

Swara

East AFRICAN WILD LIFE Society

Volume 31:3 July – September 2008





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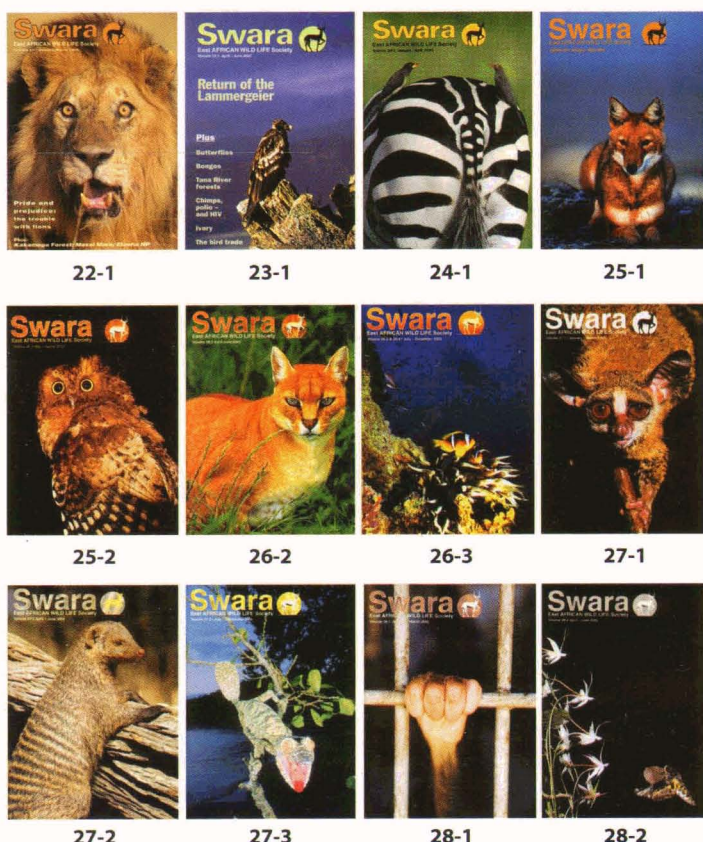


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The impala is the symbol of the East African Wild Life Society. 'Swara' is the Swahili word for antelope.



*Swara appreciates the continued support it receives from
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Photo: © PETER COLERIDGE

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Hope for Mau Forest Complex and the Mara Ecosystem

The Mau Forest Complex forms the largest closed-canopy forest ecosystem of Kenya, as large as the forests of Mt Kenya and the Aberdare Range combined. Being the single most important water catchment in Rift Valley and western Kenya, it is a natural asset of national importance. Its forests provide critical ecological services to the country, in terms of water storage, river flow regulation, flood mitigation, recharge of groundwater, soil erosion reduction, water purification, conservation of biodiversity and micro-climate regulation. Through these ecological services, the Mau Forest Complex supports key economic sectors in the Rift Valley and western Kenya, including energy, tourism, agriculture and other industries. In addition, the Mau Forest Complex helps secure the water supply to urban areas and supports to the livelihoods of millions of people living in rural areas and in the forest's immediate surrounds. It is the home of a minority group of indigenous forest dwellers, the Ogiek.

Despite its critical importance for sustaining current and future economic development, the Mau Forest Complex has been adversely impacted by extensive irregular and ill-planned settlements, as well as illegal forest resources extraction. Degazettement of forest reserves (excision) and continuous widespread encroachments have led to the destruction of some 104,000 hectares, representing over 24% of the Mau Complex area, over the last 15 years. In 2001 alone, 61,023 hectares of forest in the Mau Complex were excised. In addition, an estimated 43,700 hectares have been encroached in the remaining protected forests of the Mau Complex.

The extensive destruction of this key asset has become a national emergency

and the Prime Minister has stepped in to engage all the stakeholders, including relevant Government Ministries, to provide a sustainable solution to the current crisis. Accordingly, a stakeholder consultative forum was convened in Nairobi on 15 July 2008, attended by 300 people representing government institutions, members of parliament, community-based organizations (CBOs), local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and international organizations. The Prime Minister and ten Cabinet Ministers attended the forum. Shortly after the forum the Prime Minister appointed a Mau Forest Task Force to spearhead follow-up actions.

The Task Force was officially launched by the Prime Minister on 22 July 2008 and I have the honour to and challenge of chair the cadre. Within six months, the Task Force will analyse on the ground and then make recommendations to the Prime Minister on:

- (i) effective management structure to stop any further degradation in the Mau Forests Complex;
- (ii) long-term solution for uncontrolled human settlement in and around the forest complex, including relocation of populations as may be necessary for the conservation of the forest complex;
- (iii) restoration of all degraded forests and critical water catchment areas in the Mau Complex;
- (iv) mobilizing resources to achieve the aforementioned objectives.

I am happy to report that, in these early stages of the Task Force work, there is some hope for the Mau forest complex and the Mara ecosystem, which critically depends on it. There is great anxiety about possible

relocation of populations living within the forests but the government stands firm on taking actions needed to ensure sustainable management of the forest complex, albeit with a human face.

Swara continues to be published on a quarterly basis and efforts are being made for the magazine to reach more readers worldwide. In the meantime, the Society is conducting a major review of the publication and possible new roles it could play in helping to better champion the conservation course. Society members and readers will be kept informed of the changes in due course.

Our programmes and projects have registered steady growth and increased impact. The Society is strengthening its Marine Wildlife Conservation Programmes. The Kenya Forest Working Group has continued to play commendable roles in networking NGOs and civil society for information sharing and mobilizing actions against forest excisions. The Forest Working Group is a significant player in the Mau Forest Task Force mentioned above. Through its wetlands programme, the Society is playing a pivotal role in co-ordinating NGO and civil society groups challenging the proposed large-scale sugar growing in the Tana Delta wetlands in clear contravention of the Ramsar Convention and other conservation requirements.

The Council has discussed and approved the establishment of a branch in Uganda. The Society is exploring immediate opportunities to collaborate with and to support conservation players in Uganda in our future activities. Similar initiatives are planned for Tanzania.

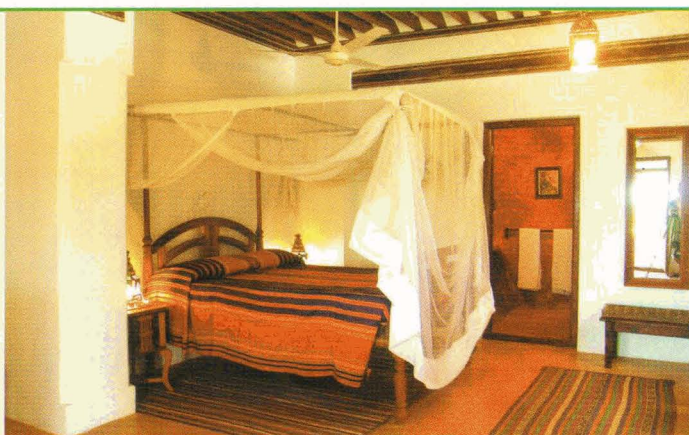
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Kwita Izina—Rwanda's Gorilla-naming ceremony

Gorillas have been grabbing the headlines recently. From the cover of *National Geographic*, to features on major talk-shows and news programmes by gorilla conservationists, gorillas are once again in the glare of the world's media spotlight. However, most of the attention is due to the dire situation faced by these gentle giants, including some recent horrific murders of them. Of

human baby. Held throughout the month of June, this year's program spanned several weeks of festivities and all the events centred on the adorable and iconic Mountain Gorillas, a distinctive sub-species found at high altitudes in the heart of Central Africa.

Kwita Izina was launched at a pop concert with the Nigerian Hip-Hop performer P-Square, which appealed to young people. Then on 17

Virunga Volcanoes, was actively involved in the celebrations and had a huge traditional celebration, called *Igitaramo* the day before the actual gorilla-naming ceremony.

The gorilla-naming ceremony itself took place on 21 June at the Volcanoes National Park headquarters. It was an impressive event with thousands in attendance—including a barrage of media and VIPs from around the world.

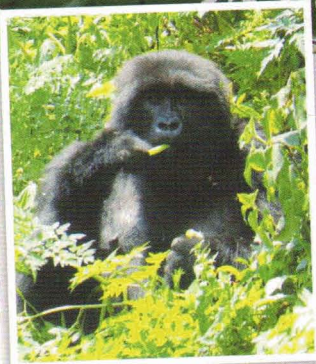
and the names were read out. Drumming and floating dancers punctuated each batch of name-giving. This was followed by an outstanding performance by the West African singer Oliver Ng'oma and his band. All of this took place in bright sunshine with the crisp blue Virunga



Photos © PAULA KAHUMBU

course, as they are some of our nearest cousins and one of our fellow 'Great Apes', the plight of the gorillas is moving to many people from all walks of life across the world.

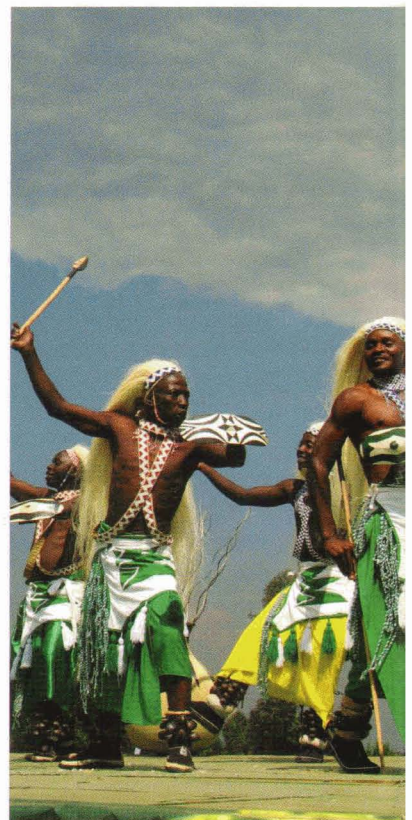
The recent gorilla-naming ceremony held in the lush central African country of Rwanda, is a pleasant departure from the gloomy headlines that have characterised reporting on the Mountain Gorillas over the past few months. Known as *Kwita Izina* in the Kinyarwanda language, this ceremony has been running annually for a few years. It is based on the traditional baby-naming and 'outdooing' celebrations held in Rwanda after the birth of a



June, the Rwandan President Paul Kagame unveiled a Gorilla Monument constructed in downtown Kigali. This was followed by a day of community events intended to raise awareness and a scientific/conservation conference that attracted participants from all over the world. The local community living around the

The Rwandan parks authority (ORTPN), have cleverly marketed the event and the uniqueness of the gorillas, and this was evident from the wide range of participants who took part in the naming ceremony.

Among the guests were tourism investors, scientists, local and regional conservationists and Rwandan officials. The ceremony was preceded by a fantastic presentation that included the elegant Rwandan 'cow-dance', where the dancers move their shoulders in synchrony while gliding across the stage. Then the people bestowing the names on the gorillas were draped in traditional Rwandan garb



volcanoes as a backdrop! The singing was exquisite and the gyrations of the accompanying dancers electric.

Oliver Ng'oma performed again at the Lake Kivu Serena where the final event was held on the Saturday, after the official opening of the Sabyinyo Community Lodge in the Virungas. This lodge will serve as a base for tourists visiting the gorillas and bring much-needed income and jobs to the surrounding community.

The gorilla-naming event is just a small part of the massive conservation and tourism-development strategy of Rwanda, cleverly using the gorillas—not just to earn millions of dollars but more importantly—as a flagship for national reconstruction through investment in tourism. The ceremony also promoted regional peace-building initiatives as the mountain gorillas in the Virunga Range into the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda blissfully unaware of the international boundaries

that bisect their leafy, mist-distilled paradise.

As the mountain gorillas continue to attract ever more of the world's attention, given the tenuous future faced by all the great apes (save for ourselves), events like *Kwita-Izina* are key for raising awareness both locally and globally that there is so much to celebrate about these wonderful cousins of ours.

—Dino Martins

For more information about *Kwita-Izina* and on the mountain gorillas in Rwanda please visit www.kwitezina.org.

Bushmeat given the attention it deserves in East Africa

Broadly defined, bushmeat denotes meat from wild animal species. As such, it can be an important social and economic activity that occurs in many habitats, and in ethnically diverse areas of eastern Africa. Its role in maintaining communities' livelihoods, food security and nutritional status through subsistence consumption is critical to many. The emerging importance of trade markets in the region has also resulted in bushmeat being viewed as a considerable economic resource that contributes to many household incomes. However, the negative ecological impacts are enormous and uncontrolled illegal use is now believed to be one of the greatest direct causes of the decline of wild animal populations, second only to habitat loss.

In view of the seriousness of the bushmeat problem, and the fact that regional effort is needed to combat growing illegal bushmeat trade, the MENTOR (Mentoring for Environmental Training in Outreach and Resource Conservation) Fellowship Program was established by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the College of African Wildlife Management (at Mweka, Tanzania) and the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group to train and build the capacities of emerging conservation leaders in order to build a network of East African wildlife professionals who can lead efforts to reduce illegal and unsustainable bushmeat exploitation at local and regional levels.

The eight Fellows (from Kenya, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) are currently undergoing post-graduate training at the College of African Wildlife Management that involves nationwide bushmeat assessments and intervention activities in their respective countries.

I intend to publish my 'bushmeat assessment' in a forthcoming issue of *Swara*, 'Effects of Wildlife Policy on Bushmeat Poaching and Game Ranching in Kenya'. The restrictive non-consumptive use policy and the ban on cropping five years ago left the fate of wildlife outside protected areas in the hands of hosts who now consider wildlife in their private land 'a pest best removed'. This has resulted in increased commercial poaching for bushmeat, growing loss of habitat and escalating human-wildlife conflict. The result has been drastic decline in wildlife populations both inside and outside protected areas that was compounded by two droughts that have struck the country in the last decade. Watch this space!

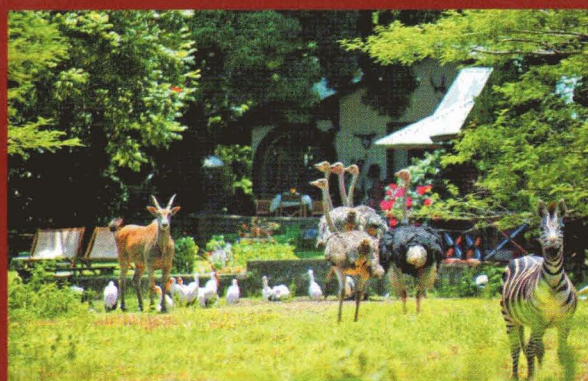
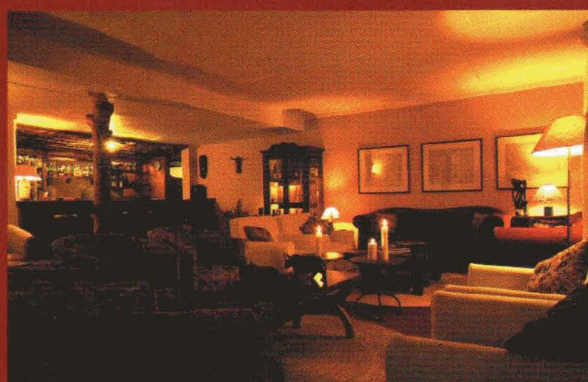
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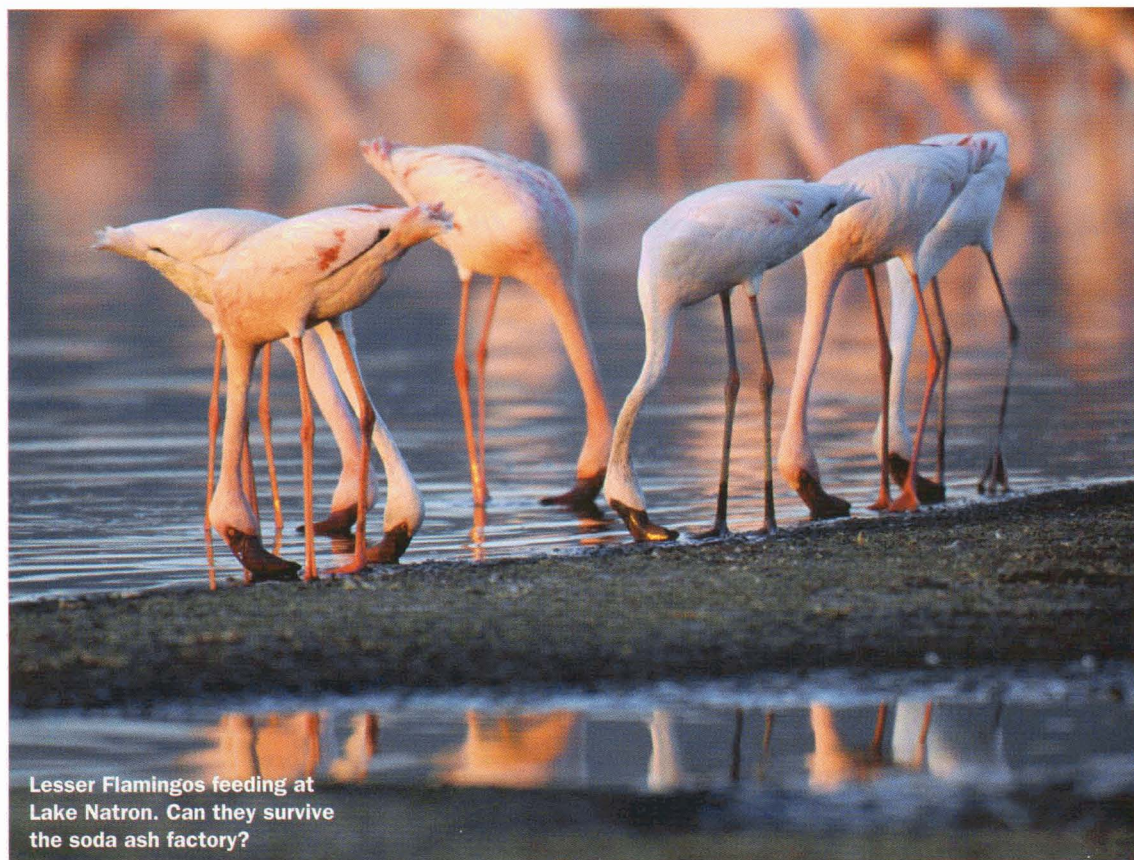


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Lake Natron: Has Tata finally bowed out?

By Ken Mwathe and Joan Kabugu

Environmental groups in East Africa have pushed Tata Chemicals Ltd to the wall; the Mumbai based company has temporarily withdrawn their proposed US\$400 million soda ash processing plant at Lake Natron, Tanzania.

This follows a relentless campaign the Lake Natron Consultative Group, a lobby group that brought together conservation groups in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa and North America with one aim—to halt plans to construct a soda ash plant at Lake Natron.

Tata Chemical Ltd, backed by the Government of Tanzania, had proposed to build a soda ash processing plant at the shores of Lake Natron. The plant would

produce 0.5 million tonnes of soda ash annually and would utilise 129,000 litres of water per hour. Soda ash (sodium bicarbonate) is used in the pharmaceutical industry, the manufacture of glass and a host of other applications ranging from making toothpaste foam to the distinctive browning of German pretzels. Soda ash can be produced synthetically from table salt in what is known as the Solvay process. Currently, roughly three-fourths of the world's soda ash is derived from the relatively inexpensive process developed in the 1860s that involves extraction from salt brine and limestone.

The lobby group argued that construction of a soda ash would be detrimental to biodiversity; notably Lake Natron is the only successful and regular breeding site for Lesser Flamingos in eastern Africa, which account for 75% of the

global population of this species that is listed as Near Threatened by IUCN. Furthermore, the Lake is listed as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance as well as an Important Bird Area.

Lesser Flamingos are extremely sensitive to disturbance during breeding and are known to readily abandon their eggs and chicks when agitated. They are also very particular about the depth and chemical composition of water that also provides the right conditions for its favourite food—microscopic blue-green algae. The process of mining soda ash is more than likely to interfere with this delicate balance.

Additionally, the livelihoods of the local community would also be threatened. More than 4,000 residents of villages such as Engare Sero, Pinyinyi, Wosi Wosi, and Gelai benefit from tourism at the

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lake—courtesy of the iconic pink birds. Furthermore, residents depend on the ecosystem to sustain their pastoral lifestyles. The people fear encroachment of pasturelands by the factory and a duplication of the case of Magadi Soda Kenya where a paltry 450 people were employed by the factory.

The campaign against the soda ash factory at Lake Natron received critical backing from Ramsar (the convention on the management and wise use of wetlands) in February of this year. In response to an invitation by the government of Tanzania following The Group's advocacy campaign, Ramsar sent a high powered Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM) team to meet stakeholders and listen to views on the proposed project. The team was led by Paul Mafabi, the Head of Uganda's Wildlife Division and a member of Ramsar's Steering Committee.

During one of the RAM meetings held at Protea Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Mr Joseph Saningo, a resident of Lake Natron area and Director of Ilkisongo Pastoralist Initiatives said: 'The construction of the plant will lead to the loss of our people's main source of livelihood—livestock—as pasturelands are encroached by the factory's footprint. ...As a community we are also shocked that the government allowed the plant to be constructed within the Ramsar site. We call upon Ramsar to ensure that Lake Natron is conserved rather than being destroyed.'

In June 2008 the Lake Natron issue was tabled at one of the highest decision making organs in East African region, The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) in Arusha, Tanzania. A Team of six from the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, BirdLife International, Youth for Conservation, Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania (JET) and Ilkisongo Pastoralist Initiatives (IPI) made a presentation to the Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources and Tourism (ANRT).

Lauding the group for bringing the issue to the attention of EALA, the ANRT Chair, Dr George Nangale, stated: 'This Parliament recognises the importance of Lake Natron as a trans-boundary ecosystem and has followed the debate on the issue with a lot of interest. We assure you that we will do what is within our power to ensure that the issues raised here are addressed in a comprehensive manner.'

When making the soda ash project withdrawal announcement, the Tata Chemicals Ltd Managing Director, Mr Homi Khusrokhhan, said: 'The Company is not in a position to take a view with regard to resumption 'til it has a chance to examine the final approved Ramsar Management Plan currently under preparation for Lake Natron... The original Environment and Social Impact Assessment should be treated as withdrawn.'

Their decision to withdraw the original proposal did not come as a surprise. On several occasions, the National Development Corporation officials in Tanzania had indicated the intention to shift the site 32 kilometres from Lake Natron. However, the conservation lobbyists maintain that this is no remedy since the raw material will still be removed from the Lake.

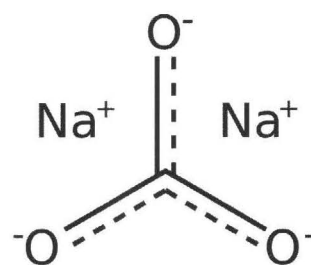
'The intricate network of pipes and pumps to draw the raw material from the lake is what is critical. These pipes are a major hindrance to the young flamingo chicks as they trek across the lake to look for fresh water', says Steve Itela, the Executive Director of Youth for Conservation, a Kenyan member of the Consultative Group. He adds, 'As far as the group is concerned, moving the site from the lake does not mitigate against the major negative impacts.'

It must be borne in mind that the withdrawal of the Lake Natron soda ash proposal is temporary. It is likely that the company and its Tanzanian counterpart, the National Development Corporation (NDC) will be back with a new proposal. Indeed, recent statements indicate that NDC is keen

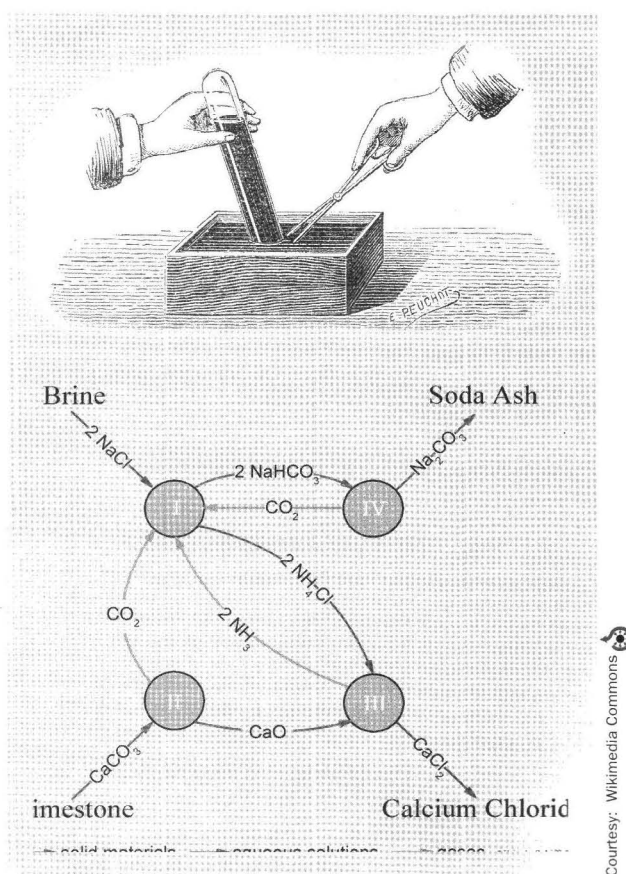
to go ahead with the project.

Tata seems to have bowed out for now—but for how long? We may not have an answer, but what is clear is that the battle ahead is likely to be arduous since Tata and the Government of Tanzania will not relent easily. The Lake Natron Consultative Group will continue to advocate and raise awareness about the threat to this globally important ecosystem. Our goal is to ensure that the proposed soda ash development is withdrawn once and for all.

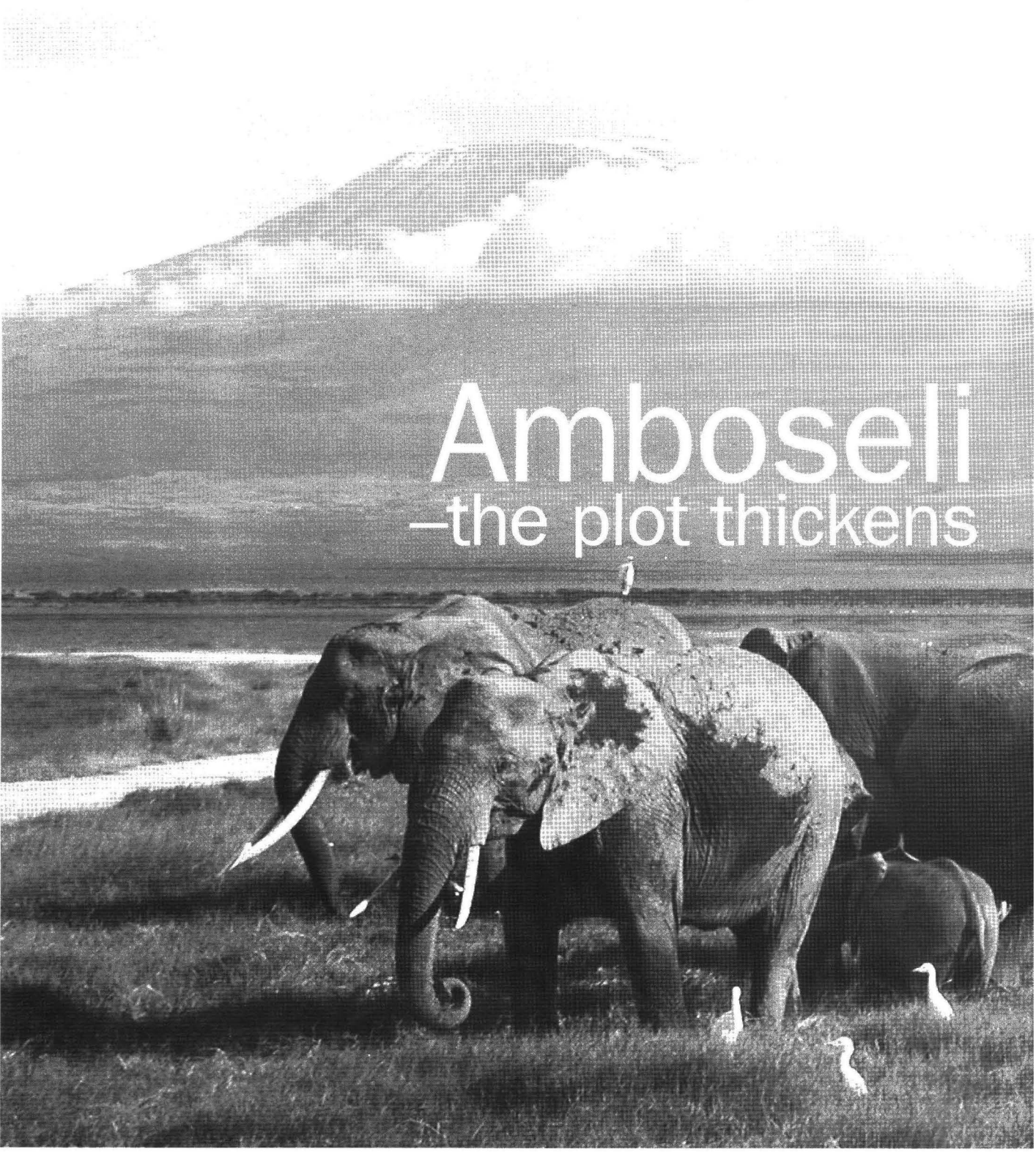
We need support from all Kenyans, East Africans and all global citizens. We urge those interested to join us so that together we can stand up for Lake Natron, the Lesser Flamingos and the local communities.



Left: The sodium carbonate molecule. Below: An illustration of the Solvay process, developed in the 1860s to extract soda ash from limestone, salt and calcium chloride.



Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Amboseli

—the plot thickens

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Months after the secret signing of a handing over of change of ownership agreement of the Amboseli National Park between the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kajiado County Council, controversy is still stalking the protected area after KWS management started playing cat and mouse games by

delaying their obligations under the signed accord.

According to sources within the Kajiado County Council, KWS has continued to delay in remitting revenue generated from the Park as per the agreement signed between KWS and the County Council some time late last year, and was witnessed by the Permanent

Secretaries from both the Local Government and the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.

While it is not yet known what action the Kajiado County Council is willing to take towards solving the pending impasse, now that KWS appears to have reneged on its obligations under the agreement signed towards the close of

would allow them to finance its non-profitable parks.'

The deal, signed at a time when the country was on the verge of going to the 2007 general elections, is said to have been influenced by politicians eager to win public sympathy and to swing voters. The two key players ignored courts orders that barred any deals on Amboseli until a case that is in court is finalised and a ruling on the same is granted.

The woes that continue to haunt Amboseli began in September 2005 when Kenya was going through the Constitutional Refer-

administration went ahead to foresee the signing of the controversial agreement between KWS and the council later in 2007. According to Mr Connan, 'As for Amboseli, the KWS management was forced to sign an agreement which anticipated a sharing of park revenues: 60% of the revenue would go to the County Council while 40% would go to KWS.'

The agreement was designed so that while KWS would continue to manage the operations of the park, it would share its revenue with the county; but only for a period of five years, after which the reserve

Amboseli is arguably one of the highest earning KWS parks, after Lake Nakuru and Tsavo East National Park and its proper management is crucial.

endum that would have seen the country adopt a new political dispensation. During a meeting with Maasai, President Mwai Kibaki announced that the government had degazetted Amboseli, a move that was widely viewed as politically motivated.

Though well-received by the residents of Kajiado, who associated the change in management to resources trickling into the council from the revenues generated from the gate entry fees, the presidential decree to degazette Amboseli was not well received by many observers—especially the wildlife oriented non-governmental organizations that immediately moved to have the unilateral decision announced by the government quashed. They claimed that the move was unprocedural and highly likely to see the park mismanaged by the country council.

Despite the fact that the issue of the degazettement of Amboseli National park back to a reserve status is still in court pending judgment, it is rumored that Kibaki

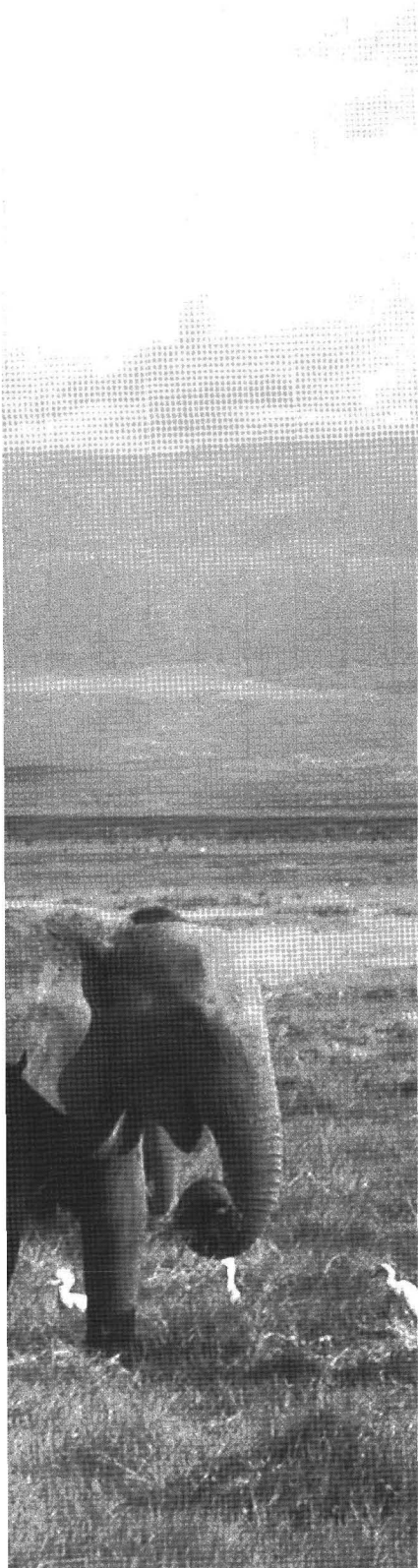
was to revert to the County Council.

Gazetted in 1974 under similar circumstance, Amboseli is arguably the one highest earning KWS parks, after Lake Nakuru and Tsavo East National Park. With an estimated annual revenue of about US\$3.5 million (KSh 240 million), the County Council was hoping to receive around KSh 14 million from the park annually. The controversy stalking Amboseli continues to worry key tourism players with Jake Grieves-Cook, Chairman, Kenya Tourism Board, stating that 'We hope that Amboseli (if handed over to the County Council), will be managed in a way that enhances it as a wildlife reserve that attracts tourists. This is one of the leading parks in the country and its proper management is crucial.'

But until the County Council enforces the agreement or the court matter is settled, the future of the park continues to hang in the balance.

— Gichuki Kabukuru

2007. Mr Dominuque Connan, A PhD student in political science and who has studied the political and social economic dimensions of the Amboseli controversy opines that the 'revenue sharing principle between the County Council and KWS has been maintained (in paper) despite the reluctance of the parastatal to part with funds which





Photos: Courtesy National Museums of Kenya

Ruvettus pretiosus or Castor Oil Fish that was baptised *Songoo nanasi* ...the strange case of the one that almost got away

Rashid Kaka, John Kochev and Dorothy Nyingi

On the night of 6 March 2008, about six nautical miles off the Kenya coast, Masoud Rashid, a middle-aged fisherman from Mabandani in the Mombasa Old Town, caught a very strange fish: one that neither he, nor any of the other fishermen he consulted, could identify. None of the fishermen had seen a fish like this one before. In the absence of a Kiswahili name, they resorted to calling the mysterious fish *songoo nanasi* ('pineapple fish') because of the pineapple-like patterning of its

scales.

A public relations campaign, mounted jointly by the Fisheries' Department and the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) Ichthyology Section bore fruit, when, on 31 March, another 'songoo nanasi' (a comparatively smaller one than this one, weighing only seven kilograms) was presented to the Fisheries' Department in Mombasa. The campaign saw to it that all District Fisheries Officers (DFOs) and fish scouts were informed about the significance of reporting and preserving unique fish catches for scientific interests. The fish is now preserved and curated at NMK in Nairobi.

The fish, earlier thought to have been a blue fish of the Pomatomidae family, has been positively identified as *Ruvettus pretiosus*, the only species within the genus *Ruvettus* (family Gempylidae), commonly referred to as Castor Oil Fish or snake mackerel. Its global range extends throughout the continental shelf of both tropical and temperate oceans. This species has been reported in Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mauritania, Dominica and Dominican Republic. The current specimen, caught off the Kenyan coast, represents the first *Revettus prestiosus* reported from the East African coast. Although its capture was reportedly made

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors are members of the National Museums of Kenya's Ichthyology Section.

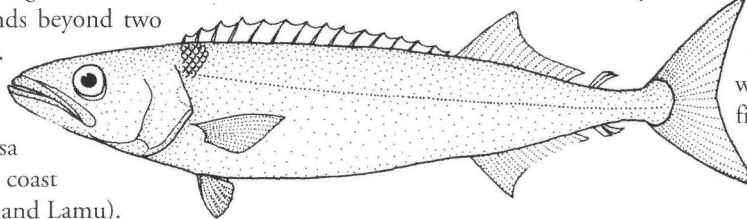
on wooden hooks (referred to as Ruventus hooks), the current specimen was captured by drift nets referred to in kiswahili as *jarife*; being the only fishing method on the coast that extends beyond two nautical miles.

These nets are commonly used in Mombasa and the North coast (Malindi, Kilifi and Lamu).

The Castor Oil Fish and the celebrated coelacanth (*Latimeria chalumnae*) share habitats—both occur in deep water (between 100 and 800 metres) close to shorelines and take the same bait (fish, crustaceans and squid). Unlike coelacanth, which aggregate into small non-aggressive groups during the day, adult Castor Oil Fish are solitary but may occur in pairs at a depth of .1 to 7 metres from the sea bottom. At night however, part of the population may migrate vertically for feeding to the epipelagic zone at depths of fewer than 100 metres. In addition, the young are found in open waters and exhibit similar inter-zonal behavior.

Adult Castor Oil Fish measure between 80 centimetres and 2 metres. Their bodies are later-

ally elongated and compressed, covered with small scales interspersed with spinous bony tubercles with a row of small pores.



These tubercles give it a pineapple texture, which led to it being referred to as a 'pineapple fish' or *Songoo nanasi* by the Mombasa community. The body is uniformly purple-brownish or dark tan, with the tips of the pectoral and pelvic fins being black. The pupil of the eye is brightly phosphorescent. Photographs taken from the second specimen delivered to the National Museums of Kenya confirm the presence of fang-like teeth on the upper jaw and a human-like tongue.

The flesh has an oil content of around 25% and consists of wax esters that are not digestible (unlike traditional castor oil). It is pleasantly rich in taste, although some people

experience a laxative side effect from large amounts of wax esters. The fish can be marketed fresh or processed into fishmeal. Globally, the price of *Ruvettus pretiosus*

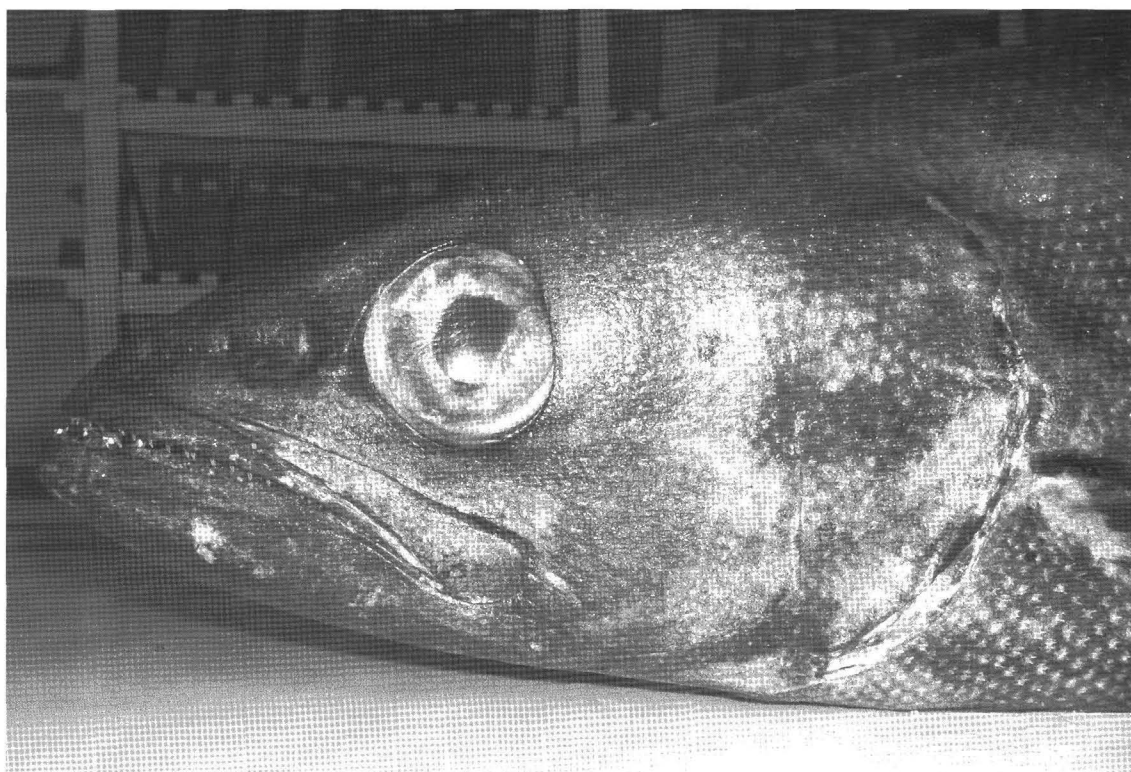
is substantially lower than other oil fishes, which have led some fish sellers to intentionally mislabel it as escolar or even codfish despite the utter

lack of relation. Consumers who unknowingly consume large servings experience embarrassing laxative effects due to this.

In the Comoros, *Ruvettus pretiosus*, which is referred to locally as *nessa*, is actively fished at night with hand lines for its value as a food fish and a medicinal purgative. This fishery has greatly contributed to reducing the local population of coelacanths, which is a by-catch.

Before this fine catch, the NMK held four species within the Gempylidae family in its collection: *Nealotus tripes*, *Neopinnula orientalis*, *Rexea prometheoides* and *Promethichthys prometheus*. The capture of this fish in Kenyan waters adds yet another species to the record.

Drawing: © Dr Tony Ayling



September 2008

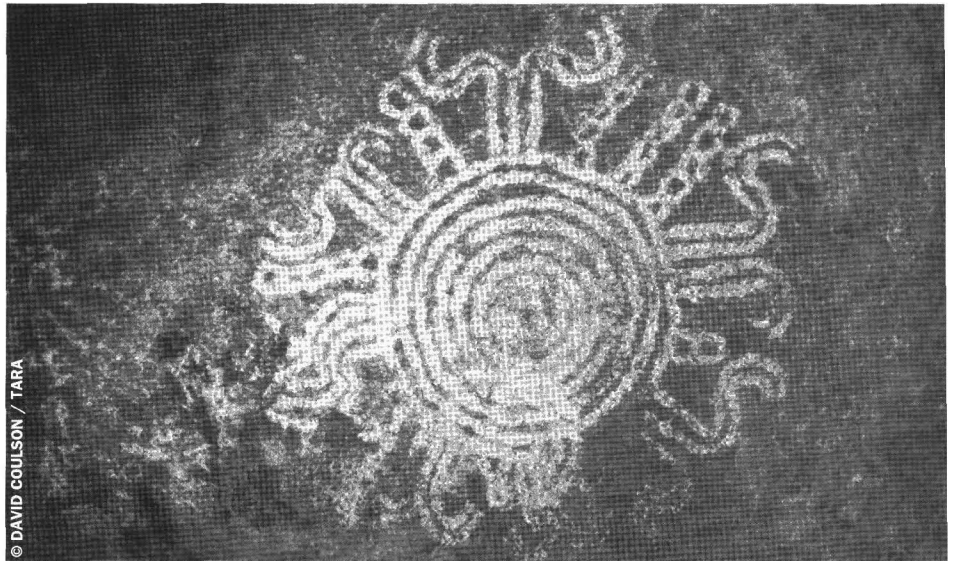
Environmentalists Target NEMA

The National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) has come under sustained criticism by the environmental and conservation lobby over their approval of Environmental Impact Assessments without carrying out proper research. The accusation was made during a Nature Uganda public talk at the Uganda Museum late last week, when the destruction of Cycad forests just outside Queen Elizabeth National Park was highlighted. Almost all of the ancient forest is just outside the park area and was due for cutting down to make way for a hydroelectric power plant; that location was highly criticised earlier in the year by conservationists. It was said then, as it is reiterated now, that the developer had not done sufficient research into alternative locations for their power plant at the lower end of the Mpanga River, which could and should be built with less impact on the Cycad forest. NEMA in turn was blamed for 'rubberstamping' the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) submitted to them with equally insufficient research into the submissions. Watch this space.



Ancient Rock Paintings under Threat

The Nyero rock paintings, located in Kumi district (northern Uganda) are reportedly threatened by extensive quarrying in the immediate neighbourhood of the caves, where the paintings are located. The Museums and Monuments Department at the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry has since swung into action and began to sensitize residents of the area to preserve the art, thought to be over 500 years old. The challenge will be to eventually produce sustainable revenue from the site by attracting tourist visitors to the area, so



TARA (Trust for African Rock Art) founder and chairman, David Coulson, was very disturbed to hear about this threat to the Nyero site. He responded to the news by saying, 'Nyero is a National Monument and one of East Africa's most important rock art sites. Sites like these have value and relevance to today's inhabitants and are irreplaceable. Local communities can derive financial benefits from them through tourism as evidenced by TARA's Suba project on Lake Victoria.' For an account of how people at Suba, Lake Victoria developed The Abasuba Community Peace Museum with local elders and youth to encourage the protection of the nearby rock art sites, visit www.abasuba.museum and tinyurl.com/tara-suba.

that value can be created for the local population.



Environmental Lobby Continues to Oppose Quarry

A stakeholder consultative meeting and workshop was organized last week by the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) in Kampala, to discuss the plans by French owned Hima Cement to quarry for limestone in an area inside the Queen Elizabeth National Park. The Lafarge subsidiary had submitted an EIA study but the approval by NEMA was dismissed by NAPE members as premature, poorly researched and ill considered.

It is expected that NAPE will take their opposition into the international arena now to make Lafarge look bad, a method that has often worked in the past in other parts of the world. Both

HIMA and the UWA declined to make presentations at the meeting as the matter was in court under a case brought by NAPE and their supporters and therefore considered *sub judice* (currently under consideration).



August 2008 Wildfire Spreads through Akagera Park

Sections of Rwanda's Akagera National Park were ravaged by a bushfire, which was only brought under control after several days. Five suspected poachers were arrested by the task force and the men are thought to have started the fire to flush out game from their hiding places for easy targets. The only lodge in the park is part of Dubai World's investment programme, which intends a full refurbishment of the property and upgrading to five-star standards.



The lodge was reportedly not affected by the fire and the current rains will support sprouting of new vegetation. Game rangers are now patrolling areas where previous fires were started in order to prevent further outbreaks; meanwhile neighbouring communities are being sensitized about the issue and will benefit from a major financial support programme by Office Rwandais Du Tourisme Et Des Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN).



Arguments Persist Over Forests

Earlier in the week a committee of parliamentarians visited the Mt. Elgon National Park to get first-hand information over the resettlement of squatters, who were found inside the park and evicted while others had not yet been forced out from the park. Earlier in the year the adjustment of park boundaries was a hot topic, which some of the residents sought, but as the boundaries were only set a few years ago, this was not judged politically opportune.

Meanwhile, the minister responsible for forests has called for the degazetting of at least two forest reserves, due to 'population pressures' in the Rakai area after being confronted by a group of people about to be evicted for living in the forests illegally.



Elephants on Rampage

This column referred to the contentious matter a few weeks ago, and indeed the free roaming elephant were at the time chased back into Queen Elizabeth National Park's 'Ishasha Sector' through the efforts of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) rangers. However, some of the elephant have now returned through swamps and wetlands that were not

secured with trenches—in any case nearly impossible to do there—and have reportedly killed some residents of nearby villages who were trying to defend their property and families. Crops are also said to have been destroyed by the marauding animals and UWA rangers and wardens will be expected to be deployed to drive the animals back into the park proper and afford the population more protection.

The conflict between animals and populations has become more intense in recent years as the previously uninhabited 'buffer zone' between park and the nearest villages has shrunk considerably and homesteads are now coming up to the formal park boundaries. Some parks in East Africa with similar problems, ie, the Aberdare National Park in the Kenyan highlands, have been enclosed with electric fences, but that is an expensive solution, which not all wildlife management bodies can afford. Furthermore, it cuts off the age-old migration routes of the wild animals and in the long run affects the gene pool of game populations 'stuck' behind barbed wire.



Conflicting Reports on Conservation Support for Oil Ventures

Some contradictory reports emerged in the local media over the level of opposition to or support for oil exploration and the construction of a mini-refinery and thermal power plant in the Kaiso-Tonya Wildlife Reserve, which adjoins the Murchison Falls National Park. Public consultations were held and many submissions were made in Hoima (and directly to NEMA) about the plans. It is also clear that a full EIA will get underway soon; some conservation bodies asked to widen scope of the EIA to include the entire Albertine Rift area to create a better understanding of the impact of the ongoing drilling, exploration and eventual production and processing of crude oil. As long as the oil companies employ global best practise, ensure sustainability and transparently monitor the project,

Uganda has no choice but to exploit these resources in the interest of developing the nation. Oil companies involved in drilling, exploration, production and processing must however make lasting contributions towards the conservation of wildlife and towards the protection biodiversity in the Albertine Rift to allow not only for the use of the new oil resources but also for the long term protection of wildlife and nature-based tourism. Business, conservation and tourism need to learn to coexist and show mutual respect for each other in the national interest. That includes foregoing quick-fix solutions and carefully balancing the pros and cons of each and every case.



Fish Exports to Shrink

The Jinja based Fisheries Research Institute has predicted a fall in Uganda's fresh fish fillet exports, mainly Nile Perch and Tilapia, owing to overfishing by trawlers and the capturing of juvenile fish, which has a lasting affect on the mature stocks in Lake Victoria. In 2006 Uganda's exports reached a peak of about US\$147 million, which had fallen to less than US\$120 in 2007. The figure is set to fall even more unless fish farming on a commercial scale is now adopted, a fact well known for the past few years. More stringent protection measures were also called for by the Fisheries Research Institute as fish stocks recovered substantially over a one-year period where the new norms were strictly enforced.



President Declines Plea for Forest Reduction

During a recent visit to the east of the country as part of his nationwide poverty reduction policy the President denied a request passed to him by the Minister

for Tourism, Trade and Industry to use 7,500 hectares of Mt Elgon forest for resettlement purposes. The President however demanded to know first what impact the forest reduction would have on the environment and how it would affect the ecological balance in this important water catchment area. NEMA was instructed to prepare a scientific study to that effect and no decision will be taken by the Minister until those studies have been produced and verified. The President also directed that human resettlement could, in the meantime, be done in other more suitable areas. Mt Elgon National Park was long a hot spot for UWA in trying to evict illegal settlers, so this top-level support will be most welcome news for conservationists.



July 2008

Shocking Revelations by NFA on Forest Destruction

The National Forest Authority (NFA) has just released new data over the relentless assault on forests across the country. They pointed at Kibaale and Nakasongola districts, where encroachment and illegal logging is said to be at the highest across the country. This is of particular significance to the tourism sector, as the Kibaale Forest is not only a national park but also home to 13 known species of primates, making it one of the highest concentrations of primates in the world. Nakasongola district is home to Uganda's first rhino sanctuary and a transit route to Murchison Falls National Park and nearby reserves and protected areas. A viable tourism industry, including a privately managed lodges, has sprung up in both Kibaale and Nakasongola in recent years and are now faced with the stark reality that tourism and conservation are apparently not good enough reasons to protect the environment. The report further states that in 1988 some 26% of the country was still covered by intact forests, which by early 2008 had been



In good company: Prolific correspondent and author of the *Notes* on these pages, Prof Wolfgang Thome, at the Uganda premier early last year of the multiple award-winning film *The Last King of Scotland*, with towering star Forrest Whitaker, whose portrayal of Uganda's late brutal dictator Idi Amin won him the Oscar for Best Actor.

reduced to only 13%.

The NFA also decried the trend to cut trees without replanting or by substituting mature tropical trees with 'lesser' species like eucalyptus, which are not only exotic to Uganda but also a water thirsty species. It is estimated that by 2012 some 400,000 hectares of forest will have been cut, including 'industrial' plantations of pine trees, while only 200,000 acres will have been replanted. The Uganda government is now challenged to intervene and make provisions to encourage tree planting, even on an 'industrial' scale, to prevent the country from suffering the same fate as many other countries which stripped their forests away and ended up as deserts with massive impact on their populations.



Crested Crane Numbers Shrink Alarmingly

The ongoing conversion of the country's wetlands and into agricultural land (like

flower farms) is taking an increasing toll on the country's biodiversity, which had made Uganda hitherto a leading nation around the globe. Uganda's national bird, the crested crane, is facing near extinction and established numbers have more than halved in recent years. It is estimated that fewer than 20,000 of the species are left, approximately a quarter of the bird population some 20 years ago.

Poaching, capture for illegal export, egg collections and illegal keeping of birds in cages at upmarket expatriate residences are but a few causes for the loss in bird variety near urban areas, besides wetland encroachment. Nothing much appears to be done by government to halt and reverse the situation, which could indeed have a grave impact on bird tourism.

Prof Wolfgang H. Thome (pictured above) is the immediate past president of the Uganda Tourism Association and now Chairperson of Uganda's national Hotel and Tourism Training Institute. Having lived in Kenya since the 1970s, he moved in 1992 to Uganda, where he set up a tourism and hospitality consultancy. He has written columns and articles on tourism and conservation since the late 1990s, and is published weekly at www.eturbonews.com. Wolfgang holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a PhD in Economics.



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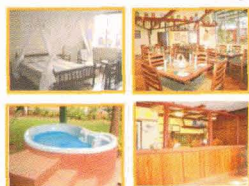
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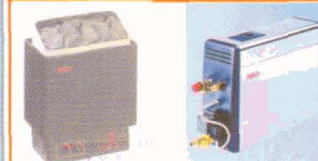
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The influx of Chinese workers into Ethiopia is encouraging production of illegal ivory trinkets

Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin

Ivory cigarette holders, as seen here, are popular with the Chinese, as is ivory jewellery, such as these small Ethiopian cross pendants and necklaces, as they can be easily smuggled out of Ethiopia. There are small hippo and warthog tusk carvings behind—all new—in the *merkato*.



Photos © LUCY VIGNE

Although most of the souvenir shops do not display ivory, and the majority of the ivory items are small, the large number of ivory objects, especially new pieces for the Chinese market, was alarming.

Elephants in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan are under threat by the growing numbers of Chinese people coming to work in Ethiopia who want to buy cheap ivory chopsticks and jewellery to take home. Although a crack-down on the sale of ivory items in 2005 removed ivory from the shop shelves, our survey in early 2008 showed that, in the absence of frequent monitoring, the number of ivory items has increased again.

The first time we counted ivory items in Addis Ababa's curio shops was in 1999—a total of 9,996 were on display in 54 outlets, which was the fourth largest number for a city in Africa at the time (following Abidjan, Harare and Cairo). Media pressure reduced this ivory trade considerably. A TRAFFIC survey in 2004, however, counted 3,557 items on display. Both TRAFFIC and CITES Secretariat

staff gave assistance and training to the Ethiopian government who, in early 2005, sent 262 officials to 66 retail outlets, resulting in the confiscation of 500 kilogrammes of ivory and other wildlife products, and criminal charges were made. Shortly afterwards, only 78 ivory items were seen on display for sale.

In January 2008, with the support of Care for the Wild International, we found ivory in 44 retail outlets. We counted 1,433 ivory items on display, nearly all in the Churchill Road area and the famous market called the *Merkato*. Although most of the souvenir shops do not display ivory, and the majority of the ivory items are small and often not very noticeable, the large number of ivory objects, especially new pieces for the Chinese market, was alarming. We counted a further 706 new ivo-

ry items in brown paper bags and from a drawer, while there were items in other bags we were unable to count. Of the total number of items (2,152), 1,790 were made after the 1990 CITES ban. Nearly all were Ethiopian-carved. We learned that there are about six ivory craftsmen still working in Addis Ababa, down from 10-20 in 1999.

The older items, made before 1990, are usually easily recognisable as they are the larger more carefully carved pieces, especially of human figures, crafted when the trade was legal and it was not necessary to hide ivory in luggage for export. There are still many large, thick old bangles, creamy orange in colour due to age, that southwestern Ethiopians used to wear. Single old bangles sell today for about US\$165 each; they are often joined together in a set of up to four bangles. We also saw whole

carved tusks for sale, but these are rarely made nowadays.

The recently-made items are nearly all mass-produced, with certain styles of identical jewellery for sale in the different shops. Bangles cost US\$15 and necklaces US\$33 on average; there were also earrings, pendants and rings. We counted 149 pairs of new ivory chopsticks that were selling for an average of US\$16. This contrasts sharply to the high prices in China: in 2004, in Guangzhou, a pair of ivory chopsticks cost US\$139. It is therefore understandable that the Chinese are tempted to buy Ethiopian-made chopsticks and that they are being carved to meet a growing demand as more Chinese workers come to the country. We counted 144 cigarette holders that were offered for only US\$4 each and 70 signature stamps for around US\$18, depending on thickness. These are also popular with the Chinese and again are far less expensive than in China. New brown paper bags filled with newly-made chopsticks, cigarette holders, signature stamps and jewellery suggest the turnover for these items is the greatest. There were also displayed recently-made figurines such as

of ivory. We saw one recently-carved 35-cm tusk and two 20-cm tusk tips carved into busts from Central/West Africa, but these were unusual.

Small items sell most frequently nowadays, as they are relatively easy to smuggle out of the country. We were told that it was best to simply wear jewellery and it would not be noticed, or to put items in one's suitcase, not in hand luggage as Customs officials can spot ivory items on security scanners and that officials search hand luggage more frequently than baggage in the hold. No vendors offered any help to get permits for export, as they said it was easy to take ivory items out of the country.

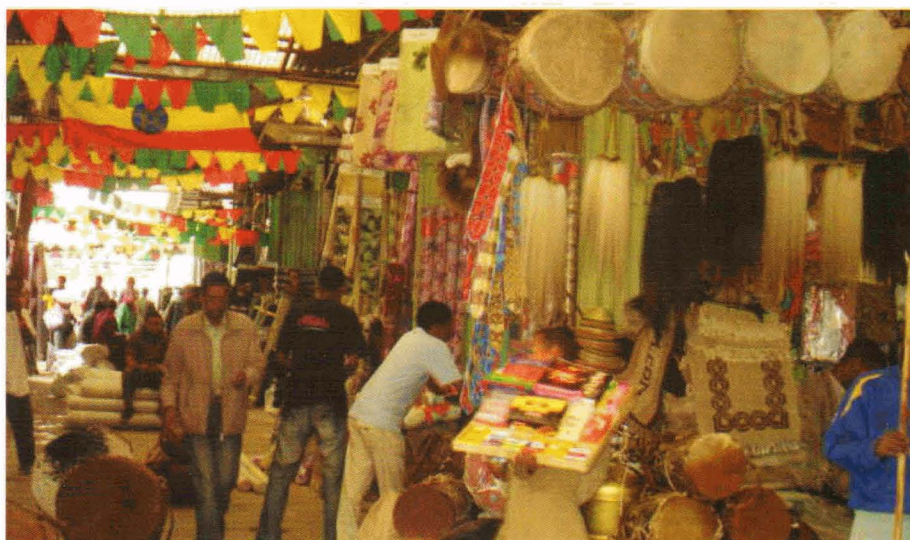
Tusks from southwest Ethiopia continue to supply the ivory craftsmen in Addis Ababa, and there has also been poaching of the tiny remnant elephant population in the north of the country. Tusks from these poached elephants, however, are not enough to meet the demand, and tusks are coming in from Sudan and Kenya illegally. In Kenya, elephants are poached for this market around Mt Kenya, Marsabit,

the 1990s, but from 1999 to 2008 they tripled. A small 2-kg tusk sells today for 1,000 bir/kg and a larger 5-kg tusk for 1,200 bir/kg (US\$110/kg and US\$132/kg respectively). This clearly illustrates an increase in demand.

Not only elephant tusks are in demand in Addis Ababa. Craftsmen are carving pig and hippo teeth as well, usually making small figurines out of them, recognizable in the shops by their curled tooth-like appearance. Hippos are on CITES Appendix II, but if elephant tusks, which are on Appendix I, can be smuggled in from neighbouring countries, so can hippo teeth. Trade in these wildlife products needs to be monitored and kept in check.

Very few Ethiopians are interested in buying ivory items in Addis Ababa. The buyers are mainly foreigners who are visiting the country as tourists or for work, usually businessmen, diplomats, conference attendees and Chinese labourers. In 2001 there were perhaps 100 Chinese people working in Ethiopia, but by 2006 there were over 3,500—and the number is rising. Based on findings from past surveys and on ivory seizures, the Chinese are known to be the main

Left: These ivory chopsticks, Ethiopian comb, Ethiopian hand-cross, figurine and bangles were all carved recently in Addis Ababa, while the ivory bust would have been smuggled in from Central/West Africa. Right: The *merkato*, a colourful market popular with tourists in northwestern Addis Ababa, is crammed with artefacts and handcrafts, including newly-made ivory items openly on display.



small flat 10-cm ones (US\$51 each), Ethiopian combs (US\$43 each), Ethiopian hand-crosses and masks. The most expensive items were 17 busts, which cost US\$168 each on average; these were made from heavy chunks (cross-sections)

the Mathews Range and Maralal. Traders in Isiolo and Nanyuki paid, in late 2007, Ksh 2,000 (US\$31) per kilogramme for tusks that then went via Mandera and Moyale into Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa prices for tusks remained roughly stable in


buyers of ivory and other wildlife products all over Africa.

We met the Chinese Defence Attaché, who had been in Addis Ababa for three years, and he was well aware of the problem of Chinese buying ivory items. He

said that the Chinese Ambassador in Ethiopia tells Chinese company managers to inform their workers not to buy ivory items, as they are illegal and they will be caught at the airport and be prosecuted. There are, he said, acceptable good quality hardwoods in China that can be used for signature stamps, and that wooden chopsticks are available in China. He said, however, it would be hard to stop all the Chinese from buying ivory in Ethiopia. With the large and growing number of Chinese coming into the country, this is an increasing threat that must be addressed. It is a warning to Kenya.

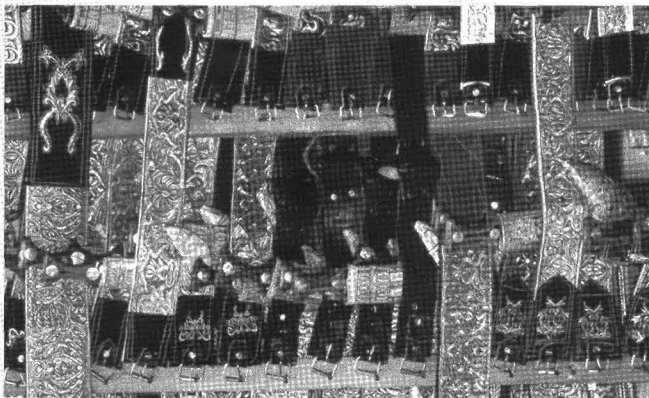
Chinese workers should stop trading in endangered wildlife

products in Ethiopia. The government needs to legislate larger fines and more stringent penalties against smuggling and illegal internal trade. These laws need to be widely publicized, such as at the airport in Addis Ababa, where large warning signs could be placed. Company managers need to speak more frequently to their Chinese workers against buying ivory. The most urgent action needed is a clampdown, once again, on ivory items displayed for sale in Addis Ababa's curio shops. Shopkeepers must be made to realise that they are not allowed to sell recently-made ivory items. TRAFFIC should assist again on this clampdown; they also need

to help the government establish a strategy to monitor the curio shops regularly and frequently, in order to prevent a further buildup of ivory items. This is the only effective way to cut down on the ivory trade and thus reduce poaching pressure on the few surviving Ethiopian elephants. This in turn will help to reduce the smuggling of tusks from elephants poached in neighbouring countries, such as Kenya. The issues of law enforcement must be addressed not only in Ethiopia, but in Kenya and Sudan. Ethiopia can be an example of how wildlife trade controls can work, but it is important for the Ethiopian government to act as soon as possible. 

Cutting edge findings on a traditional knife

Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin



Has the culture of wearing jambiyas been re-adopted in former South Yemen since their becoming legal to wear after unification of North and South Yemen in 1990?

Jambiyas made before the 1967-1990 Marxist ban in the south were the smaller Bedu-style jambiya, as opposed to the large-handled jambiya of the towns and cities in the north. Were the southerners wearing Bedu jambiyas again or choosing to emulate the northerners with the larger Sanaa-made ones? We had not visited this region since 1993, and reports varied regarding jambiya wearing.

So, in early 2008, we returned to Aden and Mukalla on the coast

and visited the main towns of the Wadi Hadramut region in the interior desert: Sayun, Shibam and Tarim. Compared to 15 years ago, the number of outlets selling jambiyas had increased to 48 in the five towns surveyed, with 1,712 jambiyas on display for sale. There were 15 outlets selling jambiyas in Aden and Mukalla compared to just two on our last visit. There was an increase in outlets also in Wadi Hadramut. As well as Sayun that is famous for its silver shops and where old Bedu daggers are still for sale, 16 outlets have opened in Shibam, now that it has become a world heritage site attracting more visitors.

The comforting facts are that the main buyers for these jambiyas are foreign tourists and that most of the jambiyas have come from Sanaa. Trade is not re-opening in the south. Although southerners are copying northerners in many ways, adhering more strictly now to Islam with women once again veiled, and with a much greater capitalist influence, they do not like jambiyas, looking down on northerners for wearing a dangerous weapon. They say

they would feel ashamed to be seen wearing one. Even northern Yemenis who come to work in southern towns mostly do not wear jambiyas when they see so few. We saw just a handful of Yemenis wearing them in the towns we visited. Nearly all were northerners, but we saw one or two Bedu from al-Bayda province wearing the smaller handled jambiya in some towns. There are a few shops selling mostly northern jambiyas to those who may need one for a party or a present, and children's jambiyas of the northern style were for sale, often available in military shops where northerners go to buy uniforms. A sprinkling of Bedu ones were for sale, the best quality being in silver sheaths found in Sayun where we also saw two old rhino horn handled Bedu jambiyas. Fortunately, these were the exception, not the rule.

It is reassuring that while northern Yemen's demand for jambiyas rises with the growing population, demand in the south is negligible. In time and with better education, the northerners will emulate the southerners, but is there enough time for the rhino whose horn is still the most favoured in Yemen?

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Unraveling the 'Mountains of the Moon'

Rwenzori Range is a marvel of glacial peaks, wetlands and lakes—and they are under threat from climate change

By MUSONDA MUMBA

Africa is at risk of losing the Central African glaciers—the highest and permanent source of water to the River Nile. A recent ten day, 27-person team expedition by WWF (the global conservation organization), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) trekked through the Mountain Range to get first hand information on the changes that are taking place

in the glaciers at the equator and the implications for the high altitude wetlands. The team found that the mountain glaciers have shrunk by 50 per cent in the last 50 years and 75 per cent in the last century. Based on historical data, the team also found that the current glaciated area is approximately 148 ha from the original 650 ha in 1906. WWF therefore estimates that the glaciers are likely to disappear in the next 30 years. The critical question therefore is—what are the likely consequences of such a change on the

important high altitude wetlands and the local livelihoods below this important massif?

Towards the end of 2007 my colleague Marc Languy wandered into my office and with a smile on his face asked whether I would be interested in being part of an expedition to the Rwenzori Mountains—after all the mountain had a lot of freshwater surely that would be of interest to me. His rather relaxed demeanor almost coaxed me into thinking his offer was not seri-

Everlasting flower (*Helichrysum guilemii*) in bloom at 3,500 metres above sea level.

ous. Then he showed me the maps, a list of climbers and evidence of his discussions with various authorities from both Congo and Uganda. I was ecstatic and in all honesty that is an understatement. This to me was like a dream trip. A date had been set—20 February 2008 to start the ascent simultaneously from either side of the border with the aim of meeting at the peak—Margherita Peak located at 5,109 metres above sea level (masl).

As Albertine Rift Coordinator at WWF, Marc's primary interest was to survey the glaciers within the range and see what changes had taken place since 1955, the date of the last survey in DRC. A few weeks after his proposition, we got a call from the Convention on

and headed to the 'Mountains of the Moon'. The week before, Marc had already left for Beni via Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to lead the Congolese team for a parallel ascent from Virunga National Park. A competent group of guides from the Rwenzori Mountaineering Services (RMS) briefed us on the loop we would take and all the precautionary measures to be undertaken. I was ready to go, equipped with camera, binoculars, notebooks and all manner of food supplies. We began our ascent as planned on the morning of 20 February. Standing at the foot of the mountain range in Kasese Town, I must admit that I felt intimidated yet excited by the sight of the mountain range. I was

of local people although their benefits flow beyond the boundaries of this mountain range.

As we climbed higher and higher, I could not resist the temptation of stopping every so often to take pictures of flowing rivers, logs encrusted with fascinating lichens, strange looking chameleons, the everlasting flower and many more details. A guide noticed my enthusiasm and warned me to my save batteries for the higher levels because that would be where, as he put it, 'the secrets of the range lay'.

At an elevation of approximately 3,500 masl, I came face to face with the marvelous Bigo Bog. This bog lay in a valley floor area, with the



The Rwenzori Massif—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—is shared by Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is protected as Rwenzori Mountains National Park in Uganda and as Virunga National Park in DRC. These two protected areas are managed by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) respectively. It covers an area of 4,800 kilometres², with about one-third being above 2,000 metres above sea level (masl). Several glacial peaks can be found in the massif, however, the Margherita Peak—at an altitude of 5,119 masl—is the third highest peak in Africa.

The massif is a priority area for biodiversity conservation in Africa. It is home to many endangered habitats and species. These include vast montane forests and afro-alpine habitats holding unique forms of life. More than 75 plant species can only be found in the Rwenzori, as well as mammals like the Rwenzori duiker (*Cephalophus rubidus*) and many amphibians and reptiles. One important feature of Rwenzori is that it supports a complete and uninterrupted habitat range from the Semliki Valley to its summit; this is unique in Africa.

Wetlands Bureau (based in Switzerland) asking whether WWF could discuss the possibility of designating the Rwenzori Mountain National Park as a Ramsar Site with the Ugandan Authorities, giving me even more reason to follow my passion for wetland ecosystems. This would prove to be rather challenging though because I had never set eyes on high altitude wetlands before.

February 2008

We packed our bags, jumped on the plane from Kenya to Kampala

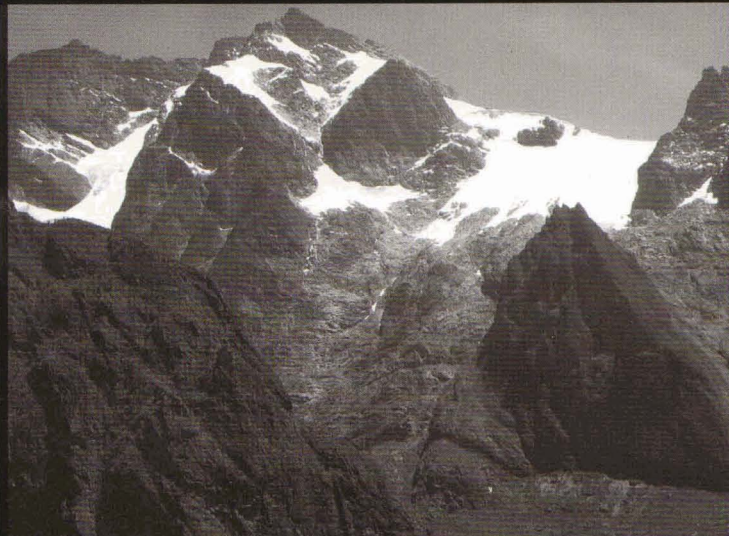
not prepared for the beauty of the range that lay ahead of us—the rivers, lakes, bogs, streams and the phenomenal glaciers at the equator.

An area of high biological diversity, the fascinating high altitude lakes, rivers and wetlands, the Rwenzori Mountain Range is a natural gem and a marvel. While most parts of Africa are endowed with wetlands and lakes, most of these are located at low elevation and easily accessible by local people. The ones on this mountain range are mostly beyond the reach

heather forest towering on either side of the valley. An area covered by *Carex* grass and other vegetation such as *Senecio* and occasional *Lobelias* was incredibly beautiful. RMS, with support from UWA, has built a long boardwalk across the boggy area to reduce damage to the bog vegetation and to ease walkers' crossing to the other side of valley. Bogs in the Rwenzori range can be precarious places and a single missed step could land a person in waist-deep mud.

As we climbed higher, the 'secrets of the range' began to unravel

Stanley Glacier—then and now



Above—the base of the main glacier, seen from Lac Gris in 1953 (left) and 2008 (right).

Below—the entire DRC section of the Stanley group, as seen from Peak Maria in 1956 (left) and 2008 (right).

Top & bottom left: © Royal Belgian
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Top & bottom right, respectively:
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themselves dramatically. The streams that flowed from the steep cliffs towards rivers, small boggy areas and small rivers that would eventually become bigger all graced the climb further up. After the third day, I spot-

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ted a few glacial peaks and it was breathtaking. First Savoia, then Baker and, as we changed direction, Speke Glacier. We climbed higher and at 4,900 masl we encountered Irene Lakes—three rather small

lakes in the shadow of Margherita Glacier. These lakes are simply too cold and too high to support any fish life in them but the view from this vantage point made up for any lack of visible life. Both Speke and Stanley Glaciers were clearly visible and so was Margherita. We could also see Lake Bujuku in its entire splendor through stunning Senecio vegetation.

Three members of the Congolese team who had just crossed the massif through the Stuhlman Pass joined our party while we were enjoying the landscape around Bujuku. I was relieved to hear the good news from our colleagues that tourism on the other side of the border had just been resumed, thanks to significant efforts from ICCN and WWF to reopen the trails and rehabilitate the huts. They informed us that Marc had stayed behind to photograph the glaciers from the Wasiwameso Ridge, which stands at 4,600 metres and reveals stunning views of the Stanley group. The idea was for him to take the images from the same vantage point as those taken in 1952 and 1956 in order to compare them.

an outlet on its western end that eventually becomes Bujuku River flowing further downstream until it joins Mubuku River. While this connectivity may sound rather simplistic, these rivers meander through a system of wetlands that is so intricate that it is difficult to locate precisely the source of the water. The winding streams and bogs within the bamboo forest area are equally intriguing.

Climate Change

Speaking to the local guides and people who have been coming to this mountain for more than twenty years, it was evident that some changes had taken place, particularly with the rainfall patterns in the area. This raised some pertinent questions: How vulnerable

communities depend on for their livelihoods. Hearing the trickling sound of water in the rocks and boulders at over 5,000 masl confirmed the intricateness and complexity of the system. The water from this mountain range eventually finds its way into the Nile River, making the Rwenzori the highest source of that magnificent river. The simple fact remains—we know very little about these wetlands and their vulnerability.

The changes that have taken place in this amazing ecosystem are prodigious. Climate change has altered the face of this ecosystem and there is proof. Unfortunately the implications of climate change on these wetland ecosystems are not so well understood but the



View of Stanley Glacier from Irene Lake.

One striking quality of the Rwenzori Range is the connectivity of the entire wetland system. Just below the Speke Glacier, for example, lies a lake embedded in solid rock known as the Green Lake. Trickling water from this lake moves down the steep slope of a rock face, flowing towards Bukuju Lake a good 6-8 kilometres below via a bog system. Lake Bujuku has

were the wetlands to such changes? What if parts of this complex ecosystem started drying up or getting wetter than usual? What would be the broader implications of such changes?

Several rivers flow from high up in the range, initially starting as small trickles from the glaciers; eventually they become flowing rivers downstream that local

potential effects of this clearly should not be underestimated. It is important to note that while the accelerated glacier retreat and its subsequent shifts are likely to be associated with climate change, glacier retreat and change is a natural phenomenon that takes place over hundreds of years. Natural systems undergo change over time but such changes have been accel-

erated by anthropogenic factors. Glaciers play an important role in maintenance of downstream flows. What is significant, on the other hand, is that non-climatic changes may have greater impact on water resources than climate change and, in a sense, climate change presents an incremental challenge to the water resources of the Rwenzori Range.

When the two teams joined in Kasese to share experiences from this unique climb, Marc showed us the pictures he took with Svein Erik, a Norwegian colleague, side by side with the pictures from the 1950s, I could not believe what

in excellent condition but also that the site was still intact. The team heard chimpanzees on four occasions, counted the tracks of six leopards and saw a wide variety of wildlife. While climbing to the peak from DRC remains a challenge, everything is now set to welcome tourists from the area and abroad up to 4,600 masl. We can even dream of opening of trails that would cross the border or go round the Stanley Glacial group, something UWA, ICCN and WWF are considering in the long run.

The Rwenzori massif is entirely protected as the Rwenzori Mountains National Park in Uganda and

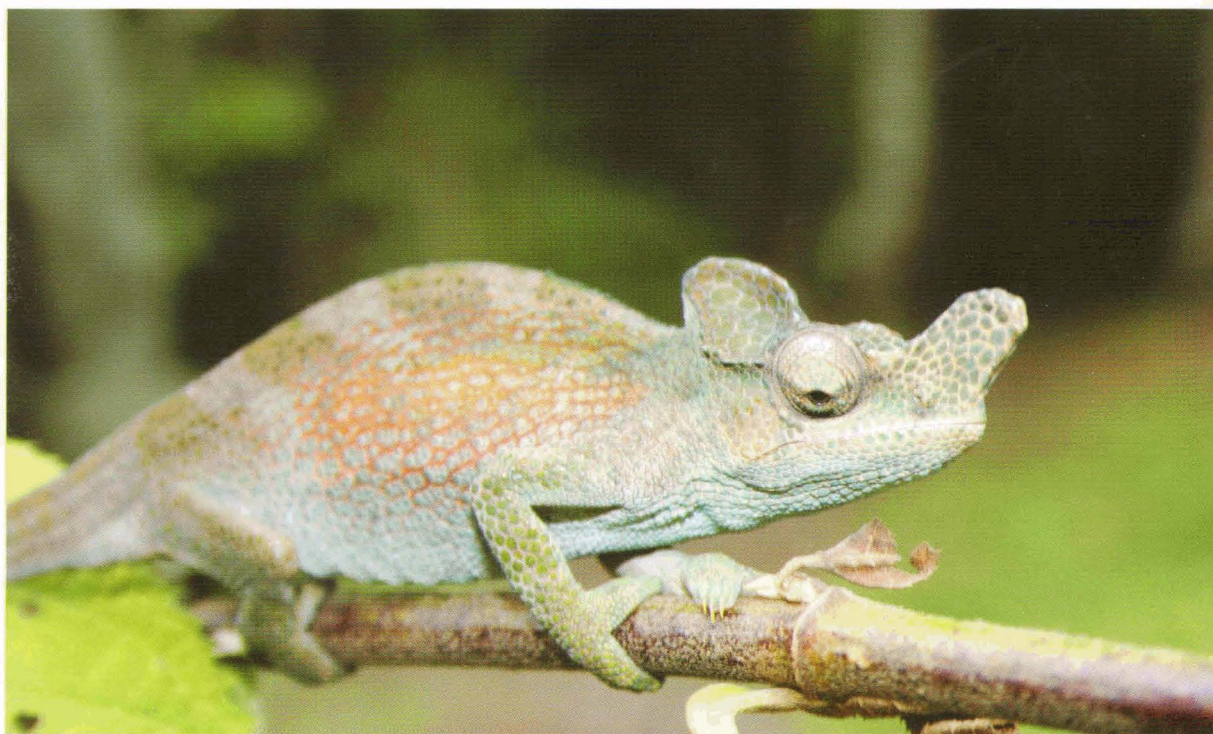
the management of the wetlands will be priority and further study in order to understand the ecosystem will be critical. The Ugandan Government can be commended for taking such a bold step particularly when this entire ecosystem is under threat.

However, there is need for joint efforts from other governments, individuals, bilateral organizations, the private sector and NGOs to collectively protect and manage this important area. The traditional knowledge particularly in relation to what changes have

**Strange-horned
chameleon
(*Kinyongia xenorhina*
aka *Chamaeleo
xenorhinus*) sighted
along the trail.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Dr Musonda Mumba has a PhD in wetland hydrology and conservation from University College London and is currently the Freshwater Programme Coordinator for WWF—Eastern Africa Regional Programme (WWF-EARPO), based in Nairobi, Kenya. She has been involved in wetland ecological research for over 10 years and was once based at the Convention on Wetlands Secretariat in Gland Switzerland as assistant to the Regional coordinator for Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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I saw. First I thought Marc had manipulated the images to exaggerate the dramatic recession of the glaciers. One week after our return to Nairobi, Marc and his team used the pictures to validate high-resolution satellite images and calculate the current extent of the glaciers. The results were devastating: their area shrank from 650 hectares in 1906 to 381 hectares in 1955. The area covered by glaciers decreased by another 50% to a mere 148 hectares in 2008.

The good news from DRC was that the trails and huts were now

Virunga National Park in DRC, both of which are designated as Ramsar sites, in 2008 and 1996 respectively.

The Ugandan Government through the Wetlands Management department, took steps to have these high altitude wetlands designated as wetlands of international importance—and rightly so—under the Convention on Wetlands. The Rwenzori Mountains National Park is already a protected area and it is due to be designated as a Ramsar Site under this convention. This implies that

taken place around the area is also important and worth gathering. In essence, the traditional way of life of the local communities is equally threatened by climate change.

Adaptive strategies and alternatives need to be well thought through so that community based strategies help the local communities to adapt to the changes and reduce the climatic shocks likely to take place. Let us not forget that local people have had to cope with climatic variability for many years. As the saying goes 'We all live downstream'.

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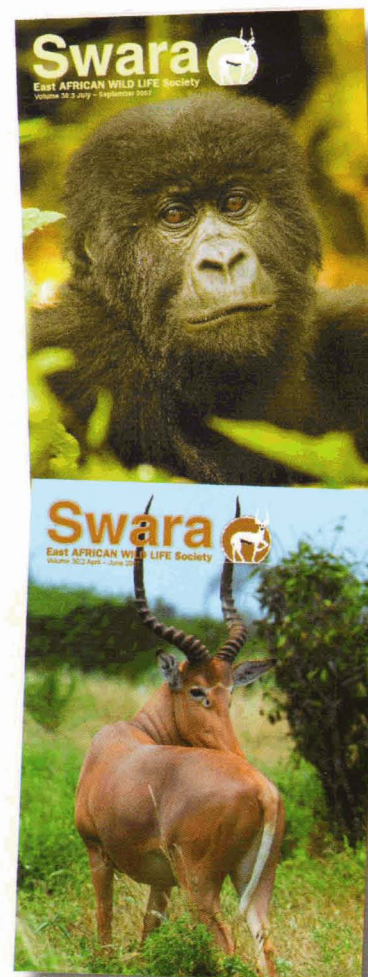
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Tana Delta

...the story behind the story

By JILL RETIEF

We saw large birds rising behind some scrub bush to the north. It was hard to see in the late evening light. They were flying low, and as they came closer we recognised them as about 100 open-billed storks; they kept rising, until 900-1,000 of them circled in the sky heading for the woodlands near the dunes. Meanwhile, we were still estimating the number of ruffs in flight, and how many sandpipers, sanderlings, and sand plovers were racing to get their last feed of the day on the mud flats. Earlier we had seen Pacific golden plovers.

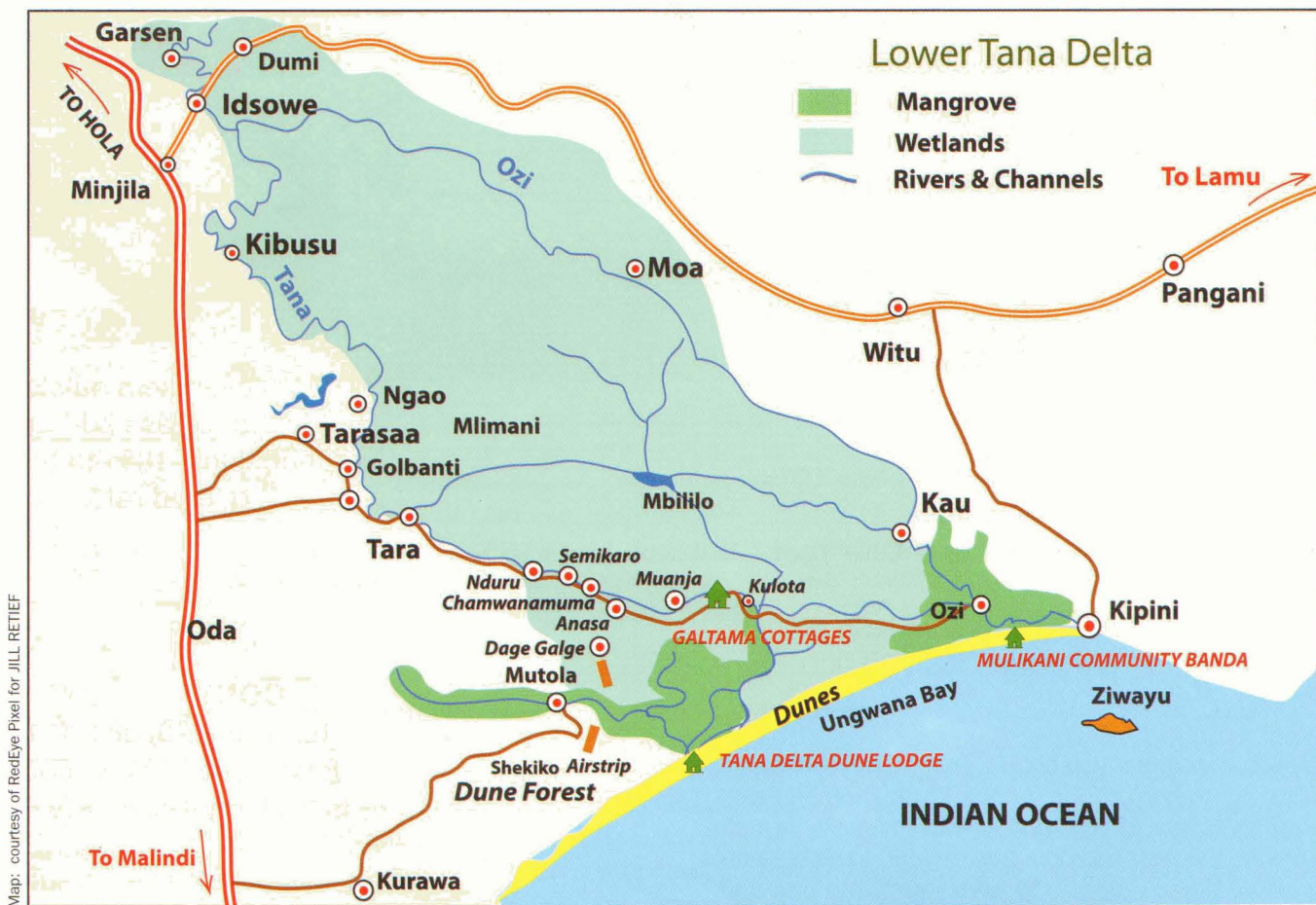
In February 2007 Colin Jackson and his team from A Rocha (an international conservation organi-

sation), estimated that they saw no fewer than 15,124 waterfowl in the area they covered between 6.00 AM to 7.00 PM, and the count took place in only 30% of the delta. February falls within the migratory season and birds come through the delta to feed on the rich resources found among the alluvial sediments that cover the flood plains and swamps.

Flooding occurs when rain fills the Tana River's water catchment on Mount Kenya and in the Aberdare mountains. Normally, the main flooding occurs in April and May, with the short rains flooding in November. The timing, extent and duration of flooding vary greatly from year to year. A

unique ecosystem has been created in the delta that contains a wealth of birdlife, unrivalled anywhere else in the region. Waterfowl flock to the area to enjoy the fish, frogs, snails, insects and crustacea in the mud flats, waterways and grasslands.

Ali Jarson herds his long horned, large boned, white and light brown cattle back to his village of Mwanja, in the Handaraku area, north of the Tana River. These flood plains provide rich grass for their cattle all year round. He owns about 100 cattle. They have been grazing with about 10,000 others on the grasslands, emerging from the receding



Map: courtesy of RedEye Pixel for JILL RETIEF

floodwaters that ravaged his village in December 2006 and January 2007. The whole village had to move and the cattle were forced to swim across the channel to find higher ground to the south. The people moved in dugout canoes made from old mango trees because the hardwoods have mostly disappeared from the banks of the river. Some homes collapsed and others survived. In 2007 many of the villagers were busy constructing new houses, entirely from local materials. The diet of people living in Mwanja consists of fish bought from the Pokomo people, bananas growing on the banks of the river, rice, milk and occasionally meat.

Ali's cattle have been grazing on the lush grasslands. Most of the flood plain is covered in grass; there are also extensive areas of bushland, rather less woodland and a few patches of forest. The vast areas of grassland are utilised as grazing grounds year-round. The Boran cattle graze peacefully on the rich grass and water in the channels where the crocodiles wait. At night they move to higher grounds where they are surrounded by hundreds of smouldering dung fires lit by the Orma to protect them from the mosquitoes.

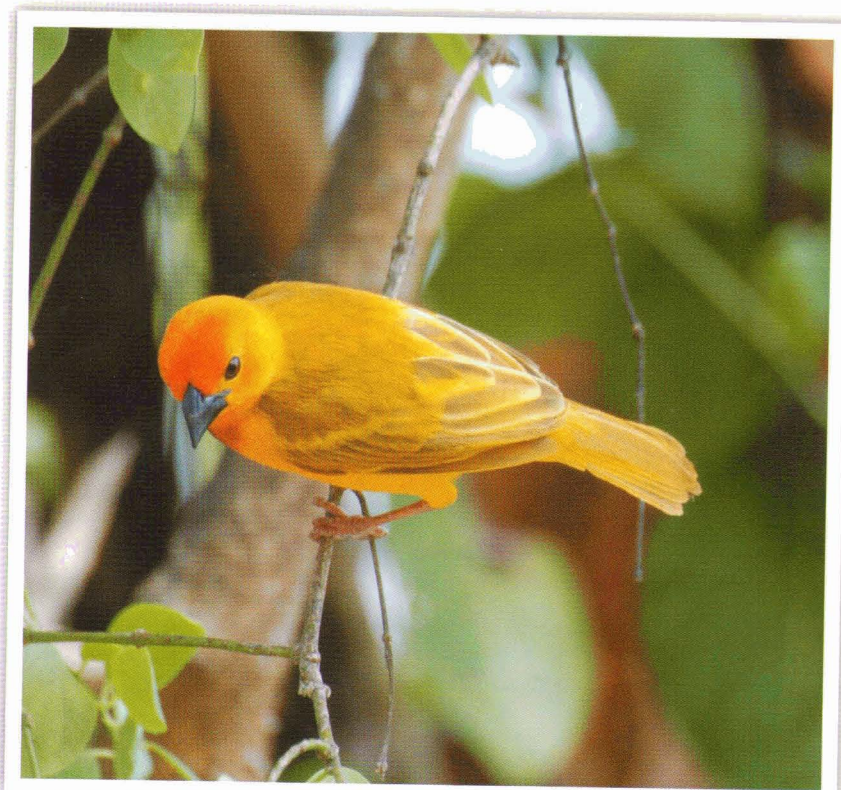
Weaving like arteries through these grasslands are endless waterways and channels. The crocodiles are numerous on the banks. Fish are abundant in these channel and fishermen's nets abound on the edges of the broader pools and lakes. They catch freshwater tilapia, mudfish, catfish and edible freshwater eel. It is not uncommon to see fishermen in their dugout canoes, trapping the fish in nets only yards from the pods of hippo in the Mbelilo channel. The fishermen dry the fish and send it in sacks to Mombasa for the many people who work in the docks and railways and have other employment in the busy Kenyan port.

Primates in the delta include Sykes monkey, vervet monkey and yellow baboon. The rare red colobus and Tana River mangabey live in the Tana River National Pri-

mate Reserve near Baomo, north of Garsen. Other mammals include the lesser galago (bush baby), Huest bush squirrel, the red bush squirrel, large spotted genet, bushbuck, impala, Peter's gazelle, zebra, waterbuck, topi, lion, hyena and civet cats. A favourite in the Dunes by the sea is the Tana River Bushbuck, believed to be a subspecies. It is very light in colour and can be confused with a lesser kudu.

Until commercial hunting was banned, elephants would migrate to the delta from Tsavo National Park and the Galana area to feed on the fruits of the Doum Palm in September and October. Now

Mangoes grow prolifically in this area and in the early 1980s mango traders began to exploit the abundance of fresh Ngowe mangoes. Marketed as 'totally organically grown' they would be of great value as an export commodity for Kenya. Ninety per cent of farmers in the Tana River District grow mangoes and approximately 8,000 tons can be harvested in one year. There are 2,000 mangoes in a ton, so this amounts to 16 million mangoes! A study conducted in 1986 shows that there were 47,129 trees in the region between Kipini and Hola, which is 200 miles inland.



© PETER COLERIDGE

there are only about 20 elephants remaining. They were annihilated for their ivory in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was common for them to walk over the dunes and onto the beach near the sea. In fact, there is a stretch of coastline that was surrounded by a branch of the delta that is named Elephant Island.

On the Southern Banks of the river the Pokomo people are busy with their rice farms, mango trees and, in season, maize and other subsistence crops.

The roads have been neglected and farmers have borne massive losses of income in the last ten years. The mangoes could have formed a significant industry for the farmers, but during the glut season (June and July) the black cotton tracks become impassable for lorries. Transporting goods on the river is hard work; imagine the difference between paddling upstream in a dugout canoe carrying approximately 1000 mangoes (half a ton). Lorries, on the other hand, can carry ten tons in each load.

The golden palm weaver (*Ploceus bojeri*)

Why has this industry never been supported by the Government in Kenya? The Tana River produces more mangoes than any other area in Kenya.

The only place farmers of the delta can sell their mangoes—apart from traders buying them for the local market in Nairobi—is a fruit juice factory in Mombasa, which offers poor prices and no transport. Mango exporting, which was a thriving business in the 1980s, has died out because of the lack of assistance in quality, reliability of supply and the issue of transporting the fruit.

The delta and its peoples are currently undergoing water stress. Two hydroelectric dams built near Mwea, the Kindaruma and the Kiambere, have brought about numerous changes in the delta, including more stress on the population during the dry season. It is currently not possible to navigate very far upstream for the many farmers in the Chara area. Nippon Koe Company of Japan organised a consultancy for a third dam, the Mutonga. The study predicts that it will result in a continuous drought of four years in the delta.

In the wetlands south of Garsen, between the Ozi and the Tana Rivers, there are approximately 34,000 cattle belonging to the Orma people. These numbers increase when the Wardei travel south to look for water and grazing during the dry months of the year.

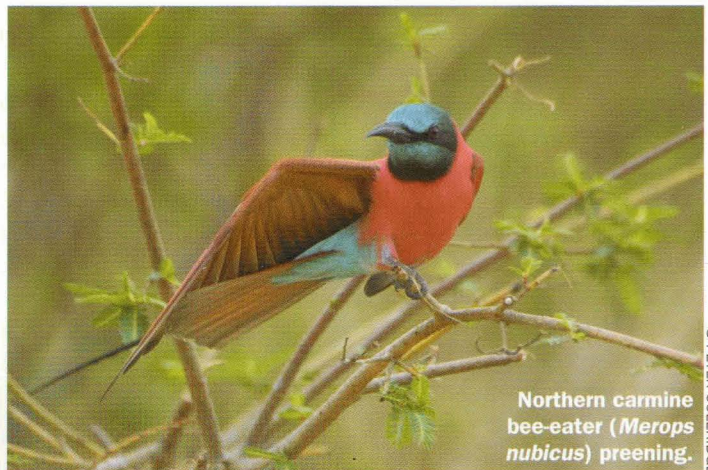
Throughout the Tana Delta region, the primary problems have been communication and roads, which pose a challenge to the Ministry of Works. It is an area of Kenya that has been all but forgotten by the government; in 2007, electricity reached Garsen and mobile phone coverage arrived for the community.

There are eight different mangroves to be found in the delta. Mangroves form a unique ecosystem, in that they grow in land which is neither in demand for human settlement nor for agricultural use. They are also unique in the

adaptation to both soil and water conditions. They are used for timber, highly valued for building poles, fuel, dyes, tannins, and medicinal purposes by the local people. Perhaps the most important of all their uses, is that mangroves provide both shelter and food for

per stomach, proving the richness of these mud flats for birds, prawns, fish, and crab.

Crab abound in the muddy waters and the Tana Delta supplies the demands of the busy tourist resort of Malindi 60 km south, with crab. The crab catchers do



Northern carmine bee-eater (*Merops nubicus*) preening.

© PETER COLERIDGE

The Tana River Delta is certainly one of the most important wetland sites in Kenya for its bird conservation value. Wetlands worldwide are known to be crucial for a large number of species, particularly those that are large and vulnerable to disturbance by humans and other predators. The Tana River Delta is a critical foraging ground for many thousands of water birds, both resident and migratory, and an important breeding site for a significant number of others, in particular herons, storks, cormorants and rails. In the 2007 waterfowl counts no more than 30% of the delta area was covered, and yet (excluding flamingos) Tana River Delta accounted for 14% of all waterbirds counted from all 34 Kenya sites. Seventy species of waterbirds were recorded—53% of the total number recorded nationwide. Furthermore, a major heronry is

located in the Delta that has yet to be fully assessed.

At each stage of the Tana Delta's fluvial cycle, from flooding to drying, the area is highly important for different groups of waterbirds—depending on the exact conditions they require. Some prefer high floodwaters and deep pools whilst others thrive on riverbanks and open mud flats. A single 'snap shot' of the delta in just one state, therefore, is far from sufficient to define its significance and importance. However, it is enough to allow us to recognise that it is indeed a key site for waterbirds in Kenya if not the whole region.

Colin Jackson
A Rocha Kenya

*For a complete copy of the 2008 bird count, visit tanariverdelta.org/tana/about.

Renaldo and Jill Retief have been working on various mango projects in the Tana Delta for 20 years and they have been involved with the Lower Tana Delta Conservation Trust, which was set up by the EU in 2006.

spawning fish, prawns, and crabs.

One of the interesting creatures to be found in abundance in the delta is the mudskipper. In 1993 four scientists from the University of Florence spent three months studying the foraging strategy of the *Periophthalmus sobrinus* of the Tana Delta. In the study, they discovered that 17 different items were to be found in the mudskip-

per not as yet work to seasons and this is something that the Lower Tana Delta Conservation Trust hopes to establish in the future.

The Lower Tana Delta Conservation Trust is a group of people from the population of the area, who are interested in the Conservation of the delta. The trust was formed two years ago in 2006 as a result of some EU funding for

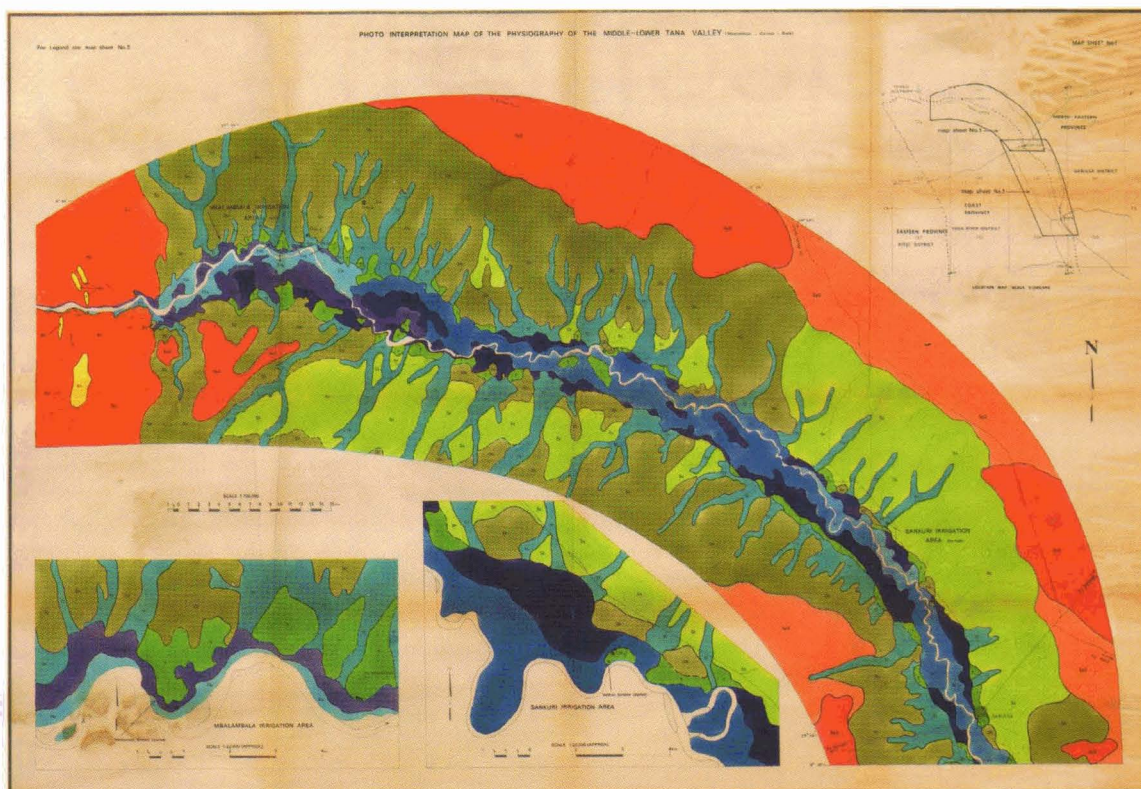


Photo interpretation map of the physiography of the Middle-Lower Tana Valley. (Mbalambala-Garissa-Bura).

a conservation area to be set up in the delta. The Trust members work tirelessly, to stop illegal logging of precious hardwoods like the *Terminalia Spinosa*, poached for building in Malindi, and other hardwood trees that are found in the Kurawa area, and also in isolated pockets of forest in the delta and in the Witu forest. They also control and scout for poachers of

the few topi to be found in the delta, and other species hunted for the bush meat trade. They are approaching the UNDP for further funding to consolidate the boundaries of the Conservation area.

They collect conservation and bed-night fees from the tourists who visit the delta, and stay at either Delta Dunes Lodge, perched on the dunes near the old mouth

of the delta at Shekiko or at the community cottages of Mulikani near Kipini and Galtama Cottages, near to Kulota.

What is the future of the Tana Delta? Read the following articles for an enlightened perspective of the social and environmental consequences of the proposed sugarcane plantation that overhangs this invaluable ecosystem.



Aerial view of Mwanja village, which falls within proposed sugarcane plantation area.

Courtesy: JILL RETIEF

Saccharify?

Not worth the Sacrifice!

By HADLEY BECHA

Two large-scale sugarcane and biofuel projects being proposed at the Tana Delta by Mumias Sugar Company and Tana and Athi River Development Authority (TARDA) on one hand, and Mat International on the other hand, are threatening the Tana Delta Wetlands. The Mumias/TARDA projects will take a total of 26,000 hectares of wetlands—20,000 in Tana Delta District

Lamu District, Mat will take an additional 80,000 hectares covering critical wetlands of Lake Moa, Lake Chalaluma, Dida Warede and the swamps and marshes of Witu, Nyangoro, Lango la Simba and Kitsaka Kairu.

The activities of the two projects will not be compatible with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetlands and will change it to an undesirable state.

have significant adverse impacts on the natural and human environment. The implementation will involve direct physical destruction of a significant portion of the total habitat types distinguished in the delta. They will also pollute through agricultural chemicals and sedimentation of the mangroves and seagrasses.

The permanent freshwater bodies, marshes, swamps and sea-



Photos: EAWLS File

(hived from Tana River District) and 6,000 in Lamu District. The Mat International project intends to take 30,000 hectares of wetland area in the Tana Delta District. This portion of land borders the Tana Primate National Reserve to the north and the Mumias/TARDA project land to the south. In

The projects will also destroy the life and livelihood support systems of the majority of pastoralists, flood-dependent subsistence and small-scale farmers, freshwater and marine fisherfolk as well as hunters and gatherers.

The implementation of the two sugarcane and biofuel projects will

sonal open water bodies cover about 10% of the Tana Delta. These include:

1. Permanent freshwater bodies: Lakes Moa, Chalaluma, Bilisa, Giritum Dangore, Mafukoni, Mwenye Kombo, Haganda, Mziridini, Mbonde, Mwanani,

Kanga, Dida Warede, Sagema, Bilisa Boka, Ziwa dya Waku, Nyangoro, Misri Duku)

2. Swamps and marshlands, including seasonal water bodies: Giriti, Chamadho, Matomba, Kone Chakaluma, Mamo, Sakwachi, Jundi, Mahere, Galili, Odo Gabsa, Nzii, Shingwaya, Kisima, Chalalhu, Dalu, Onyonyo, Ana Komora and Mwanja among others.

Seasonally flooded grassland covers about a half of the delta and mangrove and coastal dune covers 10% (5% each).

Bushland and thicket takes about 23% while the riverine and floodplain forest covers about 2% and the rest is the marine open wa-

The Tana Delta wetland covers many administrative locations inhabited by people. These are Salama, Galili, Bilisa, Shirikisho, Kipao, Ngao, Wachoda, Chara, Konemasa, Ozi, Kilelengwani, Garsen and Kipini in Tana Delta District and Didawarede Location, Witu Division in Lamu District. The main ethnic groups are Pokomo, Orma, Bajuni and Wardei. However, immigrant communities such as Mijikenda, Luo, Kikuyu and others have settled in this area for many years. Within the Delta are found minority indigenous groups such as Malakote and Wasanya.

Implementation of the sugarcane project will directly and negatively affect many permanent

plan for those to be displaced by the proposed plantations. Five administrative locations will cease to exist: Galili, Wacha Oda, Kipao, Konemasa and Dida Warede.

The proposed projects will not be the best way to develop the very rich and diverse resources of the Tana Delta; they will monopolize all the rich and varied resources and transform it from its current multiple uses to a single monoculture agricultural operation, to the detriment of the local population and the environment. There will be a net loss of livelihood support activities and a loss of prime fishing resources. Freshwater fisheries (primarily tilapia, catfish and lungfish) derive their catch from three principled habitats: permanent water

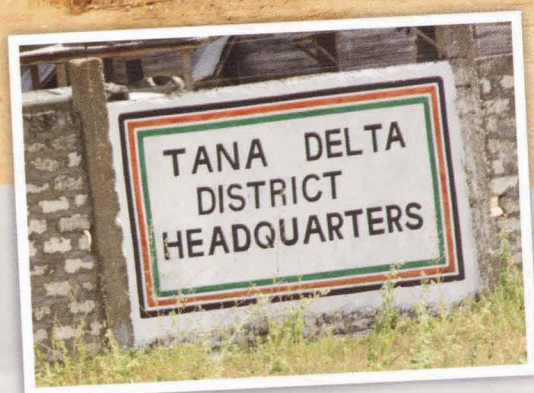


ter seagrass beds and coral gardens in areas not exceeding six meters in low tide.

The habitats of the Tana Delta harbours more than 300 plant species, some of which are rare, and maintains a large number of herbivores including topi, waterbuck, hippopotamus and zebra.

settlements. The local population at risk will be significant. For instance, the following villages have to be demolished and its people forcefully be removed: Galili, Onkolde, Kipao, Handarako, Arithi, Odhole, Gomesa, Gubahargesa, Chalaluma etc. The project does not have a relocation

and pans, marshes and swamps and seasonally flooded grasslands. For example, *Lake Moa* alone supports about 50,000 fisherfolk producing more than 300 tonnes of fish per annum. The marine fisheries that are dependent on the mangroves, seagrass beds and coral gardens will be adversely affected





as a result of increased sedimentation and intensified pollution from point sources (ie, localised) on the sugarcane estates.

There will be a net loss of prime dry-season grazing resources. The seasonally flooded grasslands will be lost as they will be converted into sugarcane farms. It will be a severe setback to the pastoralist and to livestock production within the delta and surrounding areas.

The water balance, including the river flow regimes and pattern will negatively affect the existing flood-dependent farming, most of which is small-scale and subsistence. Most, if not all, the local farming communities reside next to the river. The proposed project will not only reduce the viability of traditional agriculture but will also make them vulnerable to increased food deficit. Furthermore, sugarcane will not contribute to alleviating food shortages and extreme hunger and poverty.


The gatherers community can expect reduced habitats and no further access to resources within the 'private land' of the sugarcane company.

The community groups like Lower Tana Conservation Group and Mulikani, among others that are increasingly becoming dependent on the ecotourism, will suffer a net loss as the tourism product will be lost as a result of conversion of the rich and varied delta resources to a sugarcane plantation. The wildlife will decrease drastically as habitats shrink.

The proposed sugarcane project is not feasible in view of the recent experiences among other large scale agricultural schemes along the lower Tana River and in particular the Tana Delta. No large-scale irrigation scheme in this area has been able to repay its development costs and most—including the Tana Delta Irrigation Project for rice by Tana and Athi River Development Authority—

cannot cover its recurrent costs. Will the sugarcane projects being proposed be any different?

All the major habitats and associated biodiversity resources are threatened by the proposed projects; their presence will remove these habitats. A reduction of the normal flooding water and reclamation of the aquatic habitats is a real threat. The consequences of the projects on wild animals, birds, fish and other living organisms will be felt as their habitats become destroyed and degraded.

From the ecological and socio-economic point of view, the proposed projects are not feasible and not the best way to utilize the Tana Delta. There are many alternative approaches to developing these delta's resources within the principles of 'multiple wise uses'. Such a strategy is the only way that will benefit the local communities and bring about widespread sustainable development to the area. 

A stay of execution

By WACHIRA KAN'GARU

Mumias Sugar Company and Tana and Athi River Development Authority (TARDA) on one hand and Mat International on the other hand are threatening the Tana Delta Wetlands. The Mumias/TARDA project will take a total of 26,000 hectares of wetlands ... and Mat International sugarcane project intends to take 30,000 hectares of wetland area in the Tana Delta District.

Kenya's High Court has temporarily halted stage one of the hugely controversial KSh 24 billion (US\$373 million) biofuel project in Tana River Delta on the Northern Kenyan coast.

That by itself is an incredible boost to the local communities and conservationists, who have relentlessly opposed the project because of its negative impact on livelihoods and the ecosystem. [See Hadley Becha's article, for details.]

In July 2008, Justice Hellen Omondi, a high court judge based in Malindi, granted a group of five conservationists leave. In layman's language, the judge allowed the applicants to file a judicial review suit that, if successful, would thwart any future effort to implement the project. 'The grant of leave does operate as a stay of any decision to implement the proposed Tana Integrated Sugar Project pending the hearing and determination of these proceedings', pronounced Justice Omondi.

The five successful applicants were: Tana River Pastoralists Development Organisation, Tana Delta

Conservation Organisation, East Africa Wild Life Society (EAWLS), Centre for Environmental Legal Research and Education and George Wamukonya (an environmental lawyer).

John Njenga, an advocate with Njenga, Mbugua & Nyanjua advocates, the law firm that is prosecuting the case on behalf of the five applicants, expounds on the importance of the judge's pronouncement: 'What this means is that the project will remain grounded until both parties present their side of the story before the court and the judge makes a final decision—either allowing the project or stopping it for good.'

Looking at the court's precedent, the project proponents may need weighty evidence to reverse such a stay. The legal battle pitting the community and conservationists against business interests started on 11 July 2008 when the application for leave seeking at least six orders was filed. All were granted, albeit temporarily, by Judge Omondi. Of the six granted instructions, the first was an Or-

der of Certiorari to remove and quash the decision by the Director General of National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) that had granted Mumias and TARDA a licence to implement the project.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Licence (EIA) is issued by NEMA and is, by law, a prerequisite for any commercial or residential project to commence in Kenya.

On 11 June 2008, the Director General of NEMA issued the Project Approval letter and subsequently, on 19 June, issued EIA licence No. 0001891 to Mumias and TARDA. Both documents effectively licensed the conversion of 20,000 hectares of coastal grassland into commercial irrigated fields of sugarcane, threatening the livelihood of thousands of residents and about 350 species of birds. An entire kingdom of wildlife like lions, elephants, rare sharks and reptiles also stood condemned to misery.

But with an Order of Cer-

Overview

The Tana Delta is a vast seasonal wetland complex. Its habitats, wildlife and people have adapted their lives to the extremes of drought and flood. The seasons themselves vary dramatically from year to year. A series of drought years, in which ponds dry up and the grasslands are eaten bare, may be followed by a great flood such as the 1997-98 El Niño floods that washed away the tarmac road, destroyed the irrigation dykes, and filled the delta south of the river with three metres of water.

Intangible environmental services provided by this vast wetland system include:

- regulating the hydrological cycle, including catchment, storage and release of rainwater
- moderating the climate, including reducing the severity of droughts and floods
- protecting the soil from erosion, stabilizing the shoreline and reducing the impact of storm surges
- slowing global warming by the absorption of carbon dioxide and release of oxygen
- providing a range of habitats for terrestrial, aquatic and marine

biodiversity.

Economic use of the Tana Delta by traditional economic systems includes:

- dry season and drought refuge grazing for enormous herds of cattle from Tana River, Lamu, Ijaara, Malindi and other districts
- major fisheries for the local and export market
- growing of subsistence crops, cash crops and fruit trees
- tourism with lodges, boat rides and a wildlife conservancy, all currently under development.

The special importance of the

tiorari, Judge Omondi gave the habitat a temporary lease of life. 'What Certiorari does is to render the approval letter and the licence ineffective or non-operative. This is important in that the two documents go to the very basis of the project. By annulling them, the project cannot start', Njenga explains.

The other order sought was the Order of Mandamus also directed to the Director General of NEMA to ensure compliance to section 58(1) of the Environmental and Management and Coordination Act (EMCA). That section obligates every project proponent to submit a project report before NEMA or the licensed EIA expert can commence an Environmental Impact Assessment. Such a report is meant to ensure that the project proponent has addressed all the issues raised by lead agencies and members of the public. 'To the extent that the project proponents did not submit a project report as required by law rendered the said Project Approval and EIA licence null and void *ab initio* [from the start] for want of compliance with mandatory procedures of the Law', Njenga notes in his court papers.

An additional ground was that NEMA had also contravened section 59 of the Environmental Act (1999) to the extent that the environmental authority did not demand Mumias and TARDA to

respond to the concerns raised by the public, a move that negates the spirit of the wording of the law.

The Lower Tana Delta is fragile and needs to be conserved. This part of Kenya, covering approximately 320 kilometres-squared, is blessed by God naturally, having over 280 species of birds, thousands of Nile crocodiles, the red duikers (indigenous), elephant, hippo, collobus monkeys, dugong etc—most of which are at risk of disappearing.

Thick forests are found in areas bordering fresh and saline waters and at the saline waters you will find nine species of mangrove trees. The sand dunes complete the beautiful picture over the seashore. Come and join hands to uplift the poor communities in this area to conserve this delta.

Thank you
Tujivunie Kuwa Wakenya

Abdulla Rhova Hiribae
Chairman, Lower Tana Delta
Conservation Trust

Among the conservationists who submitted their views are EAWLS, Nature Kenya, and RSPB—a United Kingdom based non-governmental organization that works to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife. Kenya Wildlife Services also sent its objection to the project. All submissions had a common thread arguing that

the proposed project raised fundamental environmental and social issues that still have not yet been addressed by the proponents of the project. 'To the extent that NEMA did not require the project proponents to respond to issues raised by the public negates the entire public review process as envisaged under the said section', the five applicants argued in their court papers.

The other big concern was (and still is!) that the level of usage of the water from the Tana River would not be sustainable; the project proposes to extract at least a third of the current water for irrigation, industrial and domestic use.

The approval, says Njenga, was thus in contravention of the multilateral environmental agreements, in particular the Ramsar Convention, The Convention on Migratory Species, and Convention on Biological Diversity—to which Kenya is a party.

Another crucial plea made by conservationists on behalf of the community was for an Order of Prohibition directed at Mumias and TARDA, prohibiting them from carrying the implementation of the proposed sugar project. The Order of Prohibit was also extended to the Commissioner of Lands, preventing him from issuing a Title Deed to the Letter of Allotment, reference number 106798 of 1995, in favour of TARDA pending the hearing and determination of the case. The Water Resource Management Authority was also prohibited from issuing a water permit to Mumias Sugar or TARDA pending the hearing. The water permit is a prerequisite for any commercial use of water in Kenya. Also issued was a stay of any decision or action by the Tana River Country Council in respect of the land that was the subject of the suit.

The orders are still in operation. As things stand the implementation of the project will have to wait a little longer to kick off—if ever.

Tana Delta for biodiversity conservation includes:

- habitats such as Borassus Palm savannah on flooded grassland, which is not included in any protected area
- coastal *Hyphaene coriacea* palm woodland, protected only in a few Forest Reserves such as Witu Forest
- fragments of coastal and riverine forests with many rare and endemic plants
- seasonally flooded acacia woodland providing nesting sites for waterbirds from all over Kenya
- sand dunes along the

coastline with their specialized vegetation

- mudflats and sandbanks where migratory birds feed and rest
- mangrove forests with eight mangrove species and especially fine stands of *Heritiera littoralis*, *Xylocarpus granatum* and *Bruguiera gymnorhiza*—all of which play an important economic role, sheltering fish and shellfish nurseries that nourish the rich fisheries of Ungwana (Formosa) Bay.

— Fleur N'gweni

If you would like to
DO SOMETHING
about the Tana
Delta, write a letter
to NEMA at tinyurl.com/tana-petition.






Mara PLC

(Public Limited Company)

the way forward for
sub-division in the
greater Mara area?

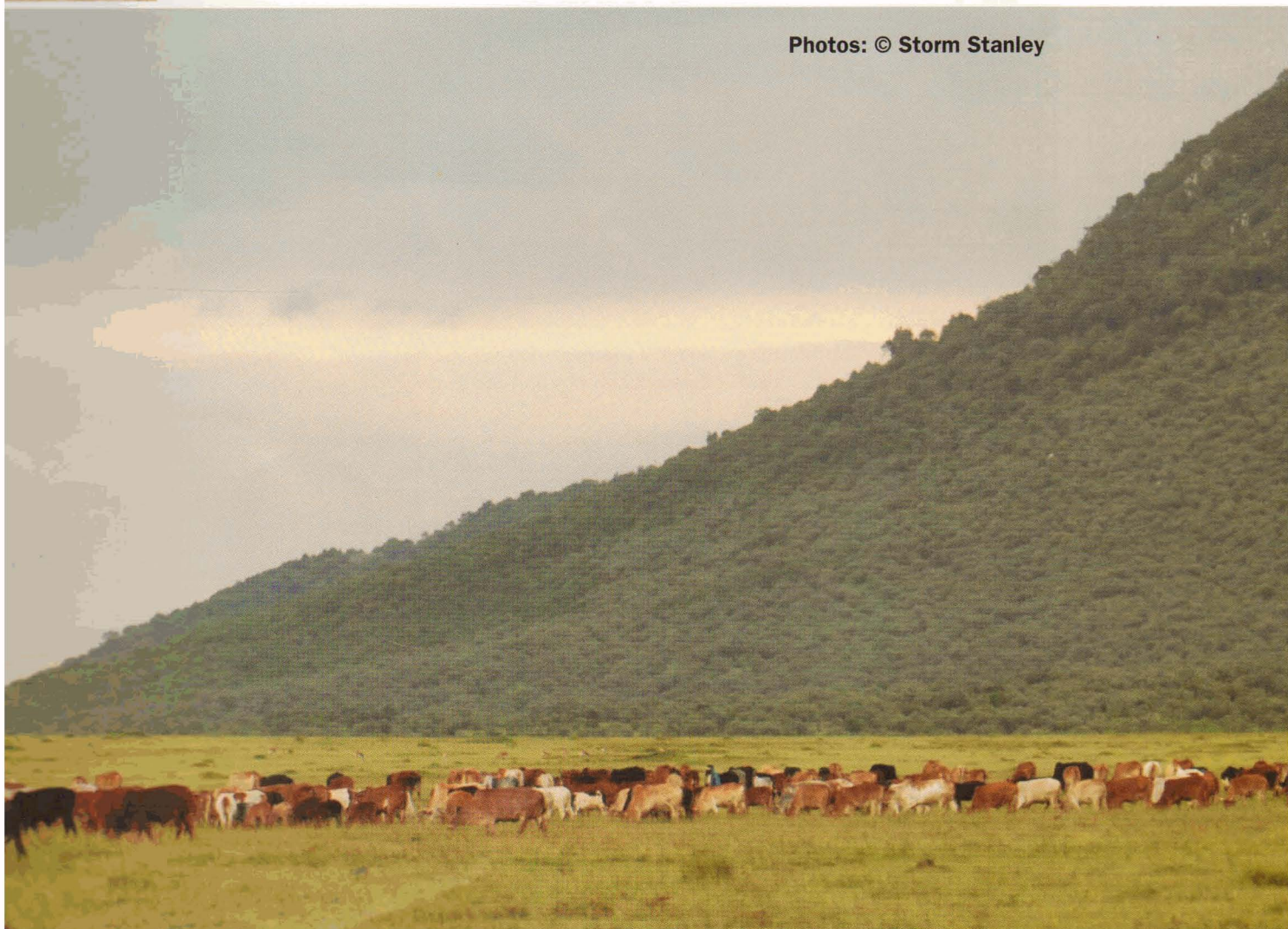
Maasai communities co-exist
with wildlife on the savannah
plains of Ol Chorro Oiroua, as
they have done for centuries.





Far on the western boundary of the Maasai Mara is an area defined by three borders, the Siria Escarpment on the west, the Mara River to the northeast and to the south, the Serengeti—hence the name the ‘Mara Triangle’. For the last seven years, this corner of the Mara (under the umbrella of the Mara Conservancy) has been steadily securing its perimeters, dealing with internal security issues, tackling poaching, upgrading the infrastructure and observing and enforcing the regulations of the reserve. Most significantly, it has returned a regular income to its stakeholders from gate fees, the Trans Mara County Council and the three bordering Maasai group ranches the Kimentet, Oloirien and Kerenkani. The income generated is modest compared with the budget of certain big name wildlife NGOs, but it manages to pay for all of the above as well as a staff of 86, of whom 40 are rangers.

Photos: © Storm Stanley



The gross revenue that the Mara Conservancy receives (a private, not-for-profit management company that the Trans Mara County Council appointed to administer the Mara Triangle and encourage conservation), is earned from just 275 'bed-nights' at US\$40 per day/per person. A percentage of this income provides the entire funding of its operations and returns a regular capital share to the local Maasai.

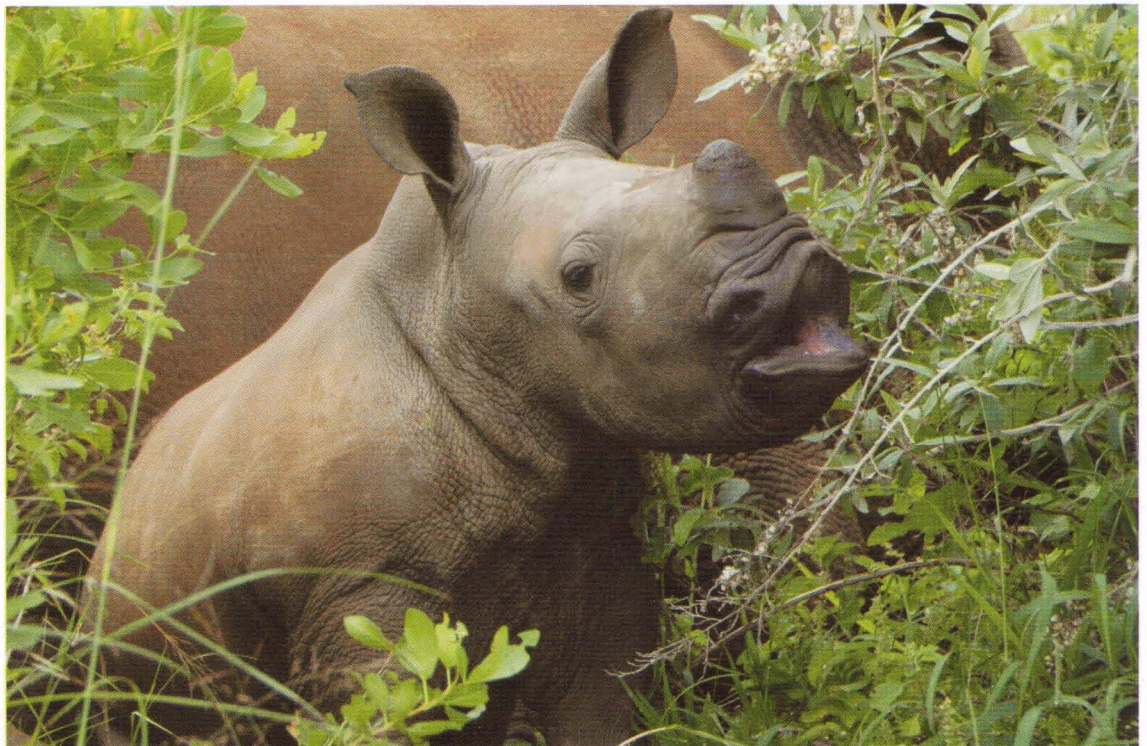
The Mara Conservancy is run by a board of directors and Brian Heath (Seyia Ltd) who, in his capacity as Chief Executive, heads the

an area of 1,543 kilometres², and is considered the premier destination in the Maasai Mara. Tourists are offered an unparalleled wildlife experience in an exceptional wilderness area in return for their tourist dollars.

To conservationists the Mara Triangle is the 'jewel in the crown' of this renowned wildlife reserve. A rich biodiversity of wildlife and birdlife, from the delicate species to the mega-fauna, which have evolved as a complex ecosystem, still occur in high numbers. Since the framework was restructured in 2001 (under the Mara Conserv-

na in the natural world. While the Mara ecosystem provides a critical haven for this keystone species by providing abundant forage and permanent water for wildebeest in the dry season, they annually fertilise and renew the Mara plains with a multitude of droppings.

When the Maasai Mara National Reserve was divided into two entities in 1994, Kilgoris became the headquarters for the Trans Mara district, under whose jurisdiction the Mara Triangle falls. Each acre of the Maasai Mara National Reserve (which includes the Mara Triangle) and surrounding



Kofi Annan, a white rhino calf, puckers his lips in front of his mother, Mama Ngina.

anti-poaching unit. The monetary receipts are scrupulously accounted for and all revenues ploughed back into the area through this public/private partnership. The largest percentage of funds is remitted to the Trans Mara County Council, which decides on their disbursement. The revenue share is 55% to the Council and 45% to the Mara Conservancy. The Council sets aside 19% of the total collection for local communities and the Mara Conservancy pays for the revenue collection.

The Mara Triangle covers approximately one third of the Maasai Mara National Reserve (MMNR),

), a compensation scheme for livestock killed by lion and leopard has been introduced to persuade the Maasai pastoralists to protect their predators, not kill them. The number of lions in the Mara Triangle has doubled to approximately 80 during the last seven years.

A million plus wildebeest thunder across the Mara River to reach their dry season grazing grounds in the Mara Triangle during the annual migration from July-September, as they have done for millennia and well before humankind stepped onto the Savannah. The Mara River crossings are considered one of the most spectacular phenome-

environs are owned by thousands of individuals, making the management of wildlife and revenue collection/distribution unusually complex.

The Conservancy's tourist-based, sustainable conservation initiative serves as a model for private management of protected areas. At Ol Chorro Oiroua, an area to the north of the Mara and situated beneath Mount Kileleoni, the Maasai landowners are keen to apply the reputable management concept of the Mara Conservancy. It is a critical buffer zone for wildlife, next to a thick belt of productive wheat farms. In fact, a

Interested parties can read the Mara Conservancy blog and make donations through maraconservancy.com or maratriangle.wildlifedirect.org.



vast expanse of Maasai community land exists beyond the borders of the MMNR known as the Greater Mara Area—where co-existence between communities and wildlife is a way of life. These areas have become essential components for dispersal and movement of animals to and from the core wildlife area.

There are just two tented camps in the 17,054 acres that make up the Ol Chorro Oiroua area. Landowners here receive 100% of the US\$40 fee charged for the 100 beds at Mara Safari Club and the 20 beds at Richard's Camp. This compares with the

are about 50% better off. The Mara Safari Club (managed by the Fairmont Group), have given the scheme substantial support and assisted Working Wildlife (who take an additional US\$25 management fee), with a soft loan to buy essential equipment such as tents, uniforms and radios for the rangers and rhino surveillance unit. The management fee also goes towards rehabilitating the area and working with the community.

I met with George Orr, of Earthview Management, whose key role is to oversee revenue collection and secure distribution of gate fees for the Mara Conservancy, Working Wildlife and other group ranches. A softly spoken Canadian, now a Kenyan resident, Orr's background in business gives him a bird's-eye overview of the financial picture of the Greater Mara area. 'The Mara Triangle was set up on a wing and a prayer in July 2001 with a group of like-minded individuals'. Orr reflects back to the beginning, adding that the Trans Mara County Council can be credited with having both vision and an understanding that conservation initiatives serious about wildlife bring a lucrative return for their people. Seven years later there are 12 places to purchase tickets for the Mara Triangle with a reputable collection system, one of them being the Kenyan Association of Tour Operators (KATO).

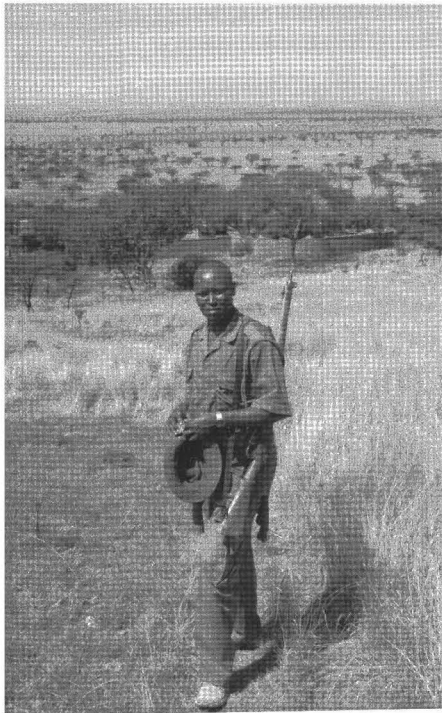
Ol Chorro Oiroua was sub-divided twenty years ago, and until Working Wildlife were contracted by Fairmont, the distribution of the assets was inequitable. Various Maasai I spoke to described the previous scene: group ranches sued each other, disagreements prevailed, staff personnel at lodges were being harassed for on-the-spot payments, balloon operators were 'under siege' as individual Maasai made financial demands and morale among rangers was exceptionally low. The roads fell into disrepair, and the

environment became degraded (and wildlife experience diluted)—with no one taking responsibility [see box below]. Furthermore, the Maasai were depleting the natural resources on which they are dependant: water, grazing and forestry.

The Price of Success

Described as the 'greatest slice of wildlife real estate in Africa', the last decade has taken its toll from a profusion of visitors and some people turned a blind eye to over-development. (Some would say the Mara is mismanaged, not over-crowded). Poaching has also been a problem; rhino have been reduced from about 100 in the 1970s to a mere handful, which now need to be guarded by armed rangers day and night. High visitor numbers and spiralling whorls of rutted tracks leading off every main route (as driver/guides pursuing lavish tips ignore Reserve regulations about harassing wildlife, especially predators) have contributed to a diminished safari experience. The Mara Conservancy has been working with the UK-based Travel Foundation to improve revenue for local communities and improve the tourist experience in the Mara by holding workshops on responsible guiding and by working with cultural villages to ensure that they receive their rightful share of the revenue.

John Ol Kintei, senior ranger with the anti-poaching force at Ngiro-Are; 'forward ops' post in the background.



Trans Mara County Council receiving 55% of the revenue drawn from 275 beds, for entry into the Mara Triangle—which equates to about 80 beds—and therefore the landowners of Ol Chorro Oiroua

Like most success stories, the Mara Conservancy's winning formula is due to a combination of factors, which Working Wildlife are hoping to replicate at Ol Chorro Oiroua. The main issue is economic prosperity, according to Orr. As long as Maasai stakeholders see a return for the utilisation of their land—literally 'money in the bank'—they are willing to turn to conservation as an instrument for development. It is anticipated that the benefits of growth will filter down to the greatest number of people and be realised throughout the region.

Over the next few months, Working Wildlife is seeking the collective will of the people, hoping

Ergams: the tie that binds

The extraordinary story of the ordinary wild asparagus

Cynthia Salvadori

Every so often when the season was right, the dry thorny bush near Laikipia where Andy and I lived many happy years would burst into frothy clouds of tiny white flowers. Lovely, I always thought. Our little chestnut mare thought otherwise. Sunrise was what is known as an easy keeper; she relished a great variety of plants, always finding something to eat even when the fields were bone dry; during one harsh dry season it was she of our 3-horse herd who first resorted to chewing the tough, prickly pink-flowered mallows. But Sunrise didn't like the frothy white flowers at all. What she liked were the green growing tips that came before the

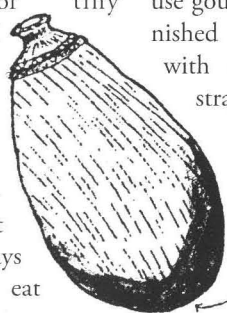


Fig 2

possessions of pastoral nomads in East Africa, their water and milk containers are by far the most important, for milk is the staple of their diet, drunk either fresh or carefully curdled into a concentrated yoghurt-like substance, while precious water has to be transported many kilometres from sparse, distant wells. The first people I got to know well, the Maasai, use gourds, long slender ones bur-nished to a rich chestnut, fitted with a bead-decorated leather strap that serves as a grip. The cousins, the Samburu, use gourds too, but also wooden jugs carefully carved from certain trees. The Turkana use a few gourds but mostly wooden con-tainers, elegant long-necked

ones coloured in patterns of red and black and bright with beads. But gourds and even wooden con-tainers are apt to crack and break. So people such as the Borana and the Gabra, the Rendille and the Somali use tightly woven baskets that are virtually indestructible. [Fig 2] How, I wondered, could anyone mange to weave such beautiful, perfectly symmetrical baskets—and of what on earth did they weave them so they would be water- (or milk-) tight?

During the year I lived among the Borana at Sololo, up by the Kenya-Ethiopia border, I would stroll down to the little market almost every day. Much of the merchan-dise consisted of miraa, grown up on top of the escarpment; if I was lucky I'd find bananas, maybe a handful of small tomatoes, once in a while a papaya. But there was always a cluster of women selling milk, fresh and curdled, usually from graceful wooden jugs fitted with a carrying strap. But in their homes I would see the finely woven milk baskets hanging in elegant display on the back wall. One day

I noticed a woman in the market selling small bundles of what at first glance vaguely resembled thin, pale brown vanilla pods. One of the first words I learned in Borana was *maan?*, 'what?' The answer: *ergams*. *Hujii maan?*, what work? I asked in my best pidgin. *Gorf*. This was the raw material for weaving the bas-kets, strips of the root-bark itself.

Making the containers is wom-en's work, all their work, from beginning to end. It is women who go, usually in groups, to the places where the wild asparagus grows to dig up the roots. They are tied in bundles and left to dry; when thor-oughly dry they are split to remove the soft white inner part, which the women call *udaani ergamsaa*, the waste of ergams, because it is not the root that is important, only the peel. The peel can be kept indefinitely; it only needs to be dampened a little to make it pliable for weaving. (The word *ergams* has the meaning of something soft and weak; one can use it to refer, for in-stance, to a sickly calf.)

The ergams is so precious that these strips are used as string in rit-

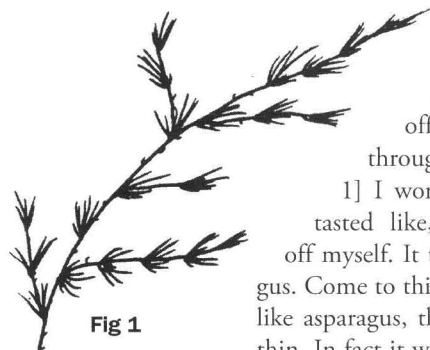
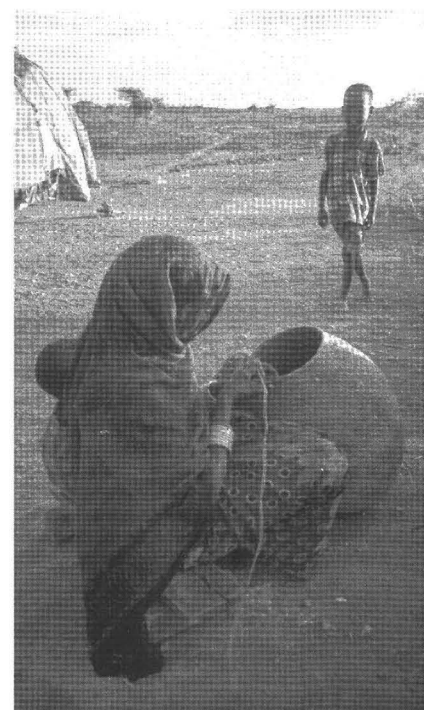


Fig 1

A Borana woman putting the finishing touches on a water container—a very rare sight these days.

But who on earth rummaged in the earth and discovered that the peel of the roots of the wild African asparagus could be used to make watertight baskets?

Of all the scant household



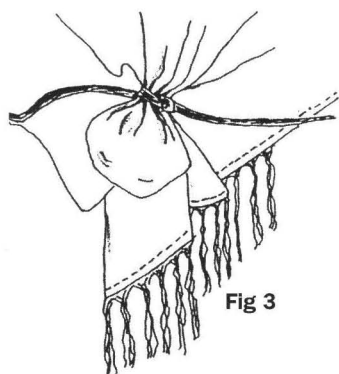


Fig 3

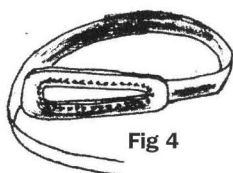


Fig 4



Fig 5

ual contexts. When a man is given a handful of tobacco or globules of myrrh as part of a ceremony, he ties it in a corner of his shawl using a length of ergams. [Fig 3] A suitor uses it to bind the big bundles of coffee beans and tobacco he must carry to his intended in-laws. A married woman makes herself a special leather belt using ergams for the decorative stitching around the slot. [Fig 4] When their firstborn son has his name-giving ceremony, a major 3-day event, after the child's hair has been ritually shorn, his parents give him a special bead, often a large opalescent oval, tying it around his neck with a length of ergams (which is later, as he grows, replaced by a cord). [Fig 10] And, uniquely, when it is time, according to the Borana age-grade system, for a man to retire as an elder, his senior wife weaves, over a period of months, strands of ergams into his hair to form the outstanding halo-like *guduru*—which she then shaves off on the great ceremonial day of his retirement. [Fig 5]

But over and above all, the ergams is used to weave baskets. The weaving is done with the help of a pair of awls made by the local

blacksmith; one for pushing, one for pulling. [Fig 6] Some lengths of the peel are stroked flat, then woven in to make a particular pattern, and especially to finish the neck so it will not fray. [Fig 7] The lids, too, are woven from ergams, designed so they can serve as cup—though people often drink directly from the milk basket. [Fig 12] Women weave when they have the time; it takes many weeks of sporadic work to complete a medium-size milk basket (they vary from two to five litres), months to complete one of the large water baskets which hold 20 litres or more.

As the ergams itself is impermeable and the weaving done so well, the containers are naturally watertight, and the large ones used for water are left like that. But those used for milk have an added interior finish because a woman regularly fumigates her milk baskets to sterilize them. With a cleft stick she lifts a few glowing coals from her fire, shuts them inside the empty milk basket and shakes them around. [Fig 8] After a few minutes she tips them out, puts another lot in. And again. When she has shaken out the last crumbs of coals she takes a rag and gives the inside a good rubbing. So over the years a

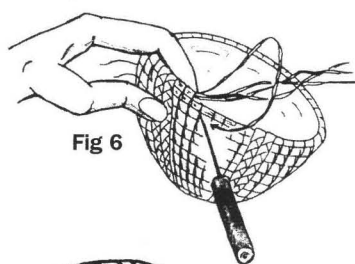


Fig 6

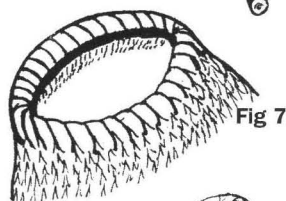


Fig 7



Fig 8

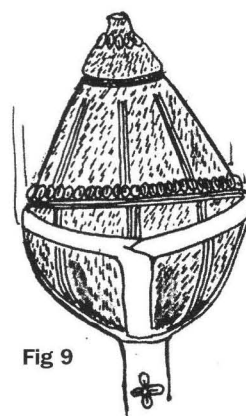


Fig 9

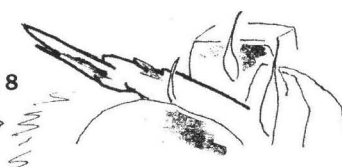


Fig 10

varnish of soot is built up. And the special woods selected to burn for the coals give the milk its delicate characteristic smoky flavour.

Each woman is extremely proud of her milk baskets, and displays them, usually at least four, on the back wall of her house, against a background of a tanned cowhide. They are hung in slings made of leather straps decorated with cowrie shells—and certain milk baskets are decorated with cowries too. [Fig 9] The large water baskets are carried in wicker frames made of slender pliable branches bound with rawhide. The Borana used to use specially trained oxen to carry water baskets, one on either side; now they use camels, as do the Gabra and Somali.

Sadly but understandably the large water containers are now almost extinct, people sensibly preferring the far lighter 20-litre plastic jerricans that can be bought in any market for a few shillings. Now even the small milk baskets are vanishing, people



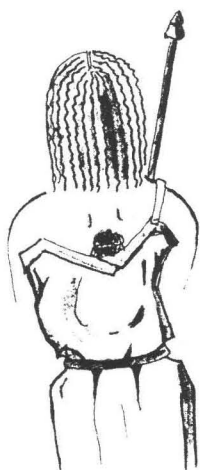


Fig 11



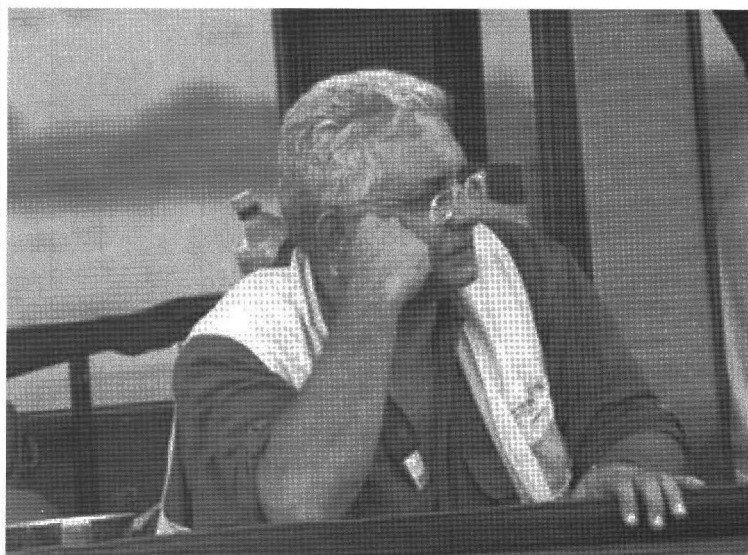
Fig 12

these days taking their surplus milk to market in the ubiquitous 4-litre mini-jerricans—which is highly unhygienic, as they are just rinsed out with whatever water is at hand. But the traditional milk baskets are still essential for anything ritual. When a Borana groom escorts his bride to her new home, she carries on her back—where she will carry her baby—the new one her mother has made for her [Fig 11] (and when she dies, it is broken in half and placed on her grave); when boys go with their age-mates on their rambunctious round of ceremonial feasting they each carry a milk basket woven by their mother, when a man goes for his lengthy retirement ceremony he will have a milk basket made by a sister—the ritual examples are legion.

But how on earth did this all start? I can imagine people noticing that when an area became waterlogged, other plants' roots would rot, those plants would die, while this feathery wild asparagus would flourish. But what on earth inspired anyone to peel the roots and use the peel for weaving impermeable water and milk baskets?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Living in the Kedong Valley years ago, Cynthia Salvadori collaborated with her late companion, Andy Fedders, to write *Maasai*, then after several trips north they produced *Turkana, Pastoral Craftsmen*. Years later, living in Sololo and Marsabit, travelling all over Gabraland, she translated, helped revise and illustrated *The Gabra, Camel Nomads of Northern Kenya* by Paul Tablino. Then, living in Dhaddim and Dhoqolle in Ethiopian Boranaland, she co-authored and illustrated *Aada Boraanaa, A Dictionary of Borana Culture*—from which these illustrations are taken.

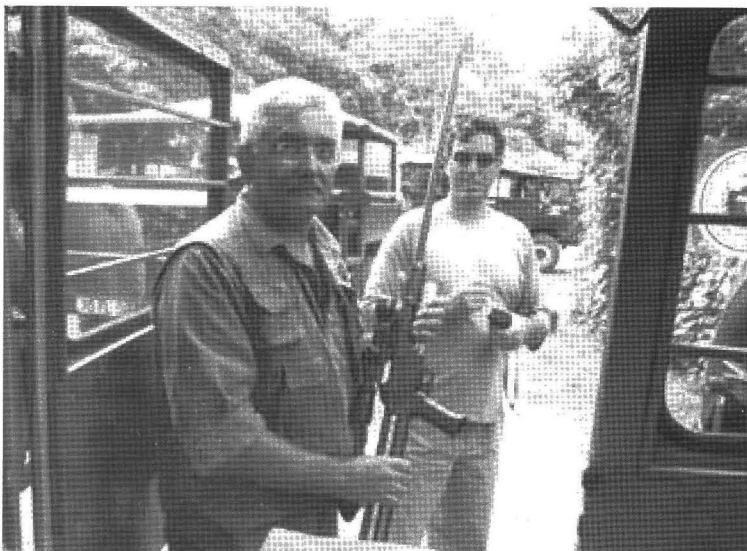


Dr Zahoor Kashmiri Wildlife Veterinarian

Dr Zahoor Kashmiri—to many he was simply Zul and to others he became Daktari. Having known the dynamic character he was, I am sure he probably had other nicknames as well. When I first met Zul I was the KWS Senior Warden for Coast Province and he was a practicing veterinarian in Mombasa. He was applying for permission to treat wild animals kept as pets by a number of people along the Coast. Gathering courage, he showed

more concerned about the state in which these animals were held and treated and got quite cocky with accusations of how we didn't bother to check on the animals. Thus, revealing his famous short fused temper. At the same time, he inadvertently willingly walked into that popular minefield of volunteering for wildlife conservation.

I promptly recommended him as an Honorary Warden and he went on to not only report cases of illegal custody of wildlife while





treated those brought to his surgery but became specialized in chemical capture techniques of wildlife and developed a passion for the activity.

Zul personally helped the EAWLS with, among many other conservation activities, arrange for complimentary air freight of its magazine, *Swara* to all our European members with his employer the African Safari Club who own and operate the African Safari Airways. This simple effort helped us save thousands of shillings.

As others have mentioned, Zul was getting increasingly unhappy with spending less time with what he loved most—wildlife. On his way to Ethiopia, he came by my office at EAWLS and informed me of his plans to get more involved in Ethiopia. He felt Kenya no longer

satisfied his demands for work on wildlife.

It is easy to find volunteers in the field of wildlife conservation due to the glamour and glory associated being seen with wild animals and so forth. It is however a very difficult task to find one who not only wants to work under all circumstances, at any time and more using their own resources. Kashmiri was that one unique volunteer. Always ready, always available and never questioned the risk. A wildlife conservation effort in the East African region has lost an invaluable asset and a hero. Kashmiri has left a gap difficult to fill.

**Rest in Peace my friend.
*Innalillahi Rajiun.***

— Ali A. Kaka



MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE

We warmly recognise and highly appreciate the hard work and commitment they made to the management, sustainable use and conservation of the nation's wildlife.

We would like to express our sincere condolences to the families and colleagues of the members of the Wildlife Division who were tragically killed in an aircraft accident on Friday 4 July 2008.

Miriam Onesemo Zakaria, Assistant Director
Stephen Mahinya, Game Officer
Pius Ngwalali, Captain

May they rest in eternal peace

IN MEMORIAM BILL DIXON

Bill Dixon of Bruce Safaris in Nairobi passed away a short while ago, leaving behind his grieving family and the many friends he made in his lifetime in Kenya, Eastern Africa and around the world, including this correspondent.

Bill was one of a kind, and old hand in the safari business, Skalleague par excellence and of course father to Alan Dixon, who built his 'Let's Go Travel' tourism empire over the past decades now spanning across Eastern Africa.

Rest in peace my friend, until we meet again.

—Wolfgang Thome

Review by Colin Church

At sixteen he faced the barrel of a Red Army tank, but in the wrong uniform. Conscripted into the German Army as the Russians closed in on Nazi Germany, the young Hungarian schoolboy absconded, leading a group who survived roaming in one of the most dangerous and brutal theatres of war in the past 100 years, before being taken in by the American Army.

His first taste of medicine was to incise a suppurating abscess at a US army field clinic. When money was not worth the paper (upon which it was printed), this young pupil 'learned' life as a black marketeer peddling cigarettes, spirits, coffee and chocolate in between

When Loeffler died in March 2007—after battling a long illness over several years—Kenya, Zambia, Uganda and indeed the region, lost a man whose impact upon medicine, conservation and aviation will live on.

This collection of writings includes only some of the 1,000-plus in his collection; a good number had, as yet, been unpublished and others, which respected newspapers and distinguished journals have agreed to re-publish, comprise this collection.

Always one with a turn of wit in his writings on conservation and as a speaker much in demand, this book begins with his self-written obituary. It sets the stage and tone

with which we share it. In this age of concrete cities, highways, industrialised agriculture and attitudes of 'monoculture'—where carbon footprints are measured in tens of thousands of millions of miles flown by hundreds of millions of humans and where we roller coast down into a vortex of 'progress' and 'development'—Imre Loeffler cut through the hypocrisy of politicians, priests and bureaucrats. Never one to suffer fools, his own obituary claims he is an errant who made 'many mistakes... was rigid, showed contempt ... and [where his] relentless, often sarcastic criticisms upset even his supporters'.

Behind his desire to cut through pretence with words, often dressed with huge doses of good humour, was a belief that our age—that of 'the demographic trap' and of 'political correctness'—was driving society to run further from the 'real' and still further from what he believed to be simple and wiser ways to achieve 'progress'.

The book contains some of Loeffler's most strident writings on conservation—most of which were published in his popular columns in both *The East African* and *The Standard* from 2000 until his death. His view that wildlife, in an age dominated by one species—man—required

bold steps by man to make wildlife 'sustainable' to communities that live with it as well as in a shared measure to the national economy. The attitude of animal welfare purists, the hypocrisy that categorises what humans do with domestic animals (purist vegans respected) and the tunnel vision of those with 'romantic' views of wildlife are all addressed with refreshing frankness and a surgeon's confidence in the science of what he propounds.

Even in the early 1990s, Loeffler stridently called for proactive management (in 'The Future of Nairobi National Park' (*The Sunday Standard*, 23 April 1990) and

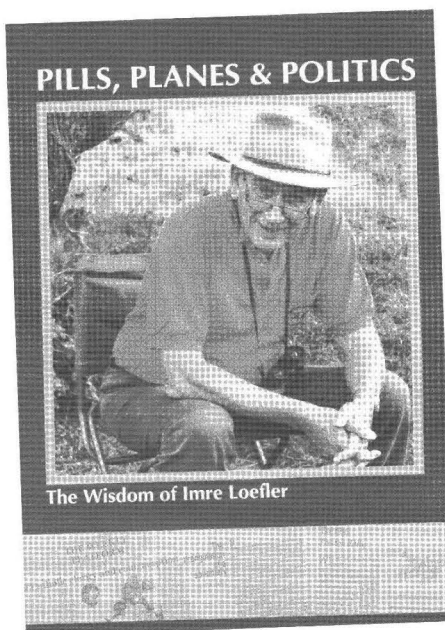
Pills, Planes and Politics

The Wisdom of Imre Loeffler

bouts of playing a good hand of bridge with the US officers.

This city-bred boy's mother was terrified of animals of all kinds. At a tender age he was introduced to his first domestic animal, a cow, at the Budapest zoo! For a person whose life began in such drama and hardship, there was an inner core of steel and determination well laced with great intelligence, romance, an earthy sense of humour and a thirst for adventure.

In *Pills, Planes and Politics*, the Satima Trust (which will receive the all royalties, after repayment of personal loans to fund publication) and the book's honorary editor, Rupert Watson, have given us the special privilege of nearly 100 essays and articles by surgeon, aviator, philosopher, orator, conservationist and naturalist—Imre Pal Loeffler.



for the chapters—all essays and commentaries—spanning 30 years from when the young surgeon arrived in Fort Portal, Uganda to practice medicine in the only place in Africa which would take him, as a Hungarian with German and American medical qualifications. Loeffler's years in Fort Portal were enriched by opportunities to experience nature in all its Rwenzori splendour; great national parks, forests and lakes abound in western Uganda.

Many of the writings focus upon the author's belief in the fusion that exists between man on this earth and the animals and plants

'How to Halt the Rape of the Mara' (*The Nation*, 19 June 1993)) and forewarned of disaster without it. He suggested that it would be in the national interest for Kenya to develop a national policy for land use in order to make all lands most productive for that to which they are best suited. He perceptively wrote 15 years ago that 'the greatest danger to sustainable land use is not ignorance but avarice. The mining of the Mara is driven by a spectacularly avaricious union of political and entrepreneurial interests and the results are spectacularly imprudent, unjust and intemperate'.

One of Loeffler's vibrant beliefs, which appears in much of his writing is that, with a little determination, people could (but do not) challenge the great edifices of political expediency and the staggering injustices of well-heeled politicians using their 'democratic' positions to ram untruths into their electorates. Bishops—especially Catholic and an occasional Evangelical—are the subjects of linguistic lashings when they hide home truths and propagate beliefs that either challenge the public's rights or are so remote from scientific reality (contraception) that such 'opiate' balloons are not just pricked but pierced by his incisive words.

The huge importance of identifying and fighting to secure ecosystems for posterity and sheer survival—especially forests—are subjects that get the attention they deserve. Loeffler champions their value but not in monetary terms; rather, he examines what they provide for Kenyans, indeed Africans, struggling to cope with galloping demographic change that is placing enormous pressure on dwindling resources in times when, for a generation, such resources have mistakenly thought to be limitless. For example, the author's courageous battle to secure Ngong Forest, always a forest reserve but now a secure sanctuary, from former President Moi's cabal of land grabbers is well recorded.

This book includes many unpublished essays of great interest about Loeffler's medical career,

ability as a Chairman in crisis.

The publication of *Pills, Planes and Politics* is a project of the Sa-

Bioterrorism

British Medical Journal, 2003

When discussing bioterrorism it is usually assumed that terrorists pursue ideologies and that bioterrorism always avails itself of micro-organisms or toxins.

Terrorism can be coercive, extortionist, or retaliative, and it can be pursued solely for the sake of self-gratification.

The poisoning in the Tokyo underground may have had ideological motivation. The bombing of German cities and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan were acts of terrorism of the coercive kind. The anthrax letters in the United States seem to have been sent to please a bent mind.

Metazoans have long been used to intimidate. The historian Livy writes of the fear that Hannibal's elephants caused among the Romans. The Emperor Nero threw Christians to carnivores in the circus to subdue the new religion and to entertain. The horses of the conquistadors vanquished the Incas and the Aztecs by intimidation.

Yet the best example of terrorism in the service of a non-ideological cause can be found in the Bible, in Exodus 8 and 9. Yahweh, in order to coerce the Pharaoh into releasing the Hebrews from forced labour and allowing them to decamp, terrorised the Egyptians by visiting pestilence upon them. He appears to have deployed micro-organisms – the murrain killing horse, ass, camel, ox, and sheep, and the "boil breaking forth with blains upon man and beast" – and he certainly used metazoans for the purpose: frogs, lice, flies and finally locusts.

Apart from the fact that Yahweh deployed metazoans as well as micro-organisms and that he did not do so for the sake of ideology, there are further lessons in the report in Exodus, which was recorded at the beginning of the Judaeo-Christian and subsequently Western cultural tradition. Clearly the series of pestilences that were visited upon the Egyptians were acts of bioterrorism; the motivation was far from ideological; and the intent to intimidate (terrorise) and the reasons were overt (announced).

There is another matter to consider: in the Judaeo-Christian tradition Yahweh is not perceived to have been a terrorist, and Moses and Aaron are not looked upon as accomplices. The reason for this is that in the tradition they were believed to have acted in a just cause.



including his three decades of commitment to Nairobi Hospital and some perceptive accounts of periods in the hospital's history and development.

Imre Loeffler was a self-admitting 'ignoramus about finance'. It should be recorded, however, that there are at least two institutions of real value, the Aero Club of East Africa and The East African Wild Life Society, that were steered to new levels of influence and financial stability thanks to the author's

tima Trust, founded by friends of Imre Loeffler during his lifetime and with his full support. The Trust exists to encourage interest in both the spoken and written word, especially among young people. Imre Loeffler's mother tongue was Hungarian and he became proficient in several languages. Clearly, he mastered the English language.

This book is testimony to his special ability to simplify a subject and tell it with disarming frankness.



A new pig for Tsavo

By James Culverwell, Jim Feely, Sheila Bell-Cross, Yvonne A. de Jong and Thomas M. Butynski

There are only two species of warthog, and both occur in Kenya; the common warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* and the desert warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*. Little is known about the natural history of the desert warthog—indeed, the desert warthog might well

be Africa's least-known, non-forest, large mammal. The morphological differences between the two species of warthog are described by Grubb (1993) and by d'Huart & Grubb (2005). The most diagnostic and noticeable characteristics for both species are summarized in Box 1.

d'Huart & Grubb (2001) compiled a map depicting the geographical range of both the common warthog and the desert warthog in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia,

Uganda and Kenya). Their findings were summarized in 2002 by Boy in *Swara* 25—1: 20-21. The authors found the desert warthog to occur from Puntland (northern Somalia) southwestward through Somalia and southeastern Ethiopia to central and eastern Kenya. The only sites shown on the map for Kenya were Moyale, El Wak, Merelle ('midway between Archer's Post and Mt Marsabit'), and Mkokoni (in the Kiunga Marine Reserve). The southernmost

How to most readily differentiate the desert warthog from the common warthog in the field (d'Huart & Grubb 2005). See Figures 1 and 2.

1. **Warts**—Adult desert warthog has a hook-shaped wart under the eye. Adult common warthog has a cone-shaped wart under the eye.
2. **Ears**—Ear tips of desert warthog are bent backwards. Ear tips of common warthog are erect.
3. **Suborbital area**—Suborbital area (ie, under the eye) appears swollen in adult desert warthog. In adult common warthog this swelling is absent.
4. **Head**—Head of desert warthog is 'egg-shaped' when viewed from the front. Head of common warthog is slightly 'diabolo-shaped' when viewed from the front.



Figure 1. Adult male common warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* on the open plains of the Laikipia Plateau, central Kenya. Note the cone shaped warts, pointed ears, and the diabolo-shaped head. Photograph by T. M. Butynski & Y. A. de Jong.

Figure 2. Adult male desert warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* in medium dense shrub in Tsavo West National Park, southeast Kenya. Note the flipped-back ears, hooked warts, the broad, egg-shaped head, and the swollen suborbital area (area under the eyes). Photograph by T. M. Butynski & Y. A. de Jong.

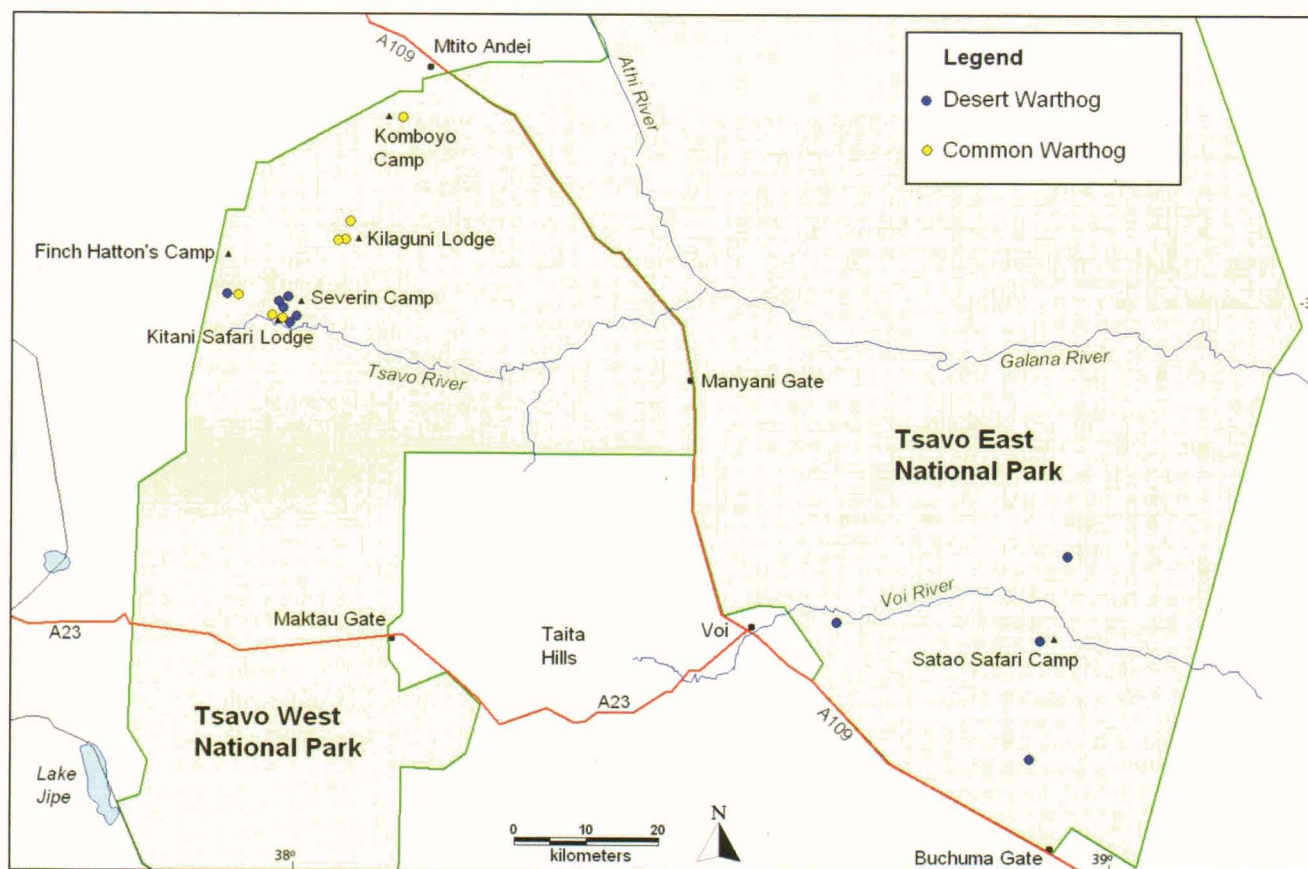


Figure 3. Desert warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* and common warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* localities in Tsavo East National Park and Tsavo West National Park, southeast Kenya.

record for Kenya was from the Kiunga Marine Reserve, about 60 kilometres northeast of Lamu. All records were from north of the Ewaso Ng'iro River and east of the Tana River. They speculated that the two species would be found to overlap in some parts of their range, but found no evidence for this; their data show the shortest distance between common warthog and desert warthog records as 25 kilometres (in Puntland).

During a primate survey in 2005, TMB and YDJ encountered two solitary desert warthogs, 15 and 80 kilometres southwest of Garissa respectively, in medium dense acacia bushland. These encounters are important, as they are the first records of desert warthog west of the Tana River. Two questions remained, however. Are the desert warthog and common

warthog sympatric? How far south does the desert warthog occur?

On 7 June 2007, JC, JF and SBC traversed Tsavo East National Park. Briefed a few days earlier about desert warthog characteristics by TMB and YDJ, they travelled through the high-density tourism areas south of the Voi River, far to the southwest of the nearest confirmed desert warthog locations. Late that afternoon they were startled to find two adult desert warthogs in low scrub on the edge of the Dika Plains, just 13 kilometres north of Buchuma Gate, and managed to take a few photographs before the warthogs turned tail. They had just recorded a new large mammal species for Tsavo East National Park, and a major range extension of over 300 kilometres for the desert warthog!

The next day they returned to the area and located four more desert warthogs only nine kilometres from the Kenya Wildlife Service headquarters at Voi; one adult and three subadults stood their ground long enough for positive identification to be made and

for more photographs to be taken. What struck JC, JF and SBC immediately during these encounters was the overall shape of the animals' heads, the hooked warts, and the flipped-back tip of the ears (see Box 1), all of which are diagnostic, easily-seen field characters of the desert warthog. During this trip, no common warthogs were seen. All photographs were sent to experts for confirmation. Some of these, together with some of our other warthog photographs, are available on a digital map at www.tinyurl.com/warthogMap.

In July 2007, JC returned briefly to Tsavo East National Park for two days. He observed two sounders of desert warthogs—each of four animals—in open shrubland north and south of the Voi River in the vicinity of Satao Safari Camp. Once again, no common warthogs were seen.

In October 2007, JC visited Tsavo West National Park for two days, where desert warthogs were found to be fairly common around Severin Safari Camp and Kitani

Safari Lodge, just to the north of the Tsavo River. Three desert warthogs were seen feeding in an open area along a major tourism circuit, permitting lengthy observation. One of these animals was a subadult male. Subadult desert warthogs, like adults, have ears that are flipped-back at the tips, and broader-based genal warts, allowing them to be differentiated in the field from common warthogs despite them lacking the hooked warts of adult male desert warthogs. During this visit JC also found common warthogs in Tsavo West National Park only a few hundred metres from where he observed desert warthogs.

In April, 2008, TMB and YDJ visited Tsavo West National Park for three days, and encountered common warthogs around Kilaguni Serena Safari Lodge, Komboyo Camp, Kitani Safari Lodge and Severin Safari Camp (including

areas where desert warthogs were seen during the earlier trip by JC). About six kilometres of Finch Hatton's Camp, in low bush on the edge of riverine forest, one group of desert warthogs (one adult male and three subadults) was encountered only 150 metres from six common warthogs. This sighting is not only the farthest range extension for desert warthog (390 kilometres) from Mikoni, the most southern record of d'Huart & Grubb, but it is also the first evidence that the two species of warthogs are sympatric.

Finding desert warthog in Tsavo, and finding them sympatric with common warthog, is exciting news for the species and for Kenya. Tsavo West National Park and Tsavo East National Park can add one more species to their list of large mammals. What further surprises can we expect from this long-overlooked pig?

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Have you seen warthogs in Africa?

To better understand the distribution of Africa's warthogs, we would like to know if you have seen desert warthogs or common warthogs in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya or Tanzania. Details and/or a photograph of your record would be highly appreciated.

The following information is most important

- date of sighting
- species
- name of nearest village or town
- latitude and longitude
- elevation
- habitat

Please send your information and/or photograph to:

Yvonne de Jong
PO Box 149
Nanyuki 10400, Kenya
yvonne@wildsolutions.nl
Thank you!
Your help is much appreciated!

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500	250	7.70	270	8.30	290	8.90	330	10.10
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1500	230	7.10	250	7.70	260	8.00	300	9.20

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500	180	5.50	200	6.10	220	6.80	240	7.40
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Swara—Director's Desk (September, 2008)

You may notice a slight change in style and content in forthcoming editions of *Swara*. For a long time we have been considering adding some more flavour to the magazine's content and include more topical articles revolving around issue that are current and concern the lives of the people of East Africa. Our global members are increasingly becoming more aware of the contemporary problems facing our environment and require reliable up to date information from EAWLS. We hope to fill this void with a modified communications strategy.

With this in mind, we have embarked on a mission to source and include more articles from environmental writers who are actively involved in the respective field. These articles will be an addition to the traditional feature pieces by loyal naturalists and other contributors.

The magazine has also been struggling for a very long time with rising produc-

tion costs. We have been avoiding passing these costs on to our members for obvious reasons and this remains our intent. However at the same time, innovative ways of increasing the revenue will have to be explored to ensure we maintain production quality, for which *Swara* is known. A team has been constituted by Council to recommend ways of addressing this challenge. I hope to bring you good news on this front soon—which may help me to sleep better too!

The EAWLS website is also in the process of being 'modernized' and will have new exciting features on EAWLS projects and other functions of the Society. The latest news on the status of our environment and who is behaving (or more likely not) will be a regular column from yours truly.

Please continue giving us your feedback to help us improve further. If you have ideas for us, please write to our Interim Editor, Bridget McGraw—SwaraEditor@gmail.com.

In my previous contribution on this page I mentioned the plan by proponents of sugar production in Kenya to invade the Tana River Delta and plant acres of sugarcane in this pristine ecosystem. I may have also mentioned that with a group of concerned individuals, which includes members of the local communities, we took the case to court after all the letters and media advocacy got us nowhere fast.

I may not have mentioned is an irony that baffles us. It was only a few years back when the Government strode side by side with us in Court and outside to protest the implementation of an aquaculture project in the Delta and vehemently proposed that the area is a biodiversity hotspot and should be declared a protected site under the auspices of the Ramsar Treaty. Sugar production seems to have become a big 'development' agenda for the East African countries. The same proposals are seriously being considered in Uganda also. The justification is claimed to be the deficit in the local market for domestic consump-

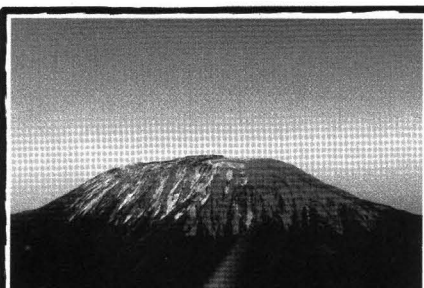
tion.

Ornamental fish, or more popularly known as Aquarium fish, face a threat along the East African coastline. There appears to be an alarming increase in demand for the colorful tiny fish found predominantly along this coastline. Tropical fish dealers supply a global market to stock aquaria in recreation centres, homes and even offices. Sadly, the poor regulatory mechanism and enforcement capabilities among the countries where the fish are found provide a perfect source of a seemingly unlimited supply. The EAWLS joined forces with a group of other concerned organizations and friends as we are embarking on a campaign to raise awareness and gather information vital in instituting controls over the burgeoning industry. Kenya and Tanzania have been recorded to be home to a number of seriously threatened species of the fish, yet we have no idea of their status.

Members will be delighted to learn that the long awaited collection of Imre Loefer's writings is completed and the launch of the book is planned for later this month in Nairobi. The book is aptly titled *Pills, Planes and Politics*. Many will remember Loefer for his provocative writings on exactly these topics. The EAWLS will without doubt stock copies for sale and can also arrange for our overseas members and friends to obtain copies on request.

Finally, a subtle appeal to all our members and friends, EAWLS is overwhelmed with requests for support to small conservation efforts by an increasing number of local community-based organisations (CBOs)—many of which we have encouraged to undertake projects in their areas. We now have a network of such CBOs all over East Africa involved in small-scale initiatives in ecosystems ranging from coastal and marine to arid. The value of such small programmes should not be undervalued. They have notably contributed to backstopping impacts of biodiversity loss. Your support to the EAWLS to help these organisations in their modest efforts is always a welcomed boost.

— Ali A. Kaka



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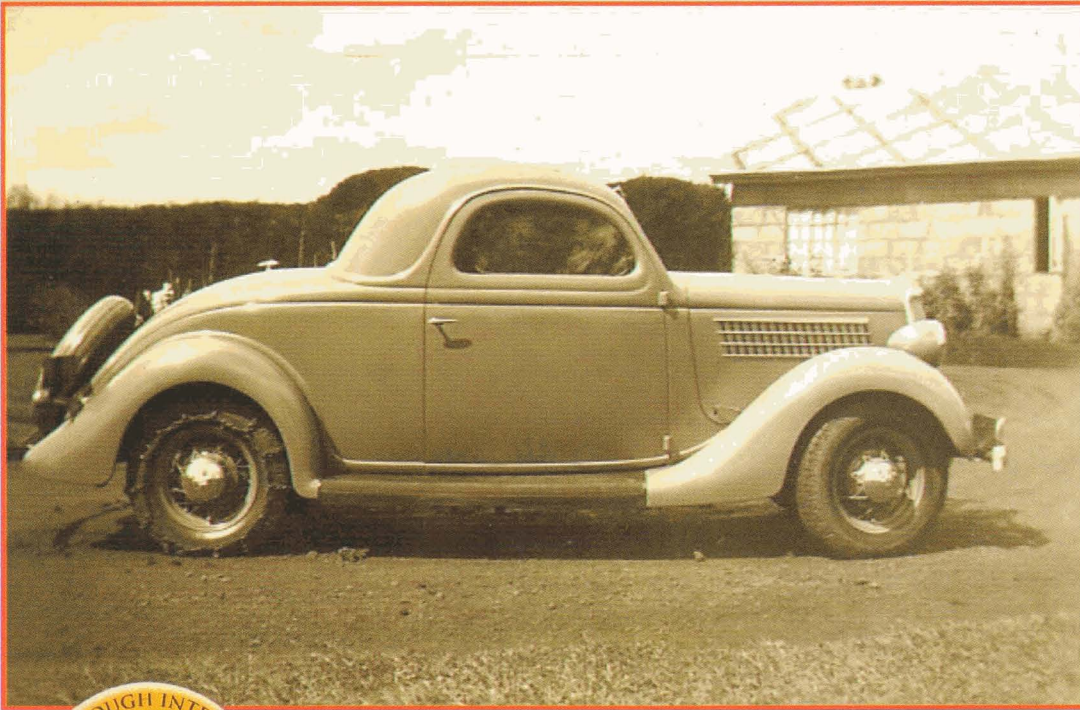
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