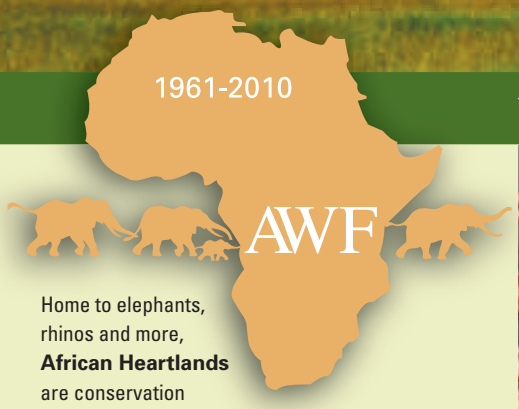
SPRING 2010

African Wildlife News



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.

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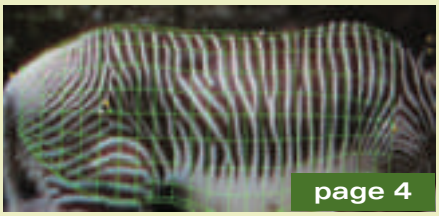

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A Model Ambassador
Meet AWF Goodwill Ambassador Veronica Varekova.

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION®
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It is likely that three-quarters of the world's population of lesser flamingoes hatched at this lake in East Africa.

Where Are We Now?

Conservation Spotlight

Tens of thousands of flamingos gathering in rippling waters during the breeding season, a sea of pink feathers on spindly legs. We all know the sight, made famous through photographs, but how many of us have actually seen flamingos amassed in these numbers on a remote African lake?

Well, if humans don't take care, we may one day never see it again.

Lake Natron is a warm soda lake in the Rift Valley in northern Tanzania. It is the largest and one of the only remaining breeding grounds of the lesser flamingo, the smallest of the flamingo species, distinguished by its red eyes and all-dark bill. The lake's caustic water creates an environment that keeps predators from reaching the nests of the flamingos, one reason these elegant waterbirds thrive in its shallows.

Over Lake Natron towers another natural wonder: Oldonyo Lengai, the only active volcano in East Africa and the only one on Earth that spews carbonite lava, a substance that is about half as hot as the silicate lava produced by most volcanoes.

Though internationally recognized as an important wetland, the Lake Natron region is largely unknown to nature lovers outside East Africa. And while the human communities around the lake live alongside priceless natural assets, there are few opportunities for them to improve their own livelihoods. Soon, though, there will be more.

Through its expanding program in Tanzania (see *Machache*, p. 2), AWF is working with pastoralist communities living along the shores of Lake Natron and another group living just east of the lake. Each aims to create its own

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WASHINGTON CENTER
1400 16th Street, N.W.
Suite 120
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-939-3333
202-939-3332 (fax)
1-888-494-5354
email: africanwildlife@awf.org

NAIROBI CENTER
Britak Centre
Mara Ragati Road
P.O. Box 48177, 00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 2710367
Fax: +254 20 2710372
email: africanwildlife@awfke.org

Website: www.awf.org

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Machache ~ A FEW WORDS

If it seems like you have been reading about AWF successes in the Maasai Steppe Heartland for years, that's because the Maasai Steppe was the first landscape AWF designated under its Heartland Program, launched a decade ago. (Yes, it's been 10 years!) Even before that, AWF was deeply involved in conserving the environments that encompass Tarangire's baobabs and the lush green forests of Lake Manyara, and all their attendant wildlife.

That work has yielded a growing suite of conservation outcomes—from the urgent and necessary (new management for the national parks) to the newly tried and transformational (the restructuring of Manyara Ranch into a wildlife haven that creates jobs and other opportunities for people living nearby). These accomplishments and others, funded both by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and AWF members like you, have made the Maasai Steppe one of our most mature and effective investments.

Also in Tanzania, AWF recently received generous funding from the Norwegian and Tanzanian governments to help 15 communities sustainably manage and leverage their forest estate ahead of the global launch of schemes to mitigate climate change through projects that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.


AWF/Paul Thomson

It's clear these multilateral funding successes stem from the solid impact AWF has achieved with your help. And we pledge to continue leveraging public resources to ensure every dollar you invest goes as far as possible and has a direct conservation impact on the ground in Africa.

While certainly good news, the funding wins outlined above cover conservation goals in one landscape over just a few years. What happens after that? And what about in Africa's other threatened landscapes? How will we meet funding needs there? AWF depends on the sustained commitment of the entire AWF community to answer those questions.

Patrick J. Bergin, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
African Wildlife Foundation


Karen K. Ormond

Results beget results. AWF's recently completed work in Tanzania includes a series of cultural enterprises that benefit and are run by Maasai women. On the strength of this initiative and others, AWF has been granted funding to extend its work in Tanzania.

Where Are We Now?

(continued from page 1)

Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a legal community-run association that manages land. When villages set up a WMA, they agree to help protect wildlife, gain the right to create businesses or contract with others to generate businesses based on that wildlife, and decide collectively how to share and spend the income they receive from these businesses.

AWF brings a lot of experience to these projects. Three years ago it helped eight villages nearby set up the Enduimet WMA, a protected corridor for elephants, antelopes, predators (including lion, cheetahs, and leopards,) and other wildlife moving between Amboseli, Kilimanjaro, and Arusha National Parks. In addition to establishing regular wildlife patrols, Enduimet's community leaders have been trained in business management and have entered into a management agreement with a private sector partner to open a tourism facility that will help finance the operations of the WMA and generate income for the eight villages.

The conservation mapping and land-use discussions already underway around Lake Natron are empowering participants to envision a new kind of future for the land and for themselves.

A WMA can take years to formalize; but the conservation mapping and land-use discussions already underway around Lake Natron are empowering participants to envision a new kind of future for the land and for themselves. Several years ago, plans by a large industrial company to extract soda ash from Lake Natron were halted after scientists warned the factory could devastate Africa's flamingo population. In supporting projects like the proposed WMAs, AWF hopes to see such plans put to rest for good. ■

Thierry Banchet

Conservation Spotlight

Asset: Lake Natron, a warm soda lake in the Rift Valley

Size: 35 miles long, 15 miles wide, and less than 10 feet deep (about the size of the Salton Sea, California's largest lake, though shallower)

Keystone species: The lesser flamingo, the smallest of the flamingo species

Threats: Logging and other industrial activity in nearby watersheds; proposed development of a soda ash plant on the lake's shores

AWF intervention: Partnering with communities conserving the Lake Natron ecosystem

Vote for AWF!

Visit www.awf.org/disney

The Give Elephants Room to Roam program of AWF has been selected by The Walt Disney Company as a recipient of funding through Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green.

Through Give Elephants Room to Roam, AWF is partnering with local communities in Zambia to safeguard elephant corridors and core wildlife habitats while also assisting with education and skill development for local children. The program is among the five that have been chosen for their habitat restoration efforts.

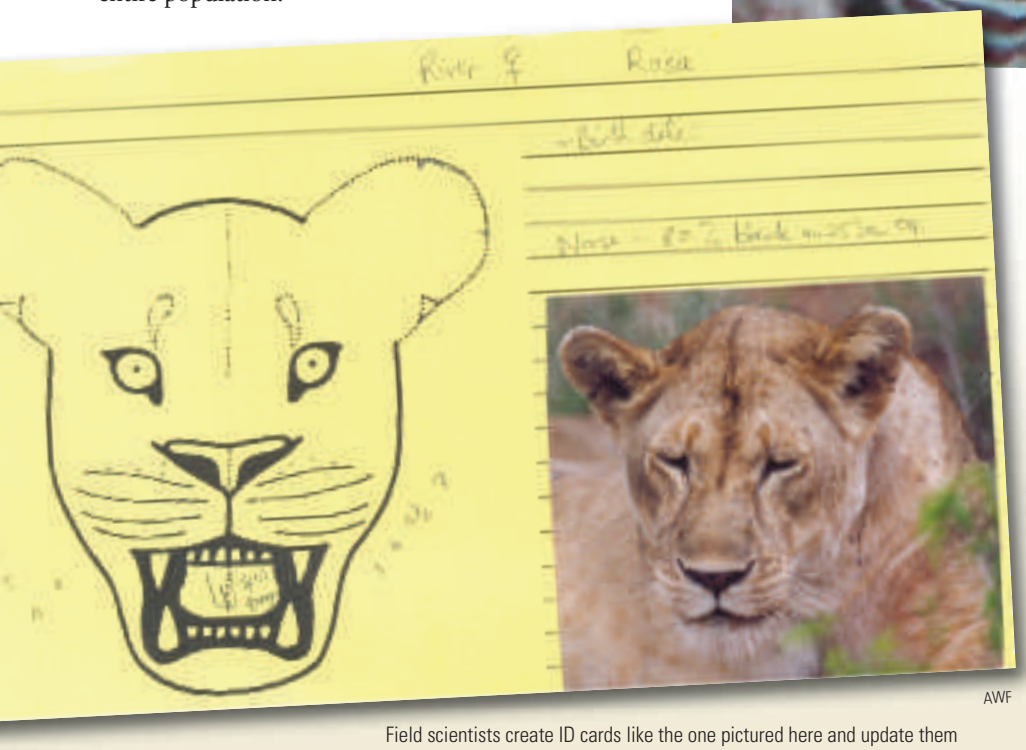
Disney's Friends for Change: Project Green helps kids help the planet. Encourage the kids in your life to join and pledge to take simple everyday actions that help the planet at **www.awf.org/disney**.

Kids can vote on the Friends for Change website through April to help Disney decide how the fourth installment of its $1 million in donations will be distributed among the five "habitat" programs. AWF's Give Elephants Room to Roam program will receive a portion of this installment. The amount depends on the percentage of votes earned—first place gets $100,000, so tell the kids in your life to get involved and vote today! ■

Getting to Know You

Everyone knows you can tell a leopard by its spots, but have you ever wondered how AWF's field scientists tell one lion from another, or distinguish a newcomer in the dizzying array of stripes within a herd of zebras?

Here AWF surveys a few of the tools its field scientists use to identify and follow individual members of wildlife populations. Armed with such methods, they can track the detailed life history of a single animal and glean important information about the dynamics of an entire population.



AWF

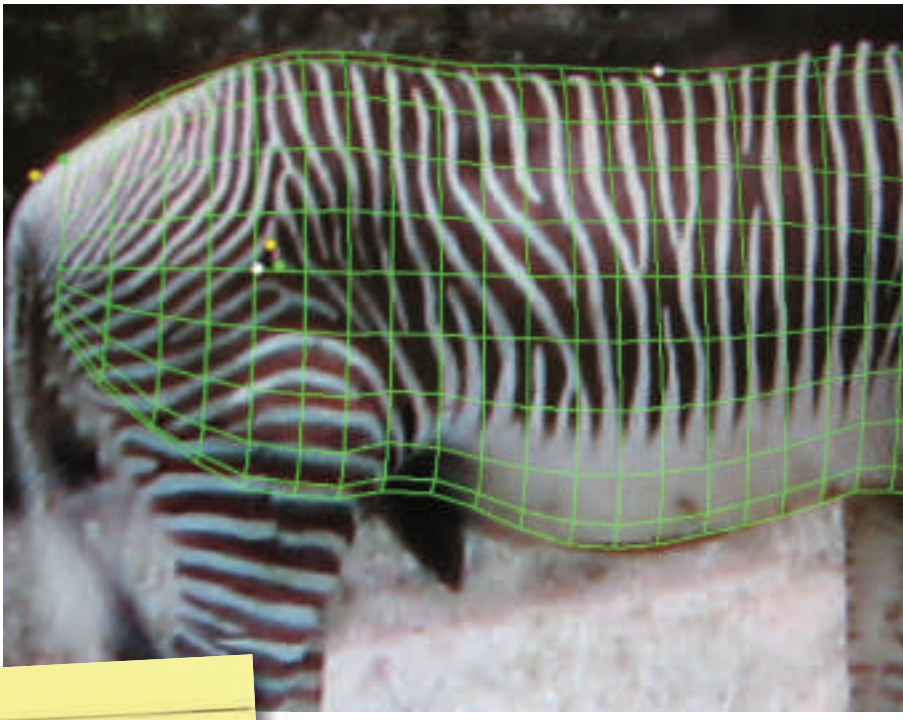
Field scientists create ID cards like the one pictured here and update them regularly with notes about and photographs of their feline subject.

Lion Whiskerer

"Every lion is born with a permanent and unique pattern of 'whisker spots,' formed by the top row of whiskers," says AWF Lion Scientist Bernard Kissui. "Like a human's fingerprint, this pattern never changes over a lion's lifetime, which is why it's the primary tool used by scientists to identify individuals."

To track the whisker patterns, field scientists create an identification card for each known lion in a defined study area. Along with a sketch of the whisker spots, the card typically details other distinctive markings on a lion's face, such as scars, ear notches, and spots in the eyes.

Alongside the sketch are a number of close-up photographs of both sides of the lion's face. The ID cards are regularly updated with new photographs and drawings depicting changes in the individual's markings.



Paul Muoria

Muoria and other field scientists are testing out a new computer program that digitally extracts a zebra's stripe pattern and fits it to stored data.

Seeing through Stripes

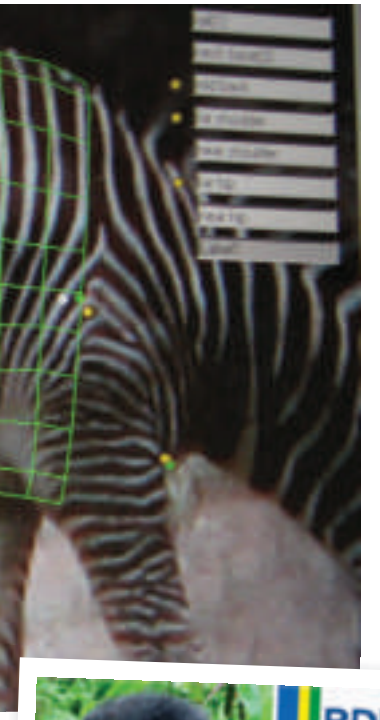
"From a distance, all Grevy's zebras may look alike, but like the lion's whisker pattern," says AWF Field Biologist Paul Muoria, "each zebra's stripe pattern is unique and stays constant throughout its lifetime."

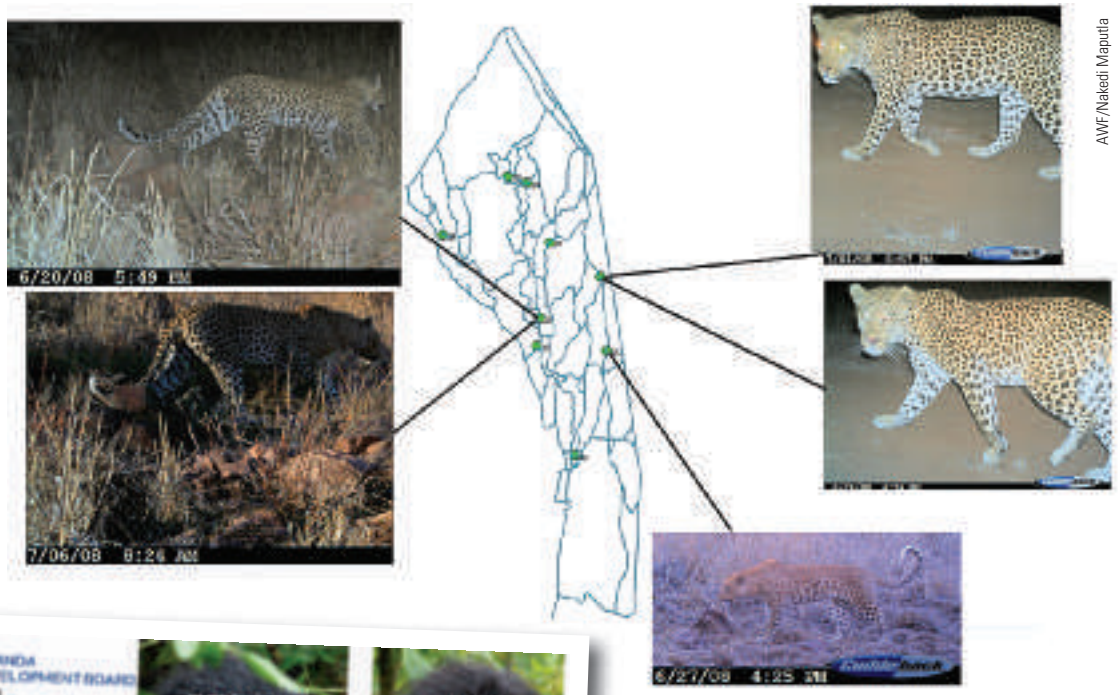
When AWF's Grevy's Zebra Research Project in Kenya began more than seven years ago, Muoria and his team photographed the stripe pattern on each zebra's right rump in order to distinguish between them. Each pattern was given a unique code and a special software program was used to archive photos, corresponding codes, GPS locations, and other data. The identified zebra was then given a unique number or name.

However, because the stripe pattern had to be coded manually by different observers, the risk of error, including double counting, was high.

Now, a software company is in the final stages of developing computer-based Grevy's zebra identification software, which is currently being tested by Muoria and other scientists. The software uses a three-dimensional model to fit a generic Grevy's zebra body shape to the photo. It then extracts the unique stripe patterns for each animal and stores this information in a library for future comparison.

Once finalized and put to use, the software program will allow scientists across the entire range of Grevy's zebra to coordinate conservation efforts.





AWF/Nakedi Maputla

This map plots leopard sightings captured by various camera traps stationed throughout the concession where Maputla launched AWF's Leopards of the Kruger project.

Rwanda Development Board

The Sabyinyo family of gorillas lives in Rwanda on the flanks of an extinct volcano in the Virunga Mountains. The nose print for most of the individual family members appears alongside the individual gorilla's photo.

On the Nose

As long ago as the start of Dian Fossey's work with mountain gorillas (and even before then) field scientists have relied on nose prints—the pattern of creases above a gorilla's nostrils—to identify individuals.

These unique markings can be distinguished at fairly close range and discerned from afar through binoculars, and scientists and rangers in the field sketch the nose prints of gorillas they come across. By comparing their sketches with photographs of the gorillas, they can identify which ones they have seen. The nose prints are kept on file and are used by scientists and park authorities to track the movements of many of the 700 individuals that make up the world's most highly endangered population of great apes.

Caught on Camera

A leopard's spot pattern is as unique as a human's fingerprint, a lion's whisker pattern, the stripe pattern of a zebra, and the nose print of a gorilla. But unlike these species, the leopard moves mostly at night, when crossing paths with it is especially dangerous. For this reason, scientists like Nakedi Maputla, head of AWF's Leopards of the Kruger project, uses camera traps to photograph the leopards in their natural habitat. The cameras are placed where tracks or other evidence of leopard activity are found and they automatically photograph animals as they pass by.

After downloading and analyzing the photos, scientists identify the individual leopards by their spot patterns and other characteristic markings, such as whisker patterns and scars. ■

Partnering to Save Giraffes

Step-by-Step Guide to a Collaring

The West African giraffe may be highly endangered, but is surprisingly at ease in the 40-square-mile "giraffe zone," east of Niamey, Niger, where it spends much of its time. In the zone's villages, the giraffes can often be seen crossing a yard or sharing the dirt road with a motorbike, barely a glance or a nod exchanged between human and ruminant.

This happy truce largely reflects the work of a local organization, the Association to Safeguard the Giraffes of Niger (ASGN), which has overseen the region's giraffe conservation effort over the past decade. Nearly extinct just over a decade ago, with only 50 individuals remaining, the giraffe population has since quadrupled. ASGN is in the process of finalizing the latest census of the West African giraffe, carried out with AWF support. Preliminary estimates put the giraffe population at 220.

Now that the population is on the rise, the giraffe's range may also be increasing, with some individuals spotted in new areas such as near the border with Mali. As the herd ventures into new frontiers, ASGN is equipping individual giraffes with GPS collars so their movements can be mapped. Using the resulting data, ASGN will work with the communities where giraffes roam, educating them about the giraffe's habits and their importance to the landscape.

AWF in late February joined ASGN for the first collaring of eight West African giraffes—the second giraffe collaring exercise ever conducted in Africa. Funded by the French Fund for Global Environment (*Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial*), the Giraffe Conservation Fund, and the International Foundation for Wildlife Management (*Fondation IGF*), in partnership with Niger's wildlife authority, the collaring illustrates how partnerships are saving the West African giraffe. ■

1 The team fires a lightweight dart filled with tranquilizer into the giraffe's rump. The giraffe begins to wobble after the drug begins to take effect in 6 to 10 minutes.

Andy Tutchings/GCF

2 A pair of field biologists each holding one end of a rope rein in the giraffe's gangly legs. One biologist ultimately crosses paths with the other, edging the giraffe's legs closer and closer together until the giraffe stumbles and falls to the ground.

JP Suraud/GCF

3 The field team rushes in and quickly administers an antidote that reverses the effects of the tranquilizer, which would otherwise metabolize too quickly, causing the animal to aspirate and die. The giraffe will spend the entire exercise fully awake, though a blindfold over its eyes and cotton wool in its ears will lessen the affront to its senses.

A Model Ambassador

It is almost always the case: People who visit the mountain gorillas of Central Africa feel deeply connected to these gentle giants and marvel at their human-like behavior.

"The silverback, the largest male in the group, is very calm, yet always observing," said AWF Goodwill Ambassador Veronica Varekova, after first visiting the gorillas. "They eat so much, and I could feel their physical power as they broke the bamboo shoots. But their facial expressions are tender." An international supermodel, Varekova was named AWF Goodwill Ambassador with financier Ben Stein in October 2009.

As their first assignment, Varekova and Stein traveled to Rwanda to see the mountain gorillas, just as AWF was wrapping up its celebration of Year of the Gorilla. On their itinerary was a stay at Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, located on the flanks of the Virunga volcano, opened two years ago with the help of AWF, USAID, and other partners.

> "I made frequent trips to Africa when I was growing up and fell in love with the continent."
>
> —AWF Goodwill Ambassador Veronica Varekova

During their stay at Sabyinyo, Varekova and Stein met with community members, who showed them a new road and water wells constructed with income from the lodge. In a meeting with Rosette Chantal Rugamba, Head of the National Office for Tourism and National Parks, Varekova discussed the lives of the mountain gorillas and the positive impact of gorilla tourism on the Rwandan economy. She also met the U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda, W. Stuart Symington who, on behalf of both Rwanda and the United States, thanked Varekova and Stein for their work.

Returning from Rwanda, Varekova quickly began work on a project of her own design: a fund-raising event for AWF held in the Hall of African Mammals at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Two exquisite watches, a safari to Rwanda, and other donated items auctioned off at the event generated substantial support for AWF's work.

Jamie McCarthy, Getty Images

Varekova with Jean-Claude Biver, CEO of Hublot, at a recent AWF event held in New York City. Funds raised from the auction of two watches donated by Hublot generated substantial support for AWF.

In the months and years ahead, Varekova says she has no intention of easing her pace to raise awareness and funds for AWF initiatives that conserve large landscapes, protect endangered species, and empower local communities in the African Heartlands.

"I made frequent trips to Africa when I was growing up and fell in love with the continent," the model explains. "After seeing AWF's work and accomplishments in the Heartlands, I was determined to promote its projects and programs around the world. AWF's mission, philosophy, and impact are truly making a difference." ■

Watch a video of Varekova in Africa at www.awf.org/varekova

Andy Tutchings/GCF

4

A field ecologist throughout the exercise rests his entire body weight on the giraffe's head. Without the use of its neck, the giraffe is unable to get to its feet—though its strong neck has the ability to lift a 100-kg biologist slightly off the ground several times.

Made of conveyor-belt material, the collar is fitted with a GPS device that will track the giraffe's movements. The team can download the GPS data and/or change the device's settings from anywhere in the world.

JP Suraud/GCF

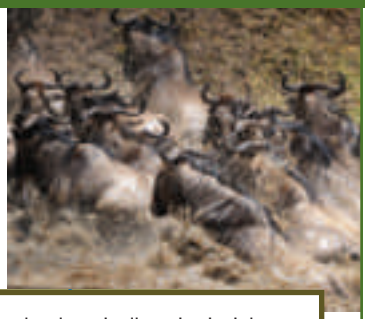
5

Necessity is the mother of invention. After two giraffes bucked so hard their collars slid up and down and broke off, the field team devised an elastic harness that holds the collar firmly in place.

Fitted with the new collar and its elastic harness, the giraffe comfortably returns to its everyday business. The team will be now able to track the giraffe's whereabouts as it moves out of its known range. Conservationists can then widen their efforts, educating more people about the ruminant's movements and its importance to the landscape.

Wildlife Watch

The Great Migration


Billy Dodson

The Great Migration is the single largest mass movement of animals in the world. Each year like clockwork, more than a million wildebeest, hundreds of thousands of zebras, and thousands of antelopes and other species trek from the southern tip of the world-famous Serengeti plains of Tanzania to the northern edge of Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. The animals literally follow the rains, moving toward greener pastures as seasonal patterns shift. Attacked by predators or cut down by fatigue, thousands of animals lose their lives in the 1,800-mile-long journey.

While both the route and timeline vary each year, the migration typically unfolds as follows:

1 The herds gather on the Serengeti plains and the Ngorongoro areas of Tanzania in December. Once the rains begin in January or February, the female wildebeest calve in great numbers (with as many as 500,000 calves born in a short three-week window).

2 By March or early April, the Serengeti's rainy season ends and the calves are strong enough to travel. The herds begin moving in a staggered fashion northwest toward Tanzania's Lake Victoria, where fresh pastures await.

3 The herds ultimately come together again near the Grumeti River. Entering the river's crocodile-infested waters, many animals panic and get caught in a deadly stampede or become exhausted and drown.

4 The surviving herds typically arrive in July at the mighty Mara River, where large concentrations of crocodiles again await. The herds that successfully cross feed, breed, and calve on the lush Masai Mara until the rainy season ends in October.

5 The herds make their way back towards Serengeti National Park, reaching the southeastern short grass plains around December, and this amazing cycle begins anew.

See the migration for yourself! Join AWF for its Annual Member Safari, *Kenya's Best: Height of The Great Migration, July 26-August 7*. Contact AWF Safari Leader Stephen Ham at sham@awf.org or (202) 939-3318.

A Shared Legacy

Susan Glasbrenner, a peace officer in New York, has never been to Africa, yet she can distinguish a black rhino from a white one and a dik-dik from other types of similar looking antelope.

From an early age, Glasbrenner learned to recognize the fantastical creatures of a distant continent, not from the back of a safari vehicle, but at the knee of her maternal grandfather. One of Glasbrenner's first loves was the African elephant, a love she shared with her grandfather.

"He told me about how long they live in the wild, how long the 'children' stay with their mothers, how much the babies weigh, and how they stay together as families," says Glasbrenner.

In fact, it was her love of elephants that first attracted Glasbrenner to the African Wildlife Foundation.

"I got involved with AWF in the early '80s when it launched its 'Save the Elephants' campaign," says Glasbrenner, whose support for AWF has never wavered since. "My mom said my grandfather would be very proud of my ongoing interest in saving animal species."

In December 2007, Glasbrenner made the decision to include AWF in her will, and designated the organization a beneficiary of her retirement account.

"I know if my grandfather were alive today, he would approve of my decision," says Glasbrenner.

Learn more about Glasbrenner and her grandfather's story at www.awf.org/legacyprofile. ■

If you're interested in learning about AWF's Legacy Giving Program, visit www.awf.org/legacygifts or contact AWF at (202) 939-3326.