



Lewa's Mission Statement

The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy works as a catalyst for the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. It does this through the protection and management of species, the initiation and support of community conservation and development programmes, and the education of neighbouring areas in the value of wildlife.

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Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

Intro by the Chairman

IAN CRAIG AND THE FUTURE VISION AT LEWA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY

Shortly after its establishment as a wildlife sanctuary some 25 years ago, I was privileged to have visited Lewa and to have seen it in its very formative state as it began to transform from a beef ranch into a wildlife conservancy.

The decision to embark on such an ambitious project required an enormous leap of faith on the part of the Craig family. They were supported by Anna Merz, whose passion for rhino and matching generosity, enabled the Craigs' to establish Kenya's first rhino sanctuary on privately owned land.

Ian became the Conservancy's first Director. He, in turn, was given guidance and support from a dedicated Board and a most able group of young executive field managers and staff. It fell to Ian, to formulate policy and to give direction while carefully articulating his "big picture" vision for Lewa and its neighbourhood, well into the future.

As there had never been anything like the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy anywhere in Africa before, there simply was no precedent to follow. Everything from high security fencing to an elephant gap in the Northern most boundary to dedicated fundraising was "new ground" for Lewa.

Having experienced the purely pleasurable side of visiting the LWC from 1991 - 1998, I was privileged to be invited to serve on the Board in 1998. Over the past decade we, the Board Members, have worked at close quarters with the Lewa Team and have experienced in the process, a level of commitment, dedication and visionary leadership which would be hard to match anywhere.

Proper conservation measures coupled with unique eco-tourism initiatives are now widely practiced on the Northern Rangelands, comprising most of Lewa's neighbours immediately to its North. This has brought substantial new wealth to these communities, thanks largely to Ian's vision and tireless energy. None of this could have happened of course without a competent team back at the home base without whose support, much of this would simply not be possible.

Hardly a week goes by nowadays without a new proposal for Lewa's assistance in conserving rangeland or uplifting Kenya's many rural communities, reaching Ian's desk, such is the high esteem and trust in which he is held.

Having brought the LWC to the magnificent conservation model it represents, Ian now has a new position as Strategic Advisor serving each of Ol Pejeta, Northern Rangelands Trust as well as the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

It is also time for me to hand over the reins which I do with a great deal of satisfaction and expectation. LWC has taken some giant strides in its many new initiatives. From its humble beginnings as a cattle ranch it has risen mightily to take up a position amongst Africa's very best wildlife refuges. I have found it most rewarding to have played just a tiny role in this mammoth effort. The Board Members, executives, managers and staff are a formidable team. I am very proud to count them amongst our best friends and colleagues and wish Ian and his family and the whole of Lewa, the very best of luck in their future endeavours.

Finally, to Jane, whose dedication and support never wavered, may I say how fortunate Ian and Lewa are to have had you out there "batting for us" through thick and thin.

As one chapter closes another one opens. The next challenge is to make Lewa the finest tourist destination in East Africa to complement its wildlife experience.

Pat Goss - Chairman Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

Tributes to Ian Craig

By Anna Merz

I first met Ian in 1982 on Lewa when my husband and I went as tourists to the camp run by David and Delia. He took me on foot to watch elephants and the calmness of all the animals meant they were not under pressure by poachers. We discussed my ideas about rhinos and I felt that perhaps here at last they might bear fruit. Over the next decade Ian proved to be endlessly helpful and supportive especially in matters concerning security. He also entered with vast enthusiasm into trying to capture and bring back the Ngare Sergoi Sanctuary as it was then known, some of the remnant black rhino in the vast area to the north of Lewa. To kill rhinos is easy with AK47s, snares, pitfalls, poison and the other means of destruction employed by Homo sapiens against creatures from whom we wish to make profit, or dispose off. Catching them alive and without injury is quite another thing. Now the Lewa team is highly trained and professional. Then we learnt the hard way and by painful experience, and had some pretty exciting moments in process.

By 1991 it was obvious that even the 10,000 acre sanctuary that we had by then was not adequate for our growing numbers of rhinos so the idea of turning the whole of Lewa into a wildlife conservancy was mooted. The idea though well known in South Africa, was new to Kenya. As far as I was concerned this was a brilliant idea for the rhinos but the land was not mine. If the conservancy was created it meant that the Craig family would no longer have the final word as to how it was managed. This was a very hard matter to decide and creation of the conservancy owed much indeed to Ian's strong leadership and far sighted vision for the future.

While working for the Game department in Ghana I had the idea of some form of community wildlife management but it foundered because there was no tourist infrastructure to provide a financial incentive. In Kenya it was quite different and Ian was able to develop this concept and take it to the communities to the North of Lewa, first of all Il Ngwesi. Because of his great understanding of the peoples amongst whom he has spent his life, his linguistic abilities and his skill in communicating ideas to them, he has been incredibly successful in creating among them the realization that by protecting wildlife they are also protecting the soil from erosion, earning financial benefits, creating new skills and a new respect for their heritage. The Northern Rangelands Trust would not have been created were it not for Ian's input. Its potential is huge, both within Kenya and beyond its borders. It is to this vital work that Ian now wishes to address all his energies. It is work that few people other than Ian could undertake. I firmly believe it to be of vital importance to the future of wildlife throughout Africa, and perhaps even further afield. Go for it Ian, that is where you are most needed.

