



AFRICA FORWARD

YEAR IN REVIEW 2016

FROM SCIENCE TO SOLUTIONS

Desert to coast, forest to faucet
Communities to national governments
Traditional local wisdom to new ideas
Boots on the ground to global impact.

THIS IS TNC AFRICA.

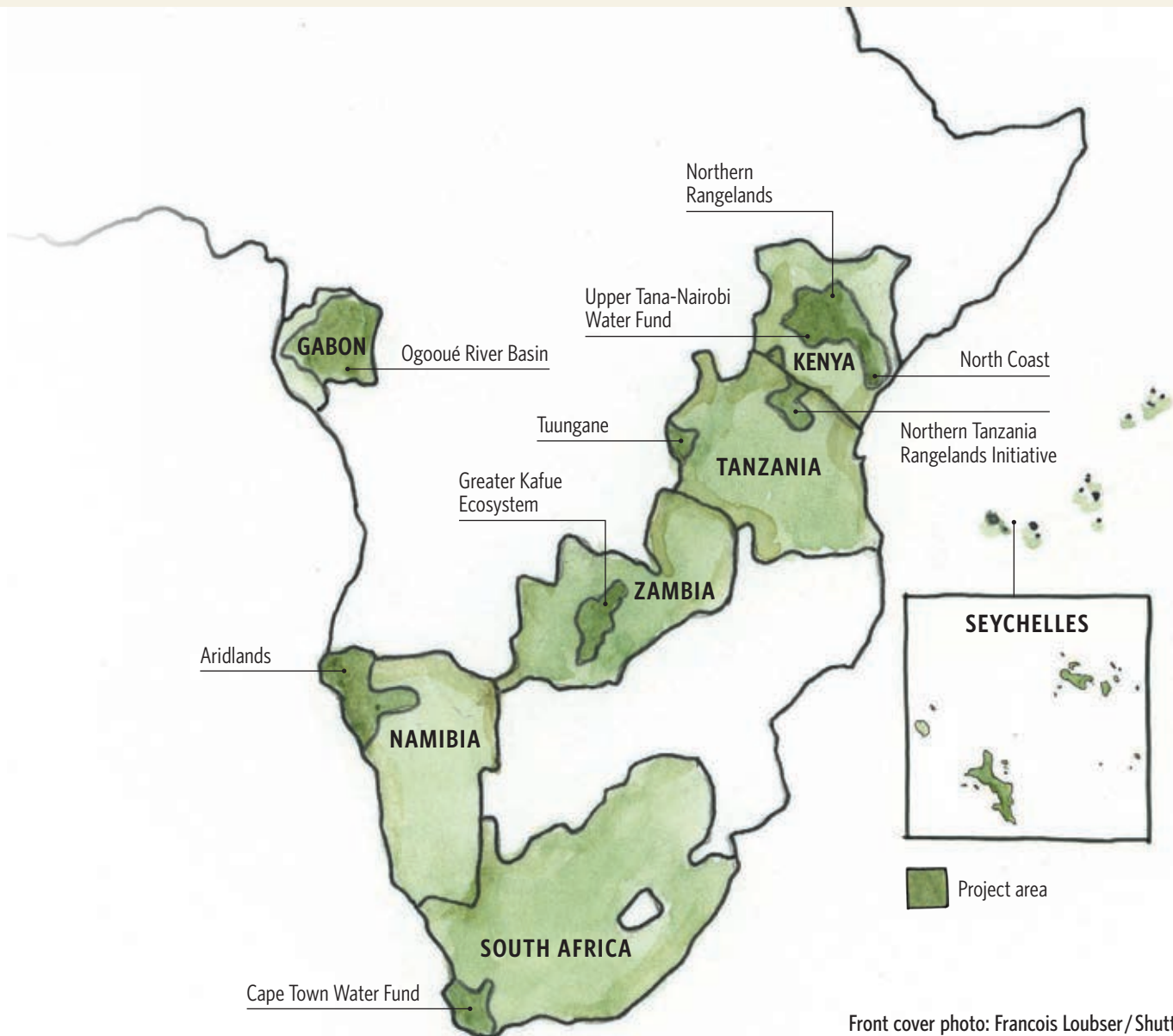
Everything we do is thanks to our generous supporters, resolute partners, and the communities and leaders that inspire and teach us every day.

OUR MISSION

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Wito wa The Nature Conservancy ni kuhifadhi ardhi na maji ambayo maisha yote hutegemea.

La mission de The Nature Conservancy est de protéger les terres et les eaux dont toute vie dépend.



Front cover photo: Francois Loubser / Shutterstock
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Reshmi Lothia



Joey Banks

A BETTER WAY FORWARD

My family's float trip down the Colorado River this June turned out to be more than a chance to connect with nature: We were on a journey through the geologic ages. As I looked up at the walls of the Grand Canyon from our small wooden dory, I was struck by how insignificant humans are compared with this natural wonder. And yet at every river mile, I was reminded of the ways people had significantly altered this intricate hydrological system.

Since the Glen Canyon Dam was built in 1963, the Colorado River has not functioned naturally. Fish that need warm, muddy water are now at risk of extinction, and sandy beaches no longer form. The great rapids of the river have been tamed by a mighty wall of concrete. Despite this huge cost to nature, the reservoir formed by the dam now stands half-empty.

It makes you wonder whether there isn't a better way.

Africa's booming energy requirements make it a target for massive dam development, and Gabon is in the bull's-eye. Just like the American Southwest in the mid-1900s, Gabon is wild and intact. A low population density and a conservation-minded government have helped protect its forests and retain free-flowing rivers. It is as it once was.

Gabon is growing, and I worry about the future. As with everywhere we work, we need to be realistic that we can't hold development back. But we can help the people of a country find a way forward that is better than the past. That's why we're providing Gabon with the science it needs to site and design dams that provide its citizens with power while also allowing for natural flows.

But it's not just more dams in Africa's future: Massive ports threaten busy fisheries, modern highways crisscross pathways created by generations of stomping elephants, and ancient dirt is turned over to create new farms.

Our time to act is now.

By working together — with governments, NGOs, and communities that have not always had a voice in the process — we can find a balance between this unprecedented growth and the wildness that has been the natural hallmark of this continent.

It's easy to feel insignificant when you're sitting at the base of the Grand Canyon or in the middle of a Gabonese rainforest. But I hope that our collective actions will mean something to Africa's lands and waters, and the wild things that depend on them, including all of us.

—DAVID BANKS, Regional Managing Director,
The Nature Conservancy, Africa Program



KENYA

A BETTER WAY TO DO CONSERVATION: CREATING CHAMPIONS FOR NATURE BY IMPROVING LIVES

Across 10 million acres, we are working with partners, chiefly the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), to innovate, strengthen, and spread a model that puts communities at the center of conservation.

TNC Kenya Director MUNIRA BASHIR explains:

“This is where TNC started in Africa, northern Kenya, my home. Here, improving lives is the key to achieving conservation results that will last.

I have seen the proof myself: If you provide communities with incentives and greater power to work together to use their resources sustainably, they become stewards of nature.

Thanks to our supporters, we’re helping provide the knowledge, tools, and resources that communities need in order to take the lead.”

A BETTER WAY TO DO BUSINESS

OceanWORKS is a pilot project of NRT-Trading on Kenya’s north coast that enables fishermen to make more money with fewer fish, reducing over-harvesting on near-shore reefs.

Participant MOHAMED BWANAHERI KASSIM, Pate Marine Community Conservancy, now has guaranteed access to buyers in urban markets with his higher-dollar product:

“Fishing is my only source of income. I have raised my family of four kids through fishing. Now that I have ice and cooler boxes from the conservancy, I can fish in deeper waters, where I can get bigger fish. I am now getting up to \$2 USD per kilogram compared with the \$1.25 we usually get.

The ocean is our farm and if we take care of it, it will take care of us. With this kind of system, bad fishing methods would be reduced.”

Another NRT-Trading program supported by TNC is BeadWORKS, which empowers women to increase their income by making and selling jewelry and household decor, thereby creating incentives to support conservation. This year, as



volunteer director of strategic marketing, TNC supporter Joanna Brown secured new distributors in the U.S., which will bring transformative benefits to more than 1,000 women.

SARANTO LEKOLOI, Kalama Community Conservancy, became a BeadWORKS entrepreneur this year. After receiving a few months’ salary, she was able to buy food for her seven children and add to her husband’s savings for their school fees. But when she found she had a little extra, she decided to buy her first phone:

“It’s as if I was deaf and blind before, and now I can hear and see. All the news that I never knew before, from friends and family who are many days’ walk away, I hear it through my phone.”

The NRT Youth Entrepreneurship Fund integrates microfinance, peace building, and rangeland management in community conservancies.

SHARIN LEPETA, Kalama Community Conservancy, is a young Samburu warrior who received \$160 to expand his taxi business:

“If you have no cattle except your father’s, you go to your neighbors and take their animals. But now we can see that there are other ways to earn an income and build your own livestock without rustling. The Borana [traditional rivals of the Samburu] were taught about microfinance last year. We suspect that they are now too busy with these activities, and making money, to come to fight us. We need to catch up.”



Ami Vitale



Ami Vitale



Stanislav Lvovsky / Flickr



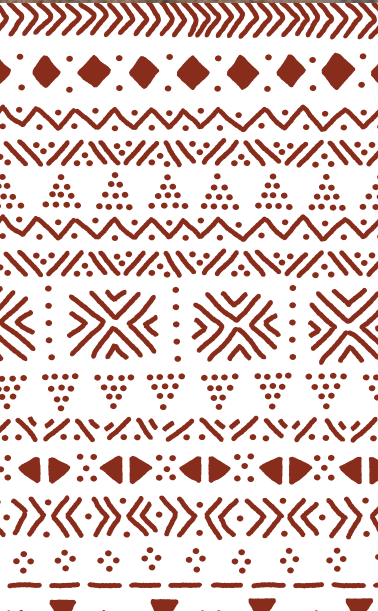
Kenneth K. Coe



Ami Vitale

POPULATION REBOUND: The Ishaqbini Community Conservancy’s hirola sanctuary, established with funding from TNC donors, doubled its population in just over three years: A hirola born in June became its 100th resident.

POACHING DECLINE: The proportion of illegally killed elephants in NRT conservancies was reduced from a high of 81 percent in 2012 to 38 percent in 2015. Peer-reviewed science found that community-based conservation may be one of the most effective ways to reduce poaching.



TOM LALAMPAA, TNC Africa Council member and NRT Chief Programs Officer, became the first African to win the prestigious Bright Award, given annually by Stanford University to an environmental pioneer.

“As conservationists we are trying to get back to traditional systems, trying to revive planned grazing, and improving the health of rangelands for both wildlife and livestock.

Profit and peace are both key to making sure that our wild places will be sustained for the benefit of wildlife, and more importantly, for the people who live here.”



LOISABA CONSERVANCY

WE'RE LEARNING FROM PAST SUCCESSES TO BUILD AN EVEN BETTER FUTURE FOR CONSERVATION

At first glance, Loisaba Conservancy appears like classic TNC land conservation: using financial and real estate acumen to protect 56,000 acres of spectacular habitat.

But Loisaba is much more. It is a crucial piece in a conservation puzzle that links together millions of acres of protected land including Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Northern Rangelands Trust's community conservancies. The intent is for Loisaba to become a proving ground of innovative conservation initiatives for the next generation.

Green Design: Loisaba's new tented camp, which offers stunning views of Mt. Kenya, was recognized in the Mindful Design category at the PURE Travel Show.

A Lighter Footprint: Loisaba is committed to low-impact tourism for its guests. Features include 100 percent solar power for tourism and ranch headquarters, greywater recycling systems for irrigation, and use of a "communal cooker," which turns waste into energy and reduces the need for charcoal or fuel wood in the staff kitchen. The tented camp was awarded a silver eco-rating from Eco-Tourism Kenya.

Valuable Neighbors: Ewaso Lions held a five-day Lion Kids Camp at Loisaba for 24 local children to learn about wildlife, conservation, and coexisting with large carnivores. Loisaba provides ongoing support to neighboring communities for education, health care, and community-driven enterprises.





NEW RESEARCH AT LOISABA

As research revealed that Africa's giraffe population had plummeted by more than 40 percent in the last 20 years, conservationists began scrambling for answers. A new program at Loisaba and Namunyak conservancies seeks to discover the threats to reticulated giraffes through research on pastoralists' interactions with them, the impact of livestock, and their movements, tracked with GPS and camera traps. Ecologist David O'Connor of San Diego Zoo Global is leading the collaboration that includes TNC, Northern Rangelands Trust, and Giraffe Conservation Foundation.

TNC Africa: Why are giraffes disappearing?

DAVID O'CONNOR: The majority of giraffes don't live in formally protected areas, but on land they share with people. As infrastructure development increases, coupled with climate chaos, formerly connected habitats are being fragmented, so giraffes can't move around as freely to access food and water. They are also competing for shared resources with increasing numbers of livestock. In areas where there is overgrazing, the topsoil can wash away, and the land is lost to wildlife as well as livestock.

"When I was growing up, there were a lot of giraffes. Now there aren't many. But they are important to communities — tourists want to see giraffes, so they create jobs. This program is creating awareness about their decline and measures to ensure that people do not kill them. Local scouts are the best tool for spreading the word."

—SYMON MASIATINE (pictured top left) leads the Giraffe Guards, six local pastoralists who run the daily operations of this research at Loisaba and NRT's Namunyak Conservancy.

In addition, giraffes are comparatively easy to kill. Consumption of bushmeat is patchy: Some tribes such as the Maasai or Samburu don't use much bushmeat, while giraffe meat is prized among other tribes.

TNC: Has this happened suddenly . . . or have we just not been paying attention?

O'CONNOR: Sadly, like most other large animals, giraffes have likely been declining in number for a while. But giraffe research has increased over the past decade, and the detection of these trends has helped increase the priority for conservation interventions.

TNC: How will this program help address the issue?

O'CONNOR: Because only a small percentage of giraffes' range is in formally protected areas, their coexistence with people is central to preventing their extinction. So what's most exciting about this approach is that it's community-led.

Our hope is that engaging, training, and empowering communities to monitor giraffe and livestock movements, as well as increasing de-snaring and anti-poaching efforts, will create an easily replicated model.

Also, knowing where giraffes are and when they are there is vital to informing conservation management and in allocating protection efforts.

TNC: How could additional funding help scale up this program?

O'CONNOR: We'd like to engage more communities that want to take ownership of their giraffe conservation.

And with giraffe lovers from around the world supporting these programs, we hope to turn the tide for giraffes while bringing benefits to local communities.



TANZANIA

TNC IS BRINGING PARTNERS TOGETHER TO HELP COMMUNITIES IN AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

TNC writer MEGAN SHEEHAN reflects on a recent trip to Tanzania:

“Within 24 hours of my arrival to Tanzania, I watched the future of its wildlife cross a road.

The hot African sun shone down as about 20 elephant moms and babies ambled across a dirt road in Tarangire National Park. It was hard not to feel that this moment symbolized a hopeful future for this species, because I know that African elephants are in peril.

And yet here in front of our truck was a healthy herd defying the statistics. Tarangire is the only place in Tanzania with a growing elephant population, but as I learned that week, much of the reason for its success lies outside its borders:

The future of Tanzania’s wildlife is people.

As Tanzania grows, so does the demand for land, energy, water, and food. Agrarian tribes and agricultural investors are moving farther into traditionally pastoral areas. And pastoral tribes will sometimes convert their land to agriculture as a means to claim it.

These changes are dissecting long-established grassland corridors used by wildlife and pastoralists alike, and they are creating conflicts between people and toward the wild animals they share the land with.

So how do we balance development with the world’s irreplaceable species?

Conservation in Tanzania requires understanding complex relationships among people, wildlife, and governments. This is where TNC’s strengths come in.

The Northern Tanzania Rangelands Initiative (NTRI) convenes 10 diverse organizations to accomplish a common goal: to ensure landscapes benefit people and wildlife. TNC is filling gaps in expertise and helping partners collaborate efficiently.

A key component of NTRI’s work is helping communities gain communal rights over traditional lands. These land titles allow communities to define and enforce the activities that are permitted there and to retain control of the very resources they need to survive.

Science and technology are helping, too. For example, when the borders of Tarangire were drawn in 1970, wildlife migration routes were relatively unknown. Now TNC’s Alphonse Mallya can create maps that show park boundaries and wildlife corridors. This science helps communities create sustainable land-use plans, such as where and when to graze their livestock, and officially designate those areas to prevent conversion to agriculture.

A big-picture view is also what it will take to get things right in this shifting landscape. All 10 NTRI partners — each bringing something unique to the table — have the best shot at making a difference for the future of Tanzania.”



Roshini Lodhia

AMPLIFYING OUR IMPACT IN TANZANIA

Communal Rights: Since 2015, NTRI partners and communities have secured legal rights to 479,537 acres through Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy.

Expanding Horizons: NTRI received a grant from USAID to launch the Endangered Ecosystems-Northern Tanzania (EENT) project. EENT is expanding NTRI’s geographic scope and capacity to build resilient communities and ecosystems.

Sustainable Agriculture: TNC Global Director of Agriculture DAVID CLEARY on growth in Tanzania’s breadbasket:

“Major strides have been made over the last decade in reducing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, and incomes and crop yields are rising steadily in many places. That’s good news, but it raises issues, too. Higher yields mean greater profits from clearing land, which puts more pressure on wildlife habitat and water catchments.

Climate change and steady population growth are pushing people into new areas. There’s nothing we can do to stop this, nor would we want to — people need to grow food. But we can bring the science needed to balance conservation and agricultural development. These are large landscapes, and TNC can help make room for both.”



Roshini Lodhia

GIFTS WITHOUT BORDERS

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS UNLOCK NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Donations without restriction to specific projects enable staff to nimbly direct resources toward the greatest return on investment. For example, when TNC played a lead role in securing a \$12.4 million grant for NTRI from USAID, the required small match of private philanthropy was supported by unrestricted funds.

A new challenge grant from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust matches qualifying gifts to the Our World campaign. Longtime TNC supporters STUART AND JOANNA BROWN recently made such a gift to TNC Africa:

“My grandmother Sally Brown was an extraordinary naturalist. She put a love for nature in my DNA. She would always say, ‘We need the smartest, most passionate people working on these very big problems.’ That is something Joanna and I have found consistently across TNC: smart and passionate people.

To me, an investment in TNC is the best decision that a donor could make because of the effectiveness of the work, the quality of the staff, and the strategic places they choose to work. There is so much work to do in Africa, and I’ve only seen a sliver of it. I’m excited that our gift could help TNC move the needle in Africa.”



Roshini Lodhia



Kenneth K. Coe



Kenneth K. Coe

ZAMBIA

TNC IS HELPING REVIVE ZAMBIA'S "SLEEPING GIANT"

While an astonishing 41 percent of Zambia's lands are designated as protected areas, the country struggles with the resources, science, and expertise needed to manage them. By strengthening management in and around Kafue National Park — a wilderness area the size of New Jersey — TNC is creating a national model of success.

TNC Africa Council member KEN COE shares his experience:

"At the lonely airstrip at Ngoma, cut amongst a still-virgin miombo forest, it is hard to fathom that once, there were regularly scheduled flights here from Lusaka and Livingstone, and that Kafue National Park was *the* must-see destination.

What happened to Kafue is a story all too familiar in many other parts of Africa: apathy leading to degradation leading to loss of visitor numbers — each element following the other, resulting in an uncontrolled downward spiral.

But hope, as we all know, springs eternal in Africa.

With investments from private and public funders, old roads and bridges have been rehabilitated and new ones built; ranger patrols have intensified; and visitor numbers are increasing steadily. Lodges, by their very presence, are providing a natural deterrent to poaching.

If there is any doubt that responsible tourism plays a role in the protection of wilderness areas,

Kafue provides the answer. For example, around Nanzhila Plains Camp, wildlife numbers are improving every year, from sable to cheetah. The black cotton soil plains — locally called *dambos* — are now strewn with large herds of zebras, smaller herds of wildebeests, and many pairs of common reedbuck and oribis.

It is not that long ago that some campers were reporting not hearing — much less seeing — any game in this formerly derelict part of Kafue.

Once again, wildlife proves its surprising resilience."

SAFEGUARDING ZAMBIA'S FUTURE

Security Investments Pay Off: An aerial survey managed by TNC found that elephant populations are on the rise in Kafue, where we are helping expand and strengthen security patrols. Funding for the survey was provided by Vulcan Inc. as part of the Great Elephant Census, a Paul G. Allen project.

Securing Water: Scoping for a water fund positioned TNC to help establish the Lusaka Water Security Initiative (LuWSI), a public-private partnership that seeks to secure the city's water supply through conservation interventions in the Lukanga Swamp, Kafue Flats, and groundwater sources.

Preserving Habitat: Increased early burning in Kafue National Park has reduced the scale of more destructive late season fire by nearly 1 million acres.



ELEPHANTS

BY WORKING HOLISTICALLY, WE'RE HELPING THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT POPULATION SURVIVE

TNC China Board of Trustees member and renowned artist Zeng Fanzhi hosted an art exhibit in Beijing to raise awareness about the illegal wildlife trade. With support from Internet giant Tencent, an opening event brought together dozens of influential people to discuss how to educate consumers about the elephant poaching crisis and the true origins of ivory.

H.E. First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, MARGARET KENYATTA, provided video remarks:

“Out of 500,000 elephants in Africa, more than 100,000 have been killed in the past three years. This means my own grandchildren may never see wild elephants — a thought almost too painful to imagine. The high price of ivory is recognized as the principal driver of illegal trade.

Ivory may appear beautiful on the surface but it is tainted by the story behind it — a story of cruelty to animals, of crime and terror, and destruction of nature. At this very moment there are wild elephants in Africa that are seconds away from a poacher’s bullet. But with your help, I know that we can save them.

Those of you gathered here today have tremendous influence and capacity to help us tell this story to the world. Thank you for stepping forward to be champions for elephants, rhinos, and other wildlife species.”



RAISING AWARENESS: With the support of our sponsor C. F. Martin and Co., the #SaveElephants campaign has reached millions of people globally through social media. We built on the success of last year’s Elegram Project by creating and promoting a mosaic of thousands of the handmade elephants (“elegrams”) that were submitted by people around the world, overlaid on a painting by Kenyan artist Shiku Wangombe (pictured above).

PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

Demand: Tencent staff visited Kenya to learn about TNC’s elephant protection work and then launched a social media campaign in China to raise awareness about the poaching crisis.

Security: Partner Honeyguide is helping farmers in Tanzania safely redirect elephants away from crops with tools like flashlights and chili powder instead of spears. Last year 200 crop protection teams, like the one pictured above, used this “elephant alarm system” to avert more than 900 elephant raids.

Habitat: TNC supported Save the Elephants in collaring 30 elephants in northern Kenya. Data from their movements help us pinpoint the most important places for security deployment and will help direct new road and rail developments away from movement corridors.

TUUNGANE

PEOPLE, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT: WE'RE TACKLING LINKED CHALLENGES IN WESTERN TANZANIA

On the shores of Lake Tanganyika, people who survive on \$1.25 per day are racing to keep up with their growing families by using destructive fishing methods and expanding farms into forests that are home to 93 percent of Tanzania's chimpanzees. We're teaming up with health organization Pathfinder International through the Tuungane Project ("let's unite" in Kiswahili) to empower communities with alternatives to create healthier families, forests, and fisheries.

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

330 "Model Households" are educating by example — setting agricultural plots away from the lake and installing hand-washing stations. TNC staff also work with community volunteers to stage dramas that educate through entertainment (pictured at right).

17,022 women of reproductive age (about 54 percent) are receiving family planning counseling and contraceptives.

8 new Village Land Use Plans earmark 228,000 acres as village forest reserves that protect key chimp habitat.

13 of the 17 coastal villages have established Beach Management Units (BMUs) to enact their own sustainable fishing regulations, such as outlawing beach seines that drag in juvenile fish and eggs.

RICHARD NKAYAMBA leads Buhingu village's BMU, which recently set aside 1.2 square miles of a near-shore fish breeding area as a no-take zone:

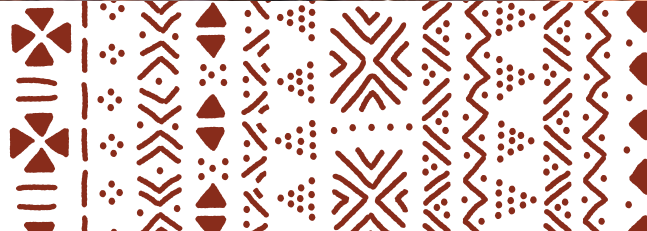
"Before the Tuungane Project, there had been no education about conservation, only a warning from the elders that the current trends would end up destroying the lake.

The fact that everyone could see their catch was getting smaller each year made it easier for the communities to accept the idea of the BMU. In this zone, beach seines are almost completely gone, and I feel confident that that's why we are seeing a higher catch this season."





Ami Vitale



Dejoviel / Shutterstock



Ami Vitale

FRESH WATER

DRAWING ON SCIENCE AND PROVEN TOOLS, WE'RE DESIGNING FRESHWATER SOLUTIONS THAT DELIVER FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE ACROSS AFRICA

After launching Africa's first water fund in Nairobi in 2015, TNC scientists analyzed more than 30 African cities to compile *Sub-Saharan Africa's Urban Water Blueprint*, which reveals where water funds could deliver the greatest returns for people and nature. Now, staff — including FRED KIHARA, who leads the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund — are busily implementing the results to take this proven model to scale:

“Cape Town, South Africa, got top marks in the blueprint. The native fynbos habitat within the city has three times more plant species per area than tropical rainforests, and conservation here would lower water treatment costs for the city.

Removing invasive plants and protecting the aquifer recharge zone near a disadvantaged part of Cape Town would also improve water security and create local jobs. That made a compelling case, so we are collaborating with the Cape Town government and local NGOs to start a new water fund.

With this work, we have the chance of a lifetime. TNC alone cannot meet the demands of a thirsty continent, but we can create examples of success and equip others to run with this model. We have started that work with partners like WWF. That's how I believe we can transform the way that Africa, and the world, manage water.”

SCIENCE THWARTS ALIEN INVASION

Thanks to the swift action of the Lake Tanganyika Authority — using a scientific analysis provided by TNC and Notre Dame University scientists — Lake Tanganyika is safer from alien attack. The four countries bordering the lake agreed to ban non-native Nile tilapia from caged aquaculture and recommended native Tanganyikan tilapia as a safe alternative.

In more than 80 percent of countries that introduced Nile tilapia, these invasive fish hurt the native fishery. Lake Tanganyika — a global biodiversity hotspot that holds more water than North American Great Lakes Michigan, Superior, and Ontario combined — also provides more than 1 million people with their main source of nutrition and income. Science saves the day!

SEYCHELLES

WE'RE PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE TO SOLVE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES ON A NATIONAL SCALE

Last year TNC led negotiations for Seychelles' debt swap. Now we're leading the design of a marine spatial plan, an expert analysis of data from all sectors that will guide government leaders in balancing conservation goals and development needs.

JP ADAM, Minister of Finance, Trade, and Blue Economy for Seychelles, explains its importance:

"As a country that's 99 percent ocean, we take very seriously our role as one of the planet's blue guardians. The debt-for-adaptation deal will contribute significantly to our climate adaptation efforts and maintain the country's economic health.

The marine spatial plan, which covers the country's entire Exclusive Economic Zone, will allow us to maximize our country's 'blue economy,' and ensure that our waters can provide for the Seychelloise people and contribute to the marine health of the Indian Ocean for the long term."



NAMIBIA

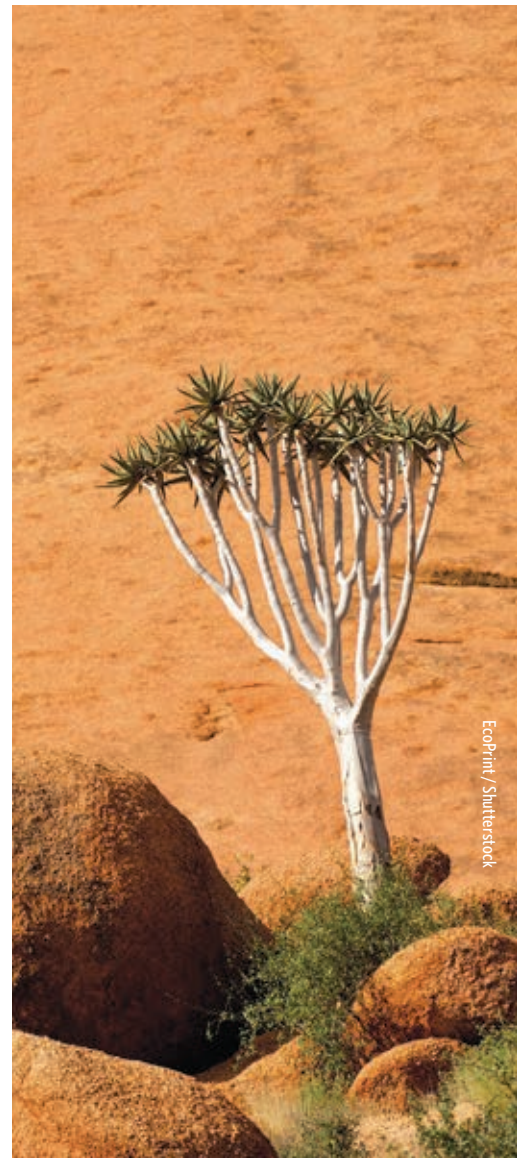
WE'RE HELPING SAVE THE ENDANGERED BLACK RHINO AND PROTECTING A VAST DESERT LANDSCAPE

TNC Africa Conservation Director MATT BROWN shares the importance of partnering with Save the Rhino Trust to protect Namibia's wild, open spaces:

"The wildness of nature calls to me. Recently, I was in a protected area adjacent to the Namib-Naukluft National Park, a 12-million-acre park with mostly wilderness designation. As the golden sun set behind the sandstone hills, leaving an afterglow that defines peace and serenity, I realized that there was nothing — no roads, no fences, no people — between me and the sun setting into the Atlantic Ocean, 100 kilometers away. Typically, we see a different kind of nature: Central Park in New York City bordered by Fifth Avenue, a wildlife conservancy bound by overgrazed rangelands in Kenya, or marine parks adjacent to bustling ports.

But here in Namibia, nature has no boundaries.

It's no wonder that Namibia is still wild: It boasts the world's oldest desert, an uninhabitable coastline, and only 2.1 million people. Twenty national parks and 82 community wildlife conservancies cover 34 percent of its surface area. This significant investment in conservation helps balance our growth and pressure on natural resources in other locations. I feel it is our duty to help keep that balance and to protect these last wild places on Earth."





Michal Jirouš / Shutterstock



Hemis / Alamy Stock Photo



GABON

GABON'S PRISTINE NATURE PROVIDES A BLANK SLATE — WE'RE HELPING THE COUNTRY GROW THE RIGHT WAY FROM THE START

Development is coming quickly to the world's second-most-forested country, but new maps created by TNC scientists and collaborators will help the Gabonese government balance conservation with future growth.

ALLISON ALDOUS, freshwater scientist for TNC Oregon, recounts the mapping expedition in the Bas-Ogooué wetlands:

“From the moment I landed, I could feel the importance of water. Everywhere we went, people were fishing, tying fishnets, selling fish, or eating fish.

I've been a wetland ecologist for 24 years, and I've never experienced a system so wild and verdant as the Bas-Ogooué. It's rare to see a large expanse of wetland that has largely not been diked, dredged, dammed, diverted, contaminated, or harvested.

The mazes of waist-high water, dense vines and trees, and mucky soil — not to mention the threat of hippos lurking behind every bend — made it really challenging to walk transect lines on foot. So instead, we took to the sky with a drone.

We are working in Gabon at a very critical juncture in its history, and it has the opportunity to do development well. But without the right science, new palm oil plantations, mines, or logging operations may threaten sensitive areas important for endangered animals like slender-snouted crocodiles and western lowland gorillas.”

MAKING HISTORY

Headquarters Agreement: Gabon's Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially granted TNC's permit to operate in the country and pursue a joint vision: to find the balance between sustainable development and conservation.

New Genus Discovered: A TNC-led biodiversity expedition on the Ogooué River led to the discovery of a new genus of weakly electric fish. The new specimen shed light on two others collected over 13 years that had been in taxonomic limbo, and the three specimens became a new genus with two species. The discovery was published in the journal *Zookeys*.



Cryptomyrus ogoouensis

“We can only protect effectively what we know. The science provided by TNC will help the government to know the country's immense water resources, understand its biodiversity, and provide a foundation for sustainable development.”

—FAUSTIN ONDAMBA, advisor to Gabon's Minister of Environment

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You are the power behind this work. Contact Cori Messinger at cmessinger@tnc.org to set up a confidential conversation about making a gift today or honoring a loved one through a bequest or other deferred gift. Every gift makes a difference. Asante sana.

Kenneth K. Coe