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The Conservancy in Africa: A Fundraiser’s Perspective

By [Mollie Fager](#)

From the perspective of a fundraiser, raising money for our global work can be likened to taking a trip to Fantasy Island. You read as much as you can about our work in the biological hotspots of the world, you bring in an expert staff person and then try to paint a picture for the donor on the importance of our work in Africa, China, Mongolia, Indonesia, Dominican Republic.... take your pick. I've long been a believer in not only the conservation outcomes of the Conservancy's work but "how" we work. So when it comes to global conservation, often it is my enthusiasm and faith in **how** we work that helps me excite a donor and convince them that a philanthropic investment in our global conservation programs is money well spent. This can be hard to convey if you just aren't entirely sure how we get our work done globally—particularly when we accomplish our work through partners.



Mollie poses with park rangers in northern Kenya © M. Fager/TNC

I'm happy to report that after a recent assignment to help a partner NGO in Northern Kenya, my commitment to "how" we work as well as truly understanding the value we bring as a "mega partner" to these smaller NGOs was increased ten fold. Partly because I had lived in East Africa for some time in my early 20s and the cross over between some Colorado donors and Africa partner organizations, I had the good fortune to begin some consulting work with the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Northern Rangeland Trust. [Lewa Wildlife Conservancy](#) is a 62,000-acre wildlife preserve who mission is to "work 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 neighboring areas in the value of wildlife." Lewa is perhaps best known for its innovative approach to endangered species preservation and restoration, particularly of the black rhino and Grevy's Zebra. Lewa's legacy has also been to spawn off-shoot conservation NGOs such as the [Northern Rangelands Trust](#) to further wildlife protection and conservation in areas much larger than the original preserve.

I was tasked with analyzing the fundraising systems and operations of both organizations. Out of this assessment would come not only recommendations to these organizations for improvements, but also the development of a joint case statement between TNC and the partners, and a strategy for raising money for our joint projects. As part of understanding in depth the work of these partners and our involvement with them, I accompanied Africa Program staff Matt Brown, Tim Tier and Greg Overton on site visits of these project areas. I was overwhelmed with the enormity of TNC's conservation goals and the complexities inherent in carrying out those goals. TNC does much more than just

write a check to partners working on the ground. We're actually in the process of helping these organizations get out of the trenches and *think strategically about where to work and then **how** to work.*

My description sounds dry and unglamorous, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. These NGOs truly need TNC. The "how we work" of The Nature Conservancy is unique and it *is* exportable. When you are a small NGO working hard at daily survival, managing your growth and trying to work as fast as you can, it is almost an impossibility to step back and objectively look at the big picture. TNC does this by default. It is in the DNA of our organization and one of our greatest strengths: constant self-reflection, continuous improvement, and a necessary tension between action on the ground and science-based assessment.

I wasn't sure how one would begin asking questions and introducing our methodologies into a discussion with partners about how they work. However, seeing is believing. Matt Brown's team did a superb job of asking direct, deferential and diplomatic questions of Lewa and Northern Rangelands Trust staff about their decision making processes around conservation priorities. At first you could sense a bit of defensiveness on the part of our partners. But as the group dove into the subject matter, a transformation occurred in their thinking. They could see the application of Conservation Action Planning and other TNC methodologies to their work. I'm happy to report that both of these NGOs will be going through their first CAP sessions in the spring of 2009.

The fundraising project with Lewa and Northern Rangelands Trust is ongoing and likely to continue into 2010. We're already making great progress on this front. However, an unintended result of my assistance with this project is my own deeper understanding of the importance of The Nature Conservancy's work in Africa. I believe that our role is so vital in Africa that conservation will not succeed there without us. I have a much more grounded base for describing our global conservation work to donors than I did prior to this project. Hopefully my story can help others in the same way.

Revolution in Oklahoma

By [Jay Pruett](#)

Last week, the governor of Oklahoma proclaimed that a revolution is occurring within his state, and he is in support of it! It is a revolution in the production of energy. Nearly 1,200 people attended Oklahoma's first wind energy conference, held December 2-3 in Oklahoma City. A leading producer of oil and natural gas, Oklahoma is now poised to become one of the top producers of wind energy in the U.S. as well.

This revolution has many facets that make it attractive to different constituencies. The most obvious benefit of wind power is its potential to replace fossil fuels with a source of clean, sustainable energy. But there are a number of indirect causes being championed at the same time. Private landowners can benefit from lease and royalty payments for the placement of wind turbines on their properties. Local rural communities see the potential for revenue generation from increased tax bases. The government and workers see potential for new jobs in the wind energy equipment manufacturing, construction and maintenance fields. For these and other reasons, Oklahoma is promoting this revolution in energy production as a big positive for the state.



A Northern Harrier flies in front of wind turbines in Oklahoma © J. Pruett/TNC

Amid the rousing support for wind energy development, the Oklahoma Revolution Wind Conference also included consideration of the impact of wind turbines on wildlife species and their habitat, which is a revolution in itself. While bird and bat collision mortality has been the main focus of wildlife impacts in the past, habitat fragmentation by wind

farms and their transmission lines has shown to be the impact of most concern in this and other states. A suite of declining prairie nesting bird species have seen their home ranges split apart and devoured by roads, power lines, agricultural fields, oil and gas development, housing subdivisions...and now wind farms. Some of these prairie bird species are very sensitive to any kind of vertical structure appearing in their habitat, structures that can serve as perches for potential avian predators such as eagles, hawks and falcons. Lesser prairie chickens, which occur in the short and mixed-grass prairies of western Oklahoma, have been shown to be particularly sensitive to this type of disturbance. Already a candidate for listing on the endangered species list, lesser prairie chickens cannot tolerate any more loss of habitat without falling toward extinction.

The Nature Conservancy's CEO Mark Tercek delivered a [keynote address](#) at the conference that spoke to the concept of wind development conducted with conservation being given appropriate consideration. Federal and state wildlife agencies, the Sutton Avian Research Center and TNC staff also made presentations advocating the development of wind energy, but with careful attention to the siting of projects away from sensitive wildlife habitat areas. These entities are working with wind developers, power purchasers and the Secretaries of Environment and Energy for Oklahoma to devise a means of incentivizing wind developers away from prairie chicken habitat, which happens to unfortunately coincide with the areas of highest wind potential. A model-based approach of delineating sensitive habitat is being tied to mitigation costs in a revolutionary approach to the siting of infrastructure—including wind facilities—in the state. This concept was introduced at the conference, with a promise of details to follow in the near future.

Wind energy generation **with** wildlife habitat protection is now the state's expectation for the future and for those involved in creating it.

Colombians Go Where the Buffalo Roam

By Alice Srinivasan



Lourdes Penuela of FHV (right) and Victoria Erazo taste the fruit of a prickly pear cactus at the Pontotoc Ridge Preserve © A. Srinivasan/TNC

In early October, a small group of Colombians witnessed the grandeur of some 3,000 bison roaming the American Great Plains as they took in the panorama at the Conservancy's 39,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma. The group included Jaime Erazo and Tomas Walschburger, who oversee the Conservancy's private lands and science programs in Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador (respectively), as well as representatives from the Conservancy's two main partner organizations in the Orinoco Grasslands of Colombia, [CIPAV](#) and [Fundación Horizonte Verde](#) (FHV), and Jaime's wife, Victoria, who audits Rainforest Alliance certified coffee producers in Colombia. Oklahoma State Director Mike Fuhr and Director of Conservation Jay Pruett hosted the group. During their trip, the Colombians explored almost every corner of boxy Oklahoma, exchanging ideas with preserve managers at the Conservancy's [Four Canyon Preserve](#) in the west, Pontotoc Ridge Preserve in the southeast, and Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in the northeast.

The trip was a continuation of the grasslands-focused conservation learning exchange between Conservancy programs and their partners in Oklahoma and Colombia. Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Manager Bob Hamilton and a State Extension Wildlife Specialist from Oklahoma State University explained how prescribed "patch burning" has been used in and around that preserve to create a diverse habitat for wildlife while also rotating livestock without the use of fencing. The Colombians were keen to explore whether such lessons could be applied in the tropical [grasslands of the Orinoco River floodplain](#), a region with a long history of cattle ranching and altered fire regimes where the Conservancy and its partners are making great inroads with the ranching community.

The header features a background image of tall grasses. Overlaid on the left side is the text "grasslands@tnc" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, "Issue 2 – December 2008" is written in a larger, white, serif font.

grasslands@tnc

Issue 2 – December 2008

A journalist and photographer from the *Tulsa World* newspaper joined the tour group during their day at Tallgrass Prairie. The resulting [article](#) and [animated slideshow](#) made the front page of the newspaper and are helpful tools to learn more about the exchange.

Migratory Bird Program Looks at Impacts of Climate Change on Grassland Birds

By [Duane Pool](#)

The wetlands, grasslands, riparian areas, and other unique habitats of North America's Great Plains provide migration and breeding habitat for a multitude of migratory and resident birds. The important bird habitat of the Great Plains is among the most threatened landscapes in North America, which is why the [Great Plains of North America campaign project](#) supports Conservancy work at 20 landscape-scale sites across the Great Plains, aimed at protecting the best of these diverse habitats.

But climate change is expected to alter habitat types, climate regimes, and other factors that influence the survival of species and health of populations in the Great Plains. In order to help Conservancy state programs plan for these changes, the Migratory Bird Program is examining the direct impacts of climate change and associated changes in land use on habitat suitability for birds of the Great Plains, focusing on birds of high conservation concern.

Results of this project will be available to Conservancy state programs and partners to modify conservation strategies within the Great Plains region. These analyses will ensure the conservation of those sites with the greatest potential to minimize impacts or provide refuge for priority birds, even in the face of a changing climate.

To learn more about this project, read the Migratory Bird Fact Sheet on the [Great Plains page of Campaign Link](#) or contact Duane Pool.

Grassland Campaign Fundraising

Looking for that Special Someone for Your Donor?

A meeting with the right program staff person can help tremendously in your donor cultivation and solicitation strategies! To learn more about arranging a visit by international program staff to your state, please contact [Barbara Quimby](#) or see potential spokespeople on [Campaign Link](#).

Grassland Matching Gift Opportunities

Please contact [Barbara Quimby](#), (213) 327-0104 x202, to learn more about using the following leverage opportunities to make the most of your donors' dollars!

Dual Matching Gift Opportunities for African Grasslands and Savannas - Donors to the African Grasslands and Savannas campaign project can take advantage of dual matching gift opportunities. A \$5 million challenge pledge by Illinois board chair, Connie Keller, and her husband will match \$.50 for every dollar raised that meets the terms of the overall Catalyst Fund and that is designated to the two Campaign sites where we work in partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation: African Grasslands and Savannas and Zambezi River. Gifts of \$100,000 or more (payable over up to three years) are eligible.

In addition, the C. Paul Johnson Family Foundation has pledged \$600,000 to the Wyoming Chapter that will provide a 1:1 match for gifts given to the grasslands of Wyoming or the African Grasslands and Savannas-- all Johnson Family matching funds go to the grasslands of Wyoming.

Urgent Need in Australia to Match PEW Grant - As part of our efforts to scale up conservation action in Australia, TNC has partnered with the Pew Charitable Trusts on a joint conservation program called the Wild Australia Program. The total budget for this 3-year partnership is \$12 million, with Pew and TNC each contributing \$6 million. The PEW Charitable Trust will provide a 1:1 match for gifts from US donors supporting the Northern Australian Grasslands and

other campaign projects in Australia. TNC is committed to raising \$1.1 million in by June 30, 2009 for two projects in the Northern Australia Grasslands that will benefit from this match.

[Pledge from Illinois Donor Bolsters Mongolia Program](#)

Congratulations to Illinois ADOP Pia Almagro for raising a \$100,000 pledge to the Mongolia Program! Mike Love called the Chicago office last week to announced his commitment to support this budding program after meeting Asia-Pacific Regional Director, Russell Leiman, during Russell's recent fundraising trip to Chicago.

[Updates from Grassland Campaign Projects](#)

[Orinoco Grasslands of Colombia & Venezuela](#)

The Northern Tropical Andes conservation program has developed a database of critical habitat in the gas and oil-rich Orinoco Grasslands of Colombia and Venezuela. The resulting "decision support tool" includes **interactive maps that oil and gas companies can reference** before applying for a permit to drill to identify low-impact areas. The Nature Conservancy has worked in cooperation with numerous scientists from local universities, NGOs and government Ministries in both countries, so oil companies know in advance they're more likely to get permission in less critical habitat, cutting their costs and making it more predictable to do business. This level of transparency is unprecedented. This is an innovation we haven't even been able to achieve in the US yet, and a transferable practice. Although the Colombian and Venezuelan governments have provided a great deal of support, **the Orinoco Grasslands project is in need of philanthropic funds** to continue this innovative work.

[Northern Australia Grasslands](#)

Fire is a critical element of Australia's savanna habitats, and one of the Conservancy's main goals in Northern Australia is to support the **reintroduction of indigenous fire regimes to these grasslands**. The Conservancy is forging an innovative partnership between indigenous groups, the Australian Government and an energy company to re-introduce traditional fire management techniques in the region with the dual benefit of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions while also providing long-term employment opportunities for indigenous Australians. The Conservancy has also partnered with Bush Heritage Australia to **purchase the Edgbaston property** in North Eastern Australia through a funding commitment of AUD\$473,000. The 19,900-acre grasslands property is rich in native vegetation that is still relatively intact despite extensive cattle grazing dominating the region's landscapes. The property is in close proximity to a National Park but features bioregions not represented in secure reserves making its acquisition a great addition to grasslands conservation in Australia.

[Patagonian Grasslands of Argentina](#)

With the office in Bariloche, Argentina now fully staffed, the Patagonian Grasslands Project Team has started to move forward on all fronts with Carlos Fernandez as Project Manager, Andrea Nogués as Sustainable Grazing Strategy Coordinator, Javier Beltran as Private Lands Conservation Strategy Coordinator, and Gustavo Iglesias as Public Protected Areas Strategy Coordinator. The Team is collaborating with local partners to elaborate the **first ever map of areas with high biodiversity value in the Patagonia region** with input from all taxonomic groups. In addition, the Team is gathering and synthesizing existing knowledge on sustainable grazing and private lands conservation legal structures, and has advanced in the process of selecting Proof of Concept Project sites. For a new Conservancy project launching efforts in Argentina for the first time, these are critical steps toward accomplishing the 2015 Goal of conserving 16 million hectares of Argentina's temperate grasslands.

[Grasslands of the Mongolian Steppe & Tibetan Plateau](#)

Addressing climate change is a priority for the President of Mongolia, who is hosting a North Asia Summit on climate-related issues in 2009 and has asked The Nature Conservancy for assistance. Anticipating how climate change will impact landscape connectivity across the vast Mongolian steppes is also a priority for the Conservancy. To that end, the Conservancy is seeking funds to build capacity within our new Mongolia program, our Utah State Program, and our Climate Change Initiative to **design a science-based climate change adaptation project for Mongolia**. The project requires capacity in the United States and Mongolia to develop a modeling framework that can predict the

impacts of changing climate patterns on the Mongolian Steppe and to account for potential shifts in vegetation, levels of grazing and land use, availability of freshwater resources, and other factors that might impact this habitat. The resulting models will be used to encourage Mongolian policymakers to consider the effects of climate change on biodiversity conservation, regional development, and human livelihoods. Ultimately, studying the Mongolian Steppe may help us determine how to adapt temperate grasslands around the world to the effects of climate change.

[African Grasslands & Savannas](#)

The mission of Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) is to improve the livelihoods of conservancy communities through wildlife conservation in the rangelands of Northern Kenya. NRT currently supports 15 communal conservancies over an area of 1,498,827 acres. The boundaries of these conservancies have the potential to expand. In addition, NRT's efforts have been so positively received by pastoralists that 13 new communities are applying for NRT support to help form conservancies. How does NRT respond to this exponential increase in demand? With support from The Nature Conservancy, NRT was able to undertake several strategic planning exercises this year to chart a course for success, as well as a land assessment exercise to ascertain land tenure status amongst all 15 conservancies under the umbrella of NRT. The land tenure assessment has provided a simple, but valuable tool for NRT to support communities in aspiring to greater security of tenure, and thereby strengthening community conservation efforts over the long term. A five year strategic plan was created for NRT in a series of facilitated workshops. In addition, NRT managed to undertake strategic planning exercises for 5 community conservancies with wide community participation. **The Nature Conservancy's support clarifies the strategic direction for NRT** to provide critical leadership for the improvement of livelihoods of conservancy communities through wildlife conservation in the rangelands of Northern Kenya.

[Great Plains of North America](#)

See **Migratory Bird story**, above.