hot air balloon race over Brussels, also documented an exploratory trip through Dutch Guyana, now Suriname, in film and photographs.

"Dad was quite an adventurer and a wonderful photographer," said von Hoffmann, who remembers her father traveling around the U.S. exhibiting his 16-mm film of his trip to Dutch Guyana.

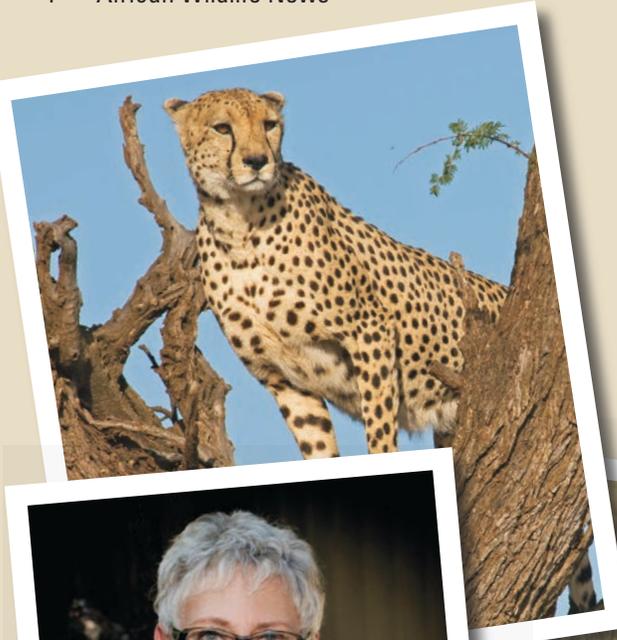
In a way, von Hoffmann has continued her father's tradition, pointing her camera at wildlife and wild landscapes in several continents, from Africa to Antarctica to Asia. And like her father's images before her, von Hoffmann's images have found a wide audience, appearing in various publications, on websites, and in photo competitions.

Through a Lens

It was during von Hoffmann's first trip to Africa—where she explored Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda through the viewfinder of her mother's camera—that her passions for the continent and for photography first came into focus. "I just felt like I was home, like my soul was there," she recalled about that first safari, during which she also met a noted nature photographer from Canada, Freeman Patterson.

"When I went home, I bought my own camera equipment, joined a local camera club, and began attending some workshops," said von Hoffmann, who credits Patterson with sparking her interest in photography.

After a trip to Africa three years later with her mother and two young sons, von Hoffman wouldn't go back for another 18 years. But since her return in 1991, she's made up for lost time. Now, von Hoffmann visits Africa every year and even started leading her own photographic safaris a couple of years ago.



Photos: Barbara von Hoffmann

AWF Kilimanjaro Society member Barbara von Hoffmann sees her legacy gift as an extension of her lifelong pursuits.

"I will have made a contribution to something that has been my passion for 40 years. What better legacy is there?"

—Barbara von Hoffmann,
AWF Kilimanjaro Society member

After years of traveling the world, the beauty and dignity of Africa made an impression on von Hoffmann that would never leave.

Legacies

legacy gift

Asked if there is a particular African animal she enjoys photographing, von Hoffmann doesn't hesitate. "Elephants," she says. "I am passionate about elephants—their sociability, their extreme intelligence, the way they treat each other. The first time I led a safari, we counted hundreds of elephants coming down off of Mt. Kilimanjaro in the morning. It was an incredible sight."

Von Hoffmann experiences twinges of sadness and anger as much as pangs of love when she thinks about those gentle giants, however. Images of poached elephants haunt her. Still, she believes even those photos have something to teach all of us. "The more [such] images we can get out there, the more it will help people realize the importance of the problem," she says.

Advocate for Africa

For von Hoffmann, the wild African subjects of her photographs are not mere pixels on paper but fascinating, living creatures deserving of our protection.

"I've always been an activist fighting for a cause," said von Hoffmann, who began supporting AWF more than two decades ago and recently included AWF in her will. "I am gratified to know that some good will be done with my gift to help the survival of Africa's magnificent wildlife. I will have made a contribution to something that has been my passion for over 40 years. What better legacy is there?"

Meanwhile, photography can benefit the conservation cause, according to von Hoffmann. "I think photography has a giant role to play in raising awareness about particular species," she said. "For a lot of people, they maybe can't travel to Africa. For them, a picture is worth a thousand words."

It's a sentiment shared by AWF's Craig Sholley, vice president for philanthropy and marketing, who has photographed Africa's natural splendors over the last 40 years. "There are special places and magical moments in nature that most people will never have the opportunity to experience first-hand," said Sholley. "A photographer's dream is to capture such images in a manner that sensitizes humankind to the diverse beauty of the natural world. Photographic images become an important tool in convincing people to conserve wildlife and wild places." ■

Barbara von Hoffmann



AWF's legacy stone recognizes those generous supporters whose estate gifts to AWF exceeded US\$500,000.

A Legacy in Stone

During AWF's 50th Anniversary celebration in Kenya last November, AWF unveiled the new Legacy Stone, a 46 x 46-inch masonry stone memorial situated in a garden area outside of AWF's Conservation Centre. The stone bestows special recognition on those supporters whose estate gifts to AWF exceeded US\$500,000.

Sholley and AWF Trustee Heather Haaga presented the new memorial at a special ceremony attended by AWF trustees, staff, and supporters, and spoke about the impact all legacy gifts, big and small, have in ensuring AWF's conservation work continues in perpetuity.

"While the Legacy Stone identifies a few specific supporters who left extremely generous gifts to AWF in support of our conservation work, we are very grateful for all the many legacy gifts we have received over the decades," said Sholley. "We extend a special thank you to our current Kilimanjaro Society members for their philanthropic forethought and commitment to Africa. Their legacy will ensure Africa's wildlife and lands endure for generations to come."

Currently more than 400 individuals, supporters like Barbara von Hoffmann, have informed AWF of their decision to include the organization in their will or estate plans. That kind of planning ahead not only helps AWF plan for the future but also gives hope for a future Africa where wildlife will continue to flourish alongside Africa's people.

Nairobi National Park *(Cont'd from cover)*

With the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), AWF has been working to keep the land in this region open for wildlife and pastoralists, and improve the livelihoods of the local Maasai. This has become progressively more challenging in recent years, however. Sub-division and land conversion is rampant, and land prices are high. Wildlife has been unable to continue its movement patterns, and human-wildlife conflict has escalated. The result has been a dramatic decline in wildlife in this region.

Through the conveyance of an environmental easement to AWF and Kenya Wildlife Service, Keen and his family are voluntarily agreeing to restrict certain uses of the land in order to keep space open for wildlife.

"I want this land to remain pristine today and in the future for wildlife and future generations," said Keen. "We have destroyed so much of our land and wildlife; it is time to save this country of ours!"

The Keens are able to continue operations of their resort, Masai Lodge (masailodge.com), and associated activities on their property. Through the easement, the facility is now actually considered to be located inside the park, which is expected to boost visitation to the lodge.

Conservation Leadership

The easement was signed in December at a ceremony at Masai Lodge, which sits on a winding river overlooking riverine forest and grasslands. In addition to the Keen family, those attending the ceremony included Helen Gichohi, AWF president; Julius Kipng'etich, director of Kenya Wildlife Service; Erna Kerst, director of USAID; and AWF, Kenya Wildlife Service, and USAID staff.

"While many Kenyans look at a piece of land and see dollar signs, the Keens see historical, ecological, and cultural values," said Gichohi. "We applaud the Keen family for their decision to place their land

"I want this land to remain pristine today and in the future for wildlife and future generations."

—John Keen



John Keen's environmental easement agreement, signed with Kenya Wildlife Service and AWF, was the first in Kenya. Here, Keen looks on as AWF President Helen Gichohi signs the lease into action.

Kathleen Fitzgerald

under an environmental easement and hope that their conservation leadership will inspire other landowners to do the same."

Kipng'etich said, "Kenya Wildlife Service would like to thank the Keens for their leadership in executing Kenya's first environmental easement. Nairobi National Park was one of Kenya's first established parks, so it is appropriate that this easement, being the first in Kenya, is adjacent to the park."

Added USAID's Erna Kerst, "We are delighted to be part of this historic event. It is a hopeful and extremely exciting day for the Keens, our partners, and all Kenyans."

Creative Solutions Needed

Environmental easements have proven highly effective in other parts of the world, and AWF has been exploring their potential use in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa. To AWF, the environmental easement offers the ideal win-win situation, where private landowners retain ownership and a park is expanded.

"Kenya's national parks, sanctuaries, and reserves safeguard roughly 8 percent of the country's land for wildlife habitat, but these protected areas are unconnected and remain too small to support viable populations of wildlife," observed Gichohi. "To secure Kenya's remaining wild places, we need creative solutions like easements." ■



Billy Dodson

Habitat loss and conflicts with humans pose the greatest threat to lions. With this easement, these carnivores and other wildlife have access to a wider range of land.

Southern Africa Up Close

AWF's vast Kazungula Heartland features varied scenery, wildlife, and more

Spanning a transfrontier region where Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe meet, AWF's vast Kazungula Heartland is home to the spectacular Victoria Falls as well as the mighty Zambezi River. The region features river systems that gradually give way to a mix of woodlands and grasslands. Throughout this area lives the savanna elephant—the world's largest elephant population is found here, in fact—along with the endangered black rhino and a multitude of other species.

Last summer, AWF Intern Becky Walter traveled around the Kazungula Heartland to capture images of the wildlife, habitats, and projects there. Here are just some of the photos from her travels.



Becky Walter

▲ Located on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe, Victoria Falls is known locally as Mosi-oa-Tunya, or “The Smoke That Thunders.” At more than 1,700 m wide and some 100 m high, the waterfall is reportedly neither the tallest or widest in the world—but is nevertheless considered the “largest.” At the height of the rainy season, more than 546 million cu. m of water flows over the edge of the falls.



Becky Walter

▲ This Heartland boasts the world's largest elephant population, featuring some 150,000 to 200,000 individuals near northern Botswana. Other key wildlife include the sable, a barrel-chested antelope with a dark mane; carnivores, such as the lion and spotted hyena; and the critically endangered rhino. In 2010, AWF helped wildlife authorities settle four white rhinos in Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park in Zambia. Since then, the rhinos have birthed at least three calves.



Becky Walter

◀ Throughout the Heartland, community members that Becky talked with recognized the importance of protecting wildlife. “When they see how many good things come out of conserving land, I think they really connect with it,” Becky observed.

Becky also had the chance to talk with members of the Sekute Community Development Trust in Zambia's Sekute Chiefdom. “I found them really passionate about what they were doing,” she said. “They were really well informed, working with AWF to create a better life for everyone involved.” ■

To learn more about Kazungula Heartland and read a Q&A with Becky Walter, as well as her blog entries about the sites she visited during her internship, please visit awf.org/becky.

Wildlife Watch

Forest Elephant

By Madeline Johnson

Until recently, people assumed that one species of elephant roamed the continent of Africa. Not until 2001, when a DNA identification system was created to track the origins of poached ivory, was it discovered that the African elephant included not just the savanna but also the forest elephant. The forest elephant shares only about 42 percent of its genes with the savanna elephant—a genetic gap that is twice as large as the one between African savanna elephants and their Asian kin. It is believed that these genetic lines developed independently of one another as far back as 2.5 million years ago.

Many noticeable differences exist between the African savanna and forest elephant. The largest, no pun intended, is their size. While a savanna elephant can reach up to 13 ft. and averages about 10 ft., a male forest elephant stands at a mere 8 ft. They also sport different ear shapes. The ears of the savanna elephant come to a point at the bottom, while those of the forest elephant are more rounded. The forest elephant has a much narrower face than its savanna counterpart, which is complimented by a longer jaw and straight, thin tusks that have a pink hue.



Craig R. Sholley

The forest elephant shares only 42 percent of its genes with the savanna elephant.

All of these characteristics enable the forest elephant to navigate its dense forest environment with ease. The elephant's smaller stature allows it to move through thick underbrush easily, and the straight tusks keep it from getting tangled in

vegetation. This dense forest habitat contributed to the species going unrecognized for so long. Since the 1900s, it had been suspected that the forest elephant was a distinct species, but because the forest environment makes tracking difficult, not much was known about the species. Until recently, a comprehensive scientific study of the species proved difficult.

New Key Species

A recent study in the Congo Basin illustrated the link between the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and local wildlife populations. According to the report, human unrest can leave wildlife vulnerable to increased poaching, and the forest elephant was no exception. In 1996, park guards in eastern DRC's Okapi Faunal Reserve were displaced by troops; during this time the reserve's forest elephant population dropped by nearly half. Comparatively, however, this reserve's population fared better than elsewhere. Before the war, 22,000 forest elephants were thought to roam throughout eastern Congo; only about 6,000 remain today.

AWF has therefore chosen the forest elephant as a key species in the Congo Heartland. We are working to learn more about this amazing species so as to devise an appropriate conservation strategy. ■

Encore Performance

AWF, Disneynature premiere 'African Cats' in Africa

By Lewis Crary

From August 2008 to October 2010, Disneynature filmmakers captured the stories of two big cat families in Kenya's Masai Mara: cheetah mother Sita and her cubs and lion patriarch Fang and his pride. Their footage reveals the hardships these beautiful animals face every day and their commitment to family that compels them to press on. Disneynature shared these stories with American moviegoers in the 2011 theatrical release of "African Cats," and a portion of ticket sales from the opening week were donated to AWF as part of the innovative "See 'African Cats,' Save the Savanna" initiative. Funds from the initiative were used to secure and protect up to 65,000 acres of land (over several years) that form a critical wildlife corridor between the Amboseli and Tsavo West National Parks in Kenya—a key passageway for predatory cats, as well as other wildlife.

This past November, as a thank you to the Kenyan people for sharing their wildlife heritage and providing expert guidance



Fox Theatres

People from all walks of life attended the Nairobi screening of Disneynature's "African Cats."

during the filming process, AWF and Disneynature organized a screening of "African Cats" in Nairobi, Kenya. Director Keith Scholey introduced the film, addressing an audience ranging from Kenyan officials to Maasai tribesmen and women. Afterward, guests mingled at a cocktail reception.

"What better way to celebrate Africa and the conservationists who call it home?" said Helen Gichohi, president of AWF. ■