



AFRICAN WILDLIFE

News

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YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK ACROSS AFRICA'S LANDSCAPES



Our mission is to ensure wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.

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A SUCCESSFUL INAUGURAL PHOTO AWARDS CELEBRATION MARKS AWF'S 60TH



Dear AWF Friends,

It was a real joy to spend time with talented photographers, conservation leaders, friends, and colleagues at the first annual Benjamin Mkapa African Wildlife Photography Awards in late October.

Against a backdrop of the stunning photographs on exhibit and the Nairobi National Museum's vibrant colors and displays, the evening was very, very special. But beyond the social and aesthetic aspects, the event was notable for its strategic conservation and communications value.

One of AWF's primary goals for the next decade is to inspire, foster, and support African conservation leadership and engagement. While this goal might be a "soft" one compared to, for example, stopping poachers, it could not be more vital. We knew that an annual global photo competition with a category for youth and categories that speak to Africa's specific wildlife challenges would resonate far beyond the contest at hand.

In addition to honoring photographic achievement in the service of conservation, the Mkapa awards marked the start of AWF's 60th-anniversary commemoration. AWF is using this milestone to highlight our 2020-2030 strategic vision (awf.org/strategic-vision) and to celebrate and re-discover in depth many of our remarkable conservation contributions.

Based on where we are as a continent, and armed with 60 years of experience, AWF has renewed its vision and revised strategic approaches to become a truly global African conservation organization. We have a bold plan to guide us in realizing our vision. Importantly, this plan is responsive to the realities around us — including climate change and a global pandemic.

Throughout the year, as we share more about our strategic vision and our history, I hope you'll feel inspired by our achievements and our commitment and feel proud to be part of the AWF community. This is a critical time for conservation in Africa, but we are more than up to the challenge, and your support and engagement are vital.

My heartfelt thanks, as always, for helping us ensure that wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.

Sincerely,

Kaddu Sebunya
Chief Executive Officer



FIGHTING WILDLIFE CYBERCRIME IN UGANDA

AWF and the Uganda Wildlife Authority collaborated on two criminal investigations in 2021 that disrupted wildlife-trafficking operations and led to the arrests of 33 individuals.

The May 2021 "Fata Poacher 1" operation was conducted within the Murchison Falls Conservation Area, while the "Fata Poacher 2" in June and July focused on Murchison Falls, Queen Elizabeth National Park, and the Kampala and Kibale conservation areas. ("Fata" is colloquial in Uganda for "follow.") During the operations, officers confiscated contraband caches including pangolin scales, bushmeat, and elephant ivory.

AWF's cybercrime program, which began in 2019, has two main objectives: 1) to prevent wildlife trafficking through enhancement of wildlife cybercrime investigations and interventions, and

2) to train and build law enforcers' capacity to fight wildlife cybercrime.

To date, AWF has provided training for over 30 Uganda Wildlife Authority officers in first response and mobile forensics, skills that were instrumental in the two Fata Poacher operations.

- INAUGURAL -

BENJAMIN MKAPA AFRICAN WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

2021 EXHIBITION

AWF launched its 60th anniversary at a colorful reception and awards ceremony honoring the winners of the inaugural Benjamin Mkapa African Wildlife Photography Awards, named in honor of the late former president of Tanzania.

Sixteen winning photographers from across the world attended the ceremony at the Nairobi National Museum. They received honorary certificates and awards for their photo and video submissions to the global competition, which received almost 9,000 entries from 50 countries worldwide, including 10 countries in Africa.

Read more at AWF.ORG/MKAPA-AWARDS



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NOT YOUR PET

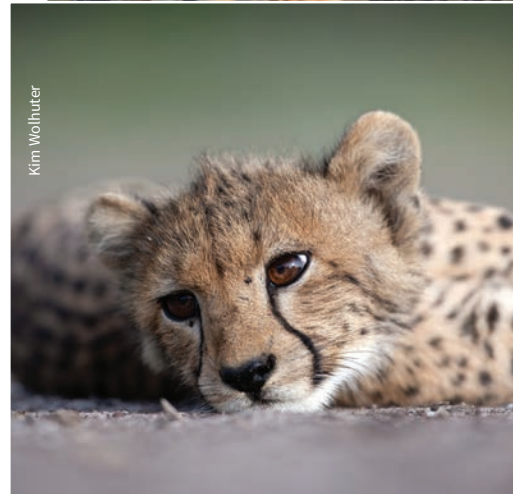
THE RISE OF THE LIVE CHEETAH TRADE

In 1975, 14,000 cheetahs roamed the wild on three continents; today approximately half that remains. Habitat loss and retaliatory killings continuously loom as the largest threats to the big cats, but another danger is rising in popularity and putting cheetahs in peril — the pet trade. While the COVID-19 pandemic saw declines in certain facets of the illegal wildlife trade, no such effect was seen for cheetahs. Instead, advertisements for exotic pets like cheetahs burgeoned during the pandemic.

In Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa, the principal point of capture of cheetahs trafficked into the illegal pet trade, there are estimated to be 2,290 adult and adolescent cheetahs in the wild. But, with conservationists estimating approximately 300 cubs smuggled out each year, it's easy to see how quickly those numbers can drop to regional extinction.

A familiar narrative involves desperate herders killing adult cheetahs in retaliation for a livestock death and then stealing the orphaned cubs to sell. According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, the herder may make \$300 on one cub and the end seller can make up to \$30,000. The loss of the cheetahs from the region though is incalculable, while its impact on the species as a whole, the ecosystems, and the world at large is tremendous.

While it's easy to be lured by a cheetah cub's cuteness, it's important to remember cheetahs are not pets. They are wild animals that have not been domesticated like house cats and can seriously injure people. Furthermore, those cheetah cubs captured for the pet trade are not treated well. An estimated 60 percent of the cubs die in transit — and those intercepted and rescued by authorities were often found to be suffering from maltreatment, malnutrition, and dehydration.



An estimated 60 percent of the cubs die in transit — and those intercepted and rescued by authorities were often found to be suffering from maltreatment, malnutrition, and dehydration.

To stop the trade, AWF petitions governments for increased big cat protections. Our ongoing petition to the US government in support of the Big Cat Public Safety Act has garnered over 44,000 signatures and features messages urging representative backing. To stop the demand, AWF educates people globally about the harms of the pet trade, raising awareness of the cruel conditions these animals face — as well as the environmental destruction eating away at



their habitat. And to improve perceptions of wild cheetahs by those who deal with them most and have the most at stake in human-cheetah conflicts, AWF supports distribution and building of mobile *bomas*. These predator-proof, mobile grazing enclosures keep livestock safe within and cheetahs out, safe from retaliatory killings.

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

What we learned from Kenya's first countrywide wildlife census

Kenya's Tourism and Wildlife Ministry released the results from the first-ever national wildlife census. AWF supported the survey both financially and by providing population counts from our own surveys, helping to establish critical baseline figures that can steer Kenya's future development and conservation plans.

The report makes recommendations, including the replication of the survey every three years to continue monitoring. Animals commonly victimized by the illegal wildlife trade and bushmeat hunting, pangolins, dik diks, and gazelles were identified as needing further support.

Over 36,000 elephants were recorded, a 12-percent population increase since 2014. And that's not the only good news: Rhinos, lions, giraffes, and Grevy's zebras all showed increases in population size.



Wildlife Watch: MEERKAT

Standing 10-14 inches tall and weighing around two pounds, meerkats are known more for their cuteness than any ferocious demeanor.

The meerkat is covered in short fur that varies in hue and matches the animal's geography — from a lighter fallow in the north to a darker sepia tone in the south. Each meerkat has inky horizontal stripes along its back and dark rings beneath its eyes — an adaptation that helps meerkats cope with the sun's intense glare.

But what they lack in size they make up for in numbers, with packs, called mobs, of up to 30 individuals dotting the savannas and open plains of Southern Africa. Mobs are highly cooperative and take turns with tasks such as guard duty or babysitting. Working in shifts ensures every animal has time to forage for insects.

Large numbers also come in handy if meerkats are unable to retreat underground after a guard calls an alarm. Before a predator approaches, the mob will group together, hissing and raising their fur on end in an effort that sometimes fools predators into believing they are facing a single animal larger than they thought.

Meerkats make their homes below ground in burrows that tunnel up to 6 1/2 feet deep. Not stingy in construction, these burrows contain multiple entrances, tunnels, and rooms. One mob can have up to five active burrows.

It isn't just predators meerkats have to worry about, though. As climate change intensifies, weather events like droughts, flooding, wildfires, and extreme temperatures pose more severe and more frequent threats.



While meerkats are currently not endangered, the impacts of climate change are affecting wildlife across the globe, meerkats included. Which is why AWF initiates and hosts global policy dialogues on the impact of climate change and the importance of mitigating the threats posed to wildlife. We also support reforestation and sustainable agriculture efforts designed to mitigate climate change effects.



CAMERA-TRAP SNAPS

How remote camera traps are revolutionizing wildlife conservation

It's a relatively small box. Inside it is a digital camera linked to an infrared motion sensor. When something walks by and triggers the sensor, the camera snaps, capturing the image to store on a local memory card or transmit to its local computer network.

The photographs taken on this camera will mostly be nothing — images of grass and tree branches blown in the wind or unrecognizable blurs. But some of these photos or videos will capture something truly invaluable: wildlife in the wild, behaving as they would when not under the observation of people.

FOCUSING ON CONSERVATION

Camera traps can gather information about population presence, abundance, and trends, as well as individual species behavior and activity. "Working day and night, camera traps are suited for detecting rare species and are ideal for remote areas due to difficult access," said Nung Fominyen, AWF's project officer in Faro, Cameroon.

Researchers use indications of animal presence (paw prints, markings, droppings, etc.) to place the cameras for optimal results. After making sure there is a clear

line of sight from the lens, the installer sets the camera, usually affixing it to a sturdy bush or tree.

The camera traps do emit light and sound that some animals may be aware of; as a result, some of these animals may avoid the traps, while others — big cats in particular — may go closer for inspection. It's not easy for the wildlife to spot the cameras, however, said David Williams, Senior Director of Conservation Geography. "While slight high-pitched sounds made by camera traps are within the hearing range of most mammals, they may not hear them over the near-constant background



Moumouni Ouedraogo



Kelly Boyer

environmental noises (e.g., rustling of leaves in a forest)."

Unfortunately, camera traps are expensive and aren't invincible, especially when set in the wilderness. Animals as large as elephants or as small as ants have been known to damage or destroy the cameras. Sometimes, people will come across them and attempt to tamper with or steal them. Rainstorms and humidity can cause moisture to build up and wreak havoc on the electronics within. But despite these difficulties, camera traps are worthwhile, enabling conservationists to study wildlife in a non-invasive, genuine, and intimate way while creating a permanent record for future study.

DEVELOPING INSIGHTS IN AWF LANDSCAPES

In 2021 the AWF team in Ethiopia's Simien Mountains conducted a camera-trap survey to help study the region's wildlife. The survey was designed to assess mammalian species diversity and how anthropogenic activities influence wildlife distribution as well as provide baseline data for wildlife population monitoring.



Stefan de Greling

Over one week in May 2021, the survey logged 1,131 photos (931 photos were blank — grass and trees blown in the wind, a reality of camera trap surveys no matter how advantageously the camera trap is set up). Regardless, Belayneh Abebe, AWF ecologist in the Simien Mountains landscape, regarded the survey efforts as a success: "[I]n this way much information can be obtained that would otherwise remain unknown, especially on the behavior of rare or nocturnal animals that are not often seen," he said.

The most unexpected, but exciting result of the survey: the recording of a genet — likely an Abyssinian genet — a species not on the known list of mammal species in the park. Abebe added that the camera-trap survey method will enable staff to better monitor wildlife and any threats, helping to ensure proper management and interventions as needed.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Significant findings from camera-trap surveys

In 2008, researchers in Liberia used a camera trap to take the first photo of a wild pygmy hippo in the country, believed to be the second-ever photo of the species.

A camera-trap survey of leopards in the Serengeti revealed that populations were actually at healthy levels. As populations on the whole decline, studies like these emphasize the importance of conservation areas.

In central mainland Equatorial Guinea, camera traps captured the first images of western lowland gorillas in the region in more than a decade.

Researchers have used camera traps in Tanzania's Serengeti and Ruaha National Parks to better understand the severity and spread of a mysterious giraffe skin disease.

In 2021, a camera trap provided the first evidence of a leopard in Cameroon's Campo Ma'an area in 20 years.

Researchers are using artificial intelligence tools to rapidly filter out "blanks" and identify wildlife species and related threats.

In early 2022 a study of wildlife camera traps across four continents, including Africa, found more mammal diversity in areas with protected designation than those without.

GIRAFFES ARE IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY. WE MUST ACT NOW.

In Garissa County, home to over 4,000 giraffes, scores of wildlife were reported dead from Kenya's drought – including giraffes. The continent's overall giraffe population has dropped as much as 40% since the 1980s, but we're working hard to change that. Despite looming threats in the Tsavo-Mkomazi landscape, AWF and our partners have maintained a relatively stable giraffe population due to our proven, comprehensive approach. We can't let the current drought set us back.

There is hope – but only if we act right now. AWF and the Kenya Wildlife Service are collaborating on a major effort to save giraffes. We need 50,000 wildlife advocates to sign a pledge to raise awareness for these life-saving initiatives.

So what do you say? Ready to stick your neck out for these beloved animals? Add your name. awf.org/stand-tall



Billy Dodson

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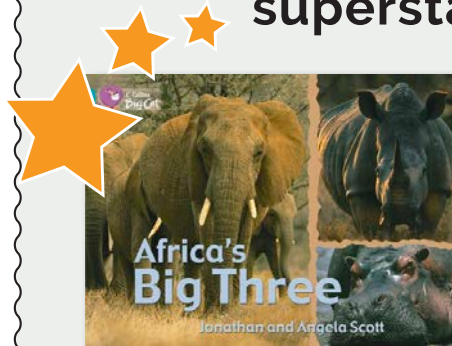


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Meet AWF's five-year-old superstar supporter



After reading a book about the many threats to Africa's "big three" — elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus — Maya Doobay, a five-year-old student in the U.K., felt inspired to raise funds for their protection.

She proceeded to learn over 40 words in two weeks and asked those around her for donations for every word she spelled correctly.

"I'm very sad that people are killing these animals, and I want to raise money to help them," Doobay said in her short YouTube Video.

Her efforts have already raised over £1,300 for AWF.

"It has been amazing to show Maya that one person's efforts, with the support of your community, can make a difference in this world," Maya's mother, Monica Parolalista, said. "She can't believe how many people are supporting her."



Billy Dodson