

African Wildlife News

Billy Dodson

1961-2009

YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK IN THE AFRICAN HEARTLANDS



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

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

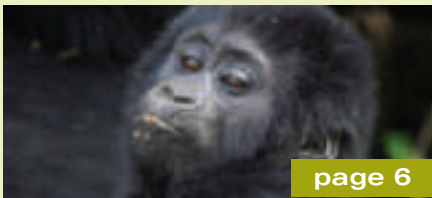
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AWF's Alfred Kikoti

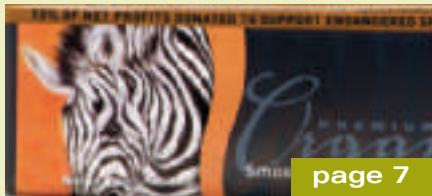
Alfred has collared a total of 22 elephants since 2005 and is using the 30,000 GPS readings he's collected to map and secure critical movement corridors.



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New Arrivals in Virunga

Ten mountain gorillas were born in the region since 2007, despite continued human conflict around their forested habitat.



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Endangered Species Chocolate

Endangered Species Chocolate is partnering with AWF to support species, habitat and humanity.



Craig R. Sholley

The most secretive and elusive of the large carnivores, the leopard is a solitary creature that hunts mostly at night.

Snapshot of a Great Cat

For years, scientists and conservationists have believed that leopards are not in danger. Recent evidence suggests otherwise. But to protect the leopard, as with other species, we must gain a greater understanding of the great cat's behavior—a pretty daunting task given this species is about as secretive as they come.

In an effort to unlock the mysteries of the leopard species, AWF, in conjunction with South African National Parks (SANParks) and Singita Game Reserves set forth to study leopards in Kruger National Park, an area that not only protects leopards but hosts an ideal habitat for the species. Led by AWF's Nakedi Maputla, this work is breaking new ground in leopard conservation.

What's the best way to count a population that travels by night? Leave it to AWF's Leopard Researcher Nakedi Maputla to figure it out.

After some research, Nakedi hypothesized that camera traps—carefully placed cameras that were triggered by animal movement—presented the most promising option for capturing information about the area's leopards.

Nakedi promptly set to work to put this idea to the test, beginning with procuring digital cameras and infrared transmitters from the United States.

“While I was waiting for the cameras to arrive, I started figuring out how to protect the expensive equipment from unknowing hyenas

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Black Rhinos on the Brink

In the 1990s, black rhinos across Africa stood at the brink of extinction because of outright poaching, primarily for rhino horn, which is coveted for its ornamental appeal and presumed healing powers. Thanks to conservation efforts by AWF and other organizations, the population is now making a steady comeback, increasing by 6 percent a year.

Mark Boulton



The successful free-release of ten rhinos from the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary into a protected area marks a major milestone in black rhino conservation in Africa. AWF helped establish Ngulia in the late 1980s.

With member support, AWF helped spur this turnaround by supporting fenced-in rhino reserves and protected zones, including the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary in Tsavo East National Park in Kenya. Ngulia has been so successful that ten rhinos were recently free-released from the sanctuary into a protected area.

AWF had also helped virtually eliminate poaching in Zimbabwe's Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ), located in Hwange National Park. But today, given the country's ever-deepening economic crisis, poaching is again taking a terrible toll. Zimbabwe's black rhino population, which stood at 46 rhinos a year ago, is now nearly half that. And because the country's parks authorities are receiving almost no state funding, anti-poaching patrols lack basic equipment, food, and mobility rations. "Some patrol teams go into the field without any communication radios—which is not only inefficient for stopping well-organized and well-armed poachers, but also poses great risk to their safety," says Jones Masonde, an AWF ecologist. ■



AWF is committed to keeping Zimbabwe's rhinos from being wiped out. A gift of only \$50 can fund food rations for rangers for one day and more can help fund a much-needed new vehicle. Contribute today at www.awf.org/rhinosonthebrink.

Baby Alert in Virunga



Newborn gorillas are tiny, weighing about 4 pounds. Their movements are as awkward as those of human infants, but their development is roughly twice as fast. At 3 or 4 months, the gorilla infant can sit upright and can stand with support soon after. It stays close to its mother until about 3.5 years, when it becomes more independent.

Congratulations are in order for a lot of proud—if hirsute—new moms and dads in Virunga National Park. According to a census conducted earlier this year, ten mountain gorillas were born there since 2007, despite continued human conflict all around their forested habitat. A total of only 720 mountain gorillas remain in the world, half of which live in the Virunga Volcanoes.

With support and assistance from AWF through the International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP), a coalition of AWF, Fauna & Flora International and the World Wide Fund for Nature, park rangers conducted the census from November 2008 through late January 2009. The results showed a population increase of 12.5 percent in habituated gorillas (gorillas used to the presence of humans) since August 2007, when the last survey was completed.

While the births are good news, the area is still roiling from continued rebel activity in and around the park. The gorillas, sadly, are caught in the crossfire. But, says IGCP Director Eugène Rutagarama, "Having seen the gorilla's resilience, we look forward to a bright future of thriving communities, both gorilla and human, living in peace alongside each other." ■



Craig R. Shrolley

Until it can walk, this young mountain gorilla will ride on its mother's back clinging to her fur as she moves through the dense forest.