

THE STORY OF THE NORTHERN RANGELANDS TRUST

NORTHERN
RANGELANDS
TRUST



Conserving wildlife, transforming lives, bringing peace

NRT's Mission

To develop resilient community conservancies that transform lives, secure peace, and conserve natural resources

NRT's Core Values

- Respect for traditional pastoral and other community values
- Coexistence of livestock, people and wildlife
- Community-led decision making
- Meaningful livelihoods through wildlife conservation
- Competent governance and financial accountability
- Equitable distribution of benefits
- Environmental, social and economic sustainability in all our work
- Apolitical, without allegiance to any political party, creed, or race
- Credible, measurable results

The Story of the Northern Rangelands Trust

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Northern Rangelands Trust

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FOREWORD

In 2004, I suggested to Ian Craig, then the manager of the privately-owned Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, that it was time to establish a new organisation to support the growing number of community conservancies in northern Kenya. Hence the birth of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). Since then, NRT has helped an ever-increasing number of communities to establish conservancies, set up democratic management structures and attract funds for conservation and development.

Looking back over the last eight years, I am immensely proud of NRT's achievements. Its success owes much to the fact that it is rooted in local communities, and is guided by their priorities and needs. The NRT community conservancy model provides a rare example of conservation for the people, by the people. Working with NRT, the conservancies are channelling the proceeds from conservation and tourism into education and development, and significantly improving livelihoods in one of the poorest regions in Kenya.

This booklet provides an insight into the drive, dedication and skills of all those involved with NRT and the conservancies, and it captures the impact of this approach to conservation and development. Wherever I travel, I see evidence of strong leadership among the elected members of the conservancy boards, as well as the managers of the conservancies and their rangers. At the same time, NRT itself, acting as an umbrella body for the conservancies, has established a small unit of highly skilled staff, many drawn from local communities.

I would like to express the Board's deep gratitude to the many organisations and individuals who have helped to fund NRT's activities. In particular, we would like to thank The Nature Conservancy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Tusk Trust, Flora and Fauna International and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. We are also very grateful for the support we have received from the the Kenya Wildlife Service and from local governments in northern Kenya.

The Honorable Francis Ole Kaparo, S.S. EGH
Chairman, NRT Board of Trustees





1. COMMUNITY CONSERVANCIES - A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

I“If we’d come here a few years ago, we would have run a high risk of being killed by bandits or cattle rustlers,” says Titus Letaapo, regional coordinator with the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT). He and his colleagues have come to witness a ‘peace marathon’, which will take place the following morning, and they have set up camp in a dry riverbed below the ruins of Kom, a remote settlement destroyed by tribal fighting in the late 1990s.

Over the decades, hundreds of Borana, Rendille and Samburu pastoralists were killed in this lawless region, and much of the wildlife was wiped out by poachers and cattle rustlers. “Even the elephants knew this was a no-go zone,” continues Titus. “If they came through at night, they would do so on the run. Giraffe, gerenuk and zebra were all killed for meat. Those days were good times for the vultures.”

“If we’d come here a few years ago, we would have run a high risk of being killed by bandits or cattle rustlers”

Titus Letaapo, NRT Regional Coordinator

In September 2009, efforts to establish peace ended catastrophically when 15 people were killed early one morning. But NRT and the three community conservancies whose boundaries meet near Kom – Biliqo-Bulesa, Melako and Sera – persisted in their attempts to broker a settlement between the warring tribes. A range of measures – better security, meetings between the elders and young people of different tribes and conservancies, new grazing agreements, the presence of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the Kom peace marathon – have helped to reduce poaching, cattle rustling and banditry.

“By this time last year, there had been seven raids in Biliqo-Bulesa, all resulting in local people being killed,” explains conservancy manager Golompo Mohamed. The rustlers were Samburu from the west, and after each attack gangs of young Borana



Modern weaponry has exacerbated tribal conflicts.

would seek revenge by raiding Samburu villages. However, there had been no major disturbances during the first six months of this year: testimony, says Golompo, to the success of the measures taken to promote peace.

Biliqo-Bulesa, Melako and Sera are among the community conservancies – there were 19 by 2012 – which come under the umbrella of NRT. All, in one way or another, are helping to bring peace to areas which have traditionally suffered from high levels of conflict. They are also helping to restore wildlife populations. For example, elephant have returned to Melako after an absence of some 20 years. In Sera conservancy the number of sightings of elephant rose from 3000 in 2006 to over 11,000 in 2011; during the same period, sightings of the rare Grevy’s zebra rose from less than 250 to over 2,000. Indeed, the experience in northern Kenya suggests that community conservancies represent one of the most effective ways of conserving wildlife.

212,000 - *The number of people living in northern Kenya's community conservancies by 2012*

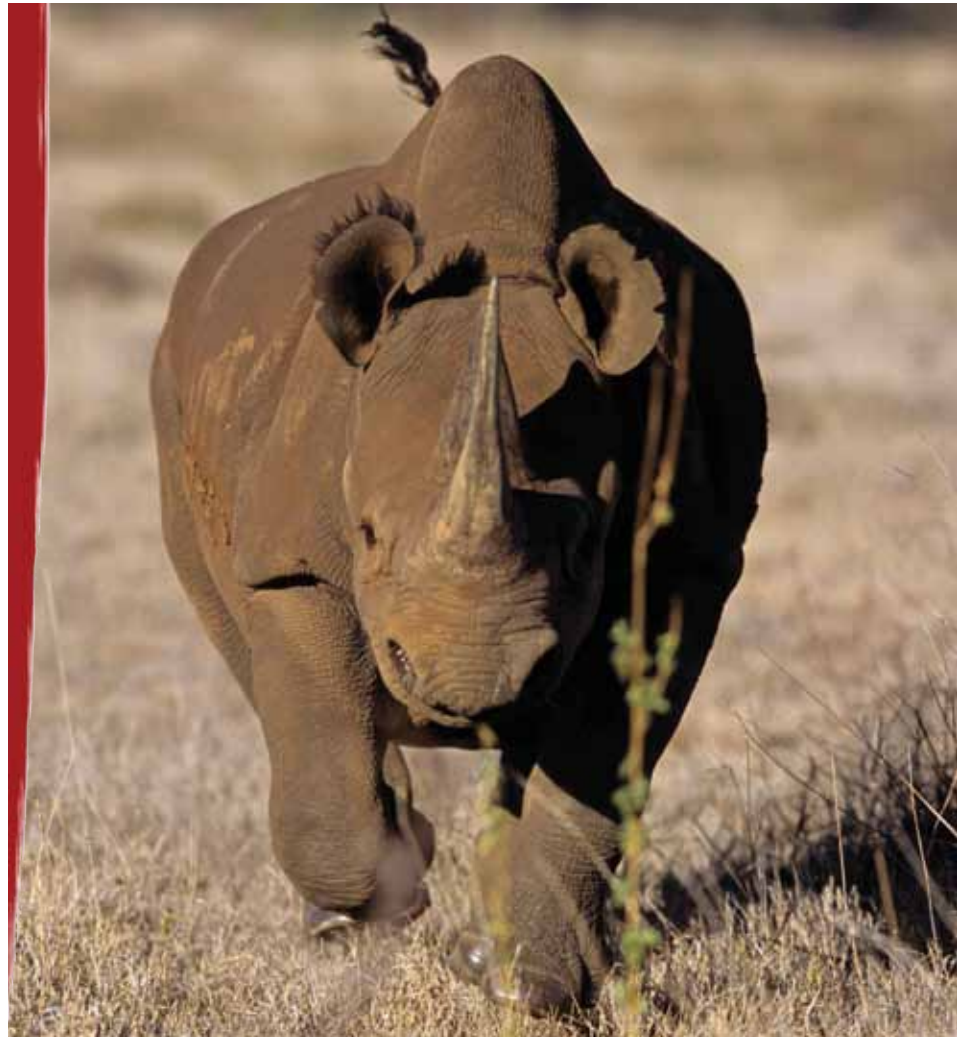
Northern Kenya is arid, poorly served by schools and health clinics, and sparsely populated by tribes who largely depend on livestock for their survival. In Isiolo, Samburu and Marsabit counties, poverty rates range from 72% to 83%, compared to 47% for Kenya as a whole. Life gets even tougher during droughts, the most recent leading to the death of up to 80% of the cattle. Malnutrition is widespread and many children – especially girls – never attend school.

In areas where the conservancies are operating, this is beginning to change, largely because the communities are investing the proceeds from conservation and tourism in education and health. In the past, many young men would turn to cattle rustling or head to Nairobi in search of work. Now, many are finding jobs as rangers and administrators in the conservancies. “There was initially a notion that the conservancies were all about protecting wildlife,” explains Tom Lalampaa, NRT’s community development manager. “Conservation is still a key objective, but now there’s a much stronger focus on improving livelihoods and human welfare.”

An idea whose time has come

This story begins in the sweeping savannah to the north of Mt Kenya. Around the time that Ian Craig took over his parents’ cattle ranch at Lewa, some 30 years ago, the conservationist Anna Merz was searching for a place to establish a rhino sanctuary. By then, Kenya’s rhino population had been reduced by poaching from over 20,000 animals in 1960 to less than 500. The Craig family agreed to set aside 2,000 ha for the project, and by 2012 Lewa had a population of over 70 black rhinos and 58 white rhinos. Some years later, they decided to transform the entire ranch, covering 62,000 ha, into a private conservancy devoted to conservation.

But there was a problem: while the rhino were restrained from leaving Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, other species, such as elephant, giraffe, zebra and lion, could move freely across the landscape. Frequently, animals that had spent time at Lewa were butchered for meat, or in the case of elephants killed for their ivory. It became clear that Lewa’s wildlife would only flourish with the help of surrounding communities.



The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy has become a safe haven for both black and white rhinos.

When Ian Craig first floated the idea of setting up a community conservancy in Il Ngwesi, to the north of Lewa, it was treated with scepticism. “The Maasai thought this was a trick to take away their land,” says Tom Lalampaa. “People thought that there would be more wildlife, less room for cattle, and they would become poorer still.”

Visit almost any conservancy and you will hear much the same story from the elders. “Most of the people here feared that their land would be turned into a national park or a wildlife sanctuary, and cattle would be excluded,” says Tom Letiwa, the community coordinator of Namunyak conservancy. However, Ian kept coming back. “He explained what had happened at Lewa, and how we could benefit from looking after wildlife and attracting tourists.” He took the elders to see Lewa and Maasai Mara, where wildlife-based tourism was generating a considerable income. “It took time, but eventually the community accepted that the idea of setting up a conservancy was noble and good,” says Tom.

Il Ngwesi and Namunyak were the first two community conservancies to be established in northern Kenya. Before long, they were transforming the way the land was managed and the welfare of the pastoralists. “People began to care about the wildlife, because they saw that it would bring them an income,” recalls Tom Letiwa. “They used to think all the wildlife belonged to the government, but now they see it as their wildlife.” Safari camps in this large and spectacular conservancy, which encompasses much of the Mathews Range, raise around 18 million Kenyan shillings (US\$210,000) a year for the community, 60% of which is spent on education, health and development.

Ian began to spend more and more time encouraging communities to set up conservancies. Sometimes he approached the communities; but frequently, communities which were impressed by what they had heard and seen came to seek advice. He and his staff helped them to find funds, set up democratic management structures and



Ian Craig (right), NRT’s first chief executive officer, has been a leading advocate of community conservancies.

attract investments for tourist facilities. In 2004, Francis Ole Kaparo, speaker of Kenya’s National Assembly and chair of Lewa’s Board of Trustees, suggested it was time to set up a new organisation to help the growing number of conservancies. “What we needed was an organisation which would provide advice and training and raise funds for the conservancies, while retaining the private-sector drive of Lewa,” says Ian.

The Northern Rangelands Trust was established in 2004. During its early years, Ian was chief executive of both Lewa and NRT. It was, as he says, a tidy marriage. Today they have separate identities, but still benefit from a close working relationship. NRT’s headquarters are based at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, which is now owned as a Kenyan trust. Lewa plays a key role in providing anti-poaching backup in the



NRT's regional coordinators spend most of their time in the field. Titus Letaapo on a visit to Sera conservancy.

conservancies. It also helps with logistical operations and helps to support livelihoods in the surrounding community conservancies. Lewa, in turn, benefits from its association with NRT and the conservancies. "It's very important for us that Lewa remains relevant at both the national and international levels, and our association with the conservancies helps us do that," says Mike Watson, Lewa's chief executive officer.

Working for the conservancies

NRT's mission can be simply stated. It is to develop resilient community conservancies which transform people's lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources. It does this in a number of ways. It raises funds for the conservancies. It provides them with advice on how to manage their institutional arrangements and financial affairs. It supports a wide range of training and it helps to broker agreements between the conservancies and

investors, such as those who wish to set up tourist lodges. It also monitors performance, providing donors – and the conservancies themselves – with a degree of oversight and quality assurance. None of this compromises the independence of the conservancies, which have full responsibility for all the decision-making on their land.

NRT's highest governing body is the Council of Elders, which consists of up to 30 members. The democratically elected chairs of the conservancies make up the majority, and are joined by institutional members representing county councils, local wildlife forums, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the private sector. The Council guides NRT policy and is responsible for drawing up the bylaws for its operation and administration. It also appoints eight of the 15-member Board of Directors, to whom the chief executive officer is answerable. The Board has five institutional members: KWS, two private wildlife conservancies – Lewa and Ol Pejeta – and two of NRT's major donors, The Nature Conservancy and Fauna and Flora International.



Women in the village of Dima-Ado used to walk 20 km to get water. Now, thanks to a project organised by Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy, they have a plentiful supply of fresh water near their homes.

540 permanent jobs have been created by community conservancies

NRT is an indigenous organisation which responds to the specific needs of specific communities in specific places. “As we are effectively owned by the conservancies, we are able to do things which would be impossible for organisations which have been parachuted into the area,” says Mike Harrison, who took over from Ian Craig as chief executive officer in 2012. To illustrate this, he cites the example of how NRT responded to problems at Ishaqbini Conservancy.



Community conservancies are playing a key role in protecting endangered species, such as the hirola.

The board at Ishaqbini was riven with conflict between various Somali clans, some of which, in a struggle for power, had manipulated the latest board elections. This threatened not just the democratic structures within the conservancy but its ability to protect the declining population of hirola, the world’s most endangered antelope. The Council of Elders asked three members of its Conflict Resolution Team to visit the conservancy with NRT’s assistant community development manager, Gabriel Nyausi.

As a result of the meetings they convened, the conservancy board agreed to organise another round of elections. These were fair and transparent. Ishaqbini – and the hirola – have benefited as a result. “There is no way a non-governmental organisation or anybody else from outside northern Kenya could have done this,” says Mike. “This represented the NRT family saying to one of its members: ‘You must put your house in order.’”

One word which frequently crops up in discussions about NRT and the conservancies is trust. “In these pastoralist societies, trust is massively important,” says Ian Craig. “It takes a long time to build up trust. If the communities didn’t trust us, we could achieve nothing.” The fact that there is now such a close relationship between NRT and most of the conservancies owes much to the respect in which Ian is held – he was brought up here and speaks fluent Swahili – and the subtle yet authoritative influence of Tom Lalampaa, who was the first Samburu from West Gate to go to university, and whose story is told on page 32.



Community conservancies employ many hundreds of local people as rangers. Simon Nantiri is the conservancy warden in Lekurruki.

In the conservancies people often talk about their relationship with NRT in terms of belonging to a family. “NRT is looking after us like a parent, and we are now the youngest member of the family,” says Omar Godana, finance chairman for Nasuulu conservancy, which was launched in January 2012. “When we were setting up the conservancy, NRT was very close to us and Titus spent a lot of time helping us to settle our differences.”

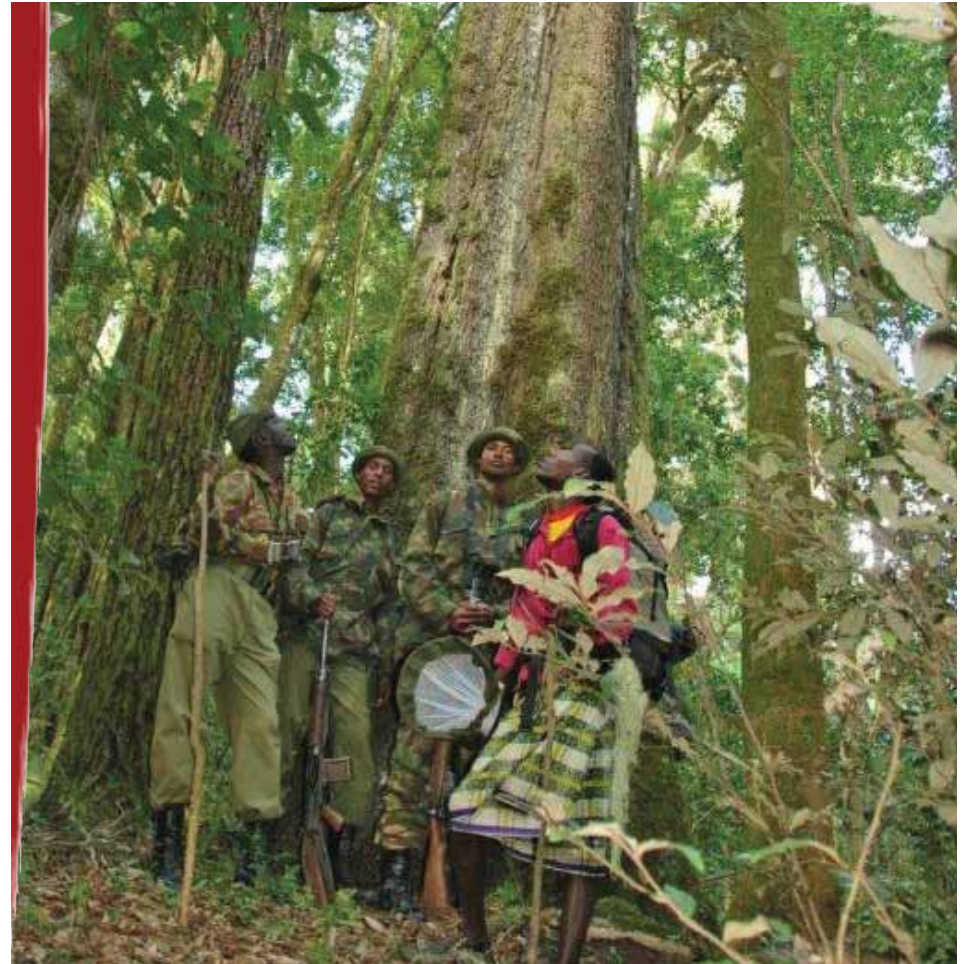
The birth of the conservancy was a difficult process, involving lengthy negotiations between representatives of four tribes – Borana, Samburu, Somali and Turkana – which had been locked in sporadic and increasingly violent conflict. Several hundred people had been killed over the last decade as a result of clashes over grazing, land ownership and water rights. The conservancy was specifically established by these communities to create peace. Without NRT’s guidance, according to Omar, this could never have happened.

366% - The increase in elephant sightings in Sera conservancy between 2006 and 2011

So what of the future? In 2012, NRT drew up a new strategic plan. This will help the organisation to build on its past achievements and prepare for the coming years. At its heart is the notion that community conservancies can play a major role in conserving wildlife over large areas and in improving the welfare of local communities. NRT will continue to encourage the conservancies to establish a range of diverse activities which will provide jobs, income and hope. The conservancies are already helping to bring peace and good governance to areas which have been plagued by conflict and poverty, and peace remains a pre-requisite for successful wildlife conservation. NRT believes the conservancy model will help communities to cope with whatever the future holds, to become more resilient to changes in the climate and capable of dealing with a wave of new developments that could transform northern Kenya.

“People began to care about the wildlife, because they saw that it would bring them an income.”

Tom Letiwa, Namunyak



The forests in the Mathews Range support a rich diversity of wildlife and act as a critical water catchment.

The Democratic Mandate

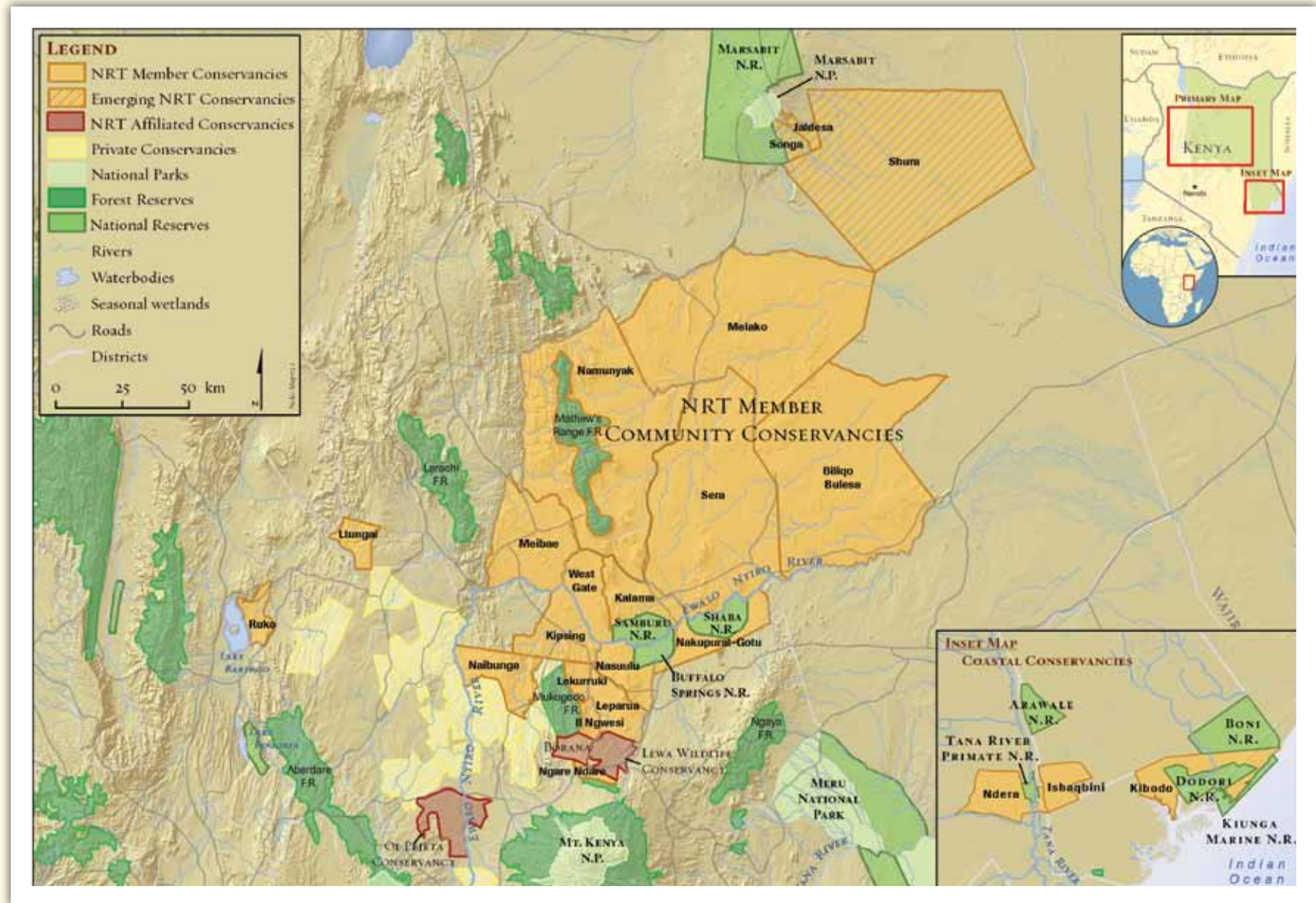


Noldonyo Letabare is a member of the Board of Directors in West Gate Conservancy.
"Times are changing, and we women need to have a say in how things change," she says.

Some conservancies are registered as not-for-profit companies, some as community-based organisations and some as trusts. They vary in size from just over 5,000 ha, in the case of Ruko and Ngare Ndare, to Namunyak's 394,000 ha. Between them, they cover over 2 million ha, an area roughly one and a half times the size of Kenya's Central Province. It is estimated that 212,000 people were living within the areas managed by the 19 conservancies that had been established by mid-2012. It is an indication of the success of the movement that another 23 communities had applied to become NRT conservancies.

Each conservancy has a Board of Directors which consists of 12 individuals elected by the community and a number of ex-officio members representing NRT, KWS, the local administration and in some cases Members of Parliament. The board employs a manager, who must have at least a first degree, as well as rangers, administrators and others with the skills required to manage a successful conservancy. The board keeps strict control of the conservancy budget, and the books are independently audited at the end of the financial year. Every conservancy enters into a memorandum of understanding with NRT.

COMMUNITY CONSERVANCIES IN NORTHERN KENYA



Conserving wildlife, transforming lives, bringing peace

NRT CONSERVANCIES

Conservancy	Date of Registration	Ethnicity	Livelihood	Area (Hectares)	Total number of Members	Number of Employees	Annual operating budget US\$	Tourism facilities	Flagship wildlife species
Il Ngwesi Community Trust	1995	Laikipia Maasai	AP	9,470	3,804	36	52,000	Il Ngwesi Community Lodge	Elephant, eland
Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust	1995	Samburu	P	394,000	13,200	70	230,000	Sarara Camp, Kitich Lodge, campsites	Elephant, wild dog
Lekurruki Conservation Trust	1999	Laikipia Maasai	P	11,950	3,000	26	102,000	Tassia Lodge	Elephant, reticulated giraffe
Ngare Ndare Forest Trust	2000	Meru, Laikipia Maasai, Somali Kikuyu	AP	5,540	37,200	18	76,000	Canopy walk, adventure activities	Elephant
Naibunga Conservancy Trust	2001	Laikipia Maasai	AP	47,740	20,000	24	59,000	OI Lentile Lodge, Koija star-beds, OI Gaboli Bandas	Elephant, eland
Sera Conservancy Trust	2001	Samburu	P	345,000	16,000	36	111,000	Kauro Bandas, campsites	Elephant, reticulated giraffe, lion
Ltungai Community Conservancy Trust	2002	Samburu, Pokot	P	19,570	9,000	20	32,000		Buffalo
Kalama Community Wildlife Conservancy	2002	Samburu	P	46,100	4,074	35	170,000	Saruni Lodge, campsites	Grevy's zebra
Melako Community Conservancy	2004	Rendile	P	387,000	23,795	24	116,000	Game-bird shooting, campsites, RAW Africa camping	Lion, beisa oryx, Grevy's zebra
West Gate Community Conservancy	2004	Samburu	P	40,350	5,000	35	128,000	Sasaab Lodge, campsites	Grevy's zebra, elephant
Ruko Community Wildlife Conservancy	2006	Pokot, Lchamus	P	16,400	4,200	16	60,000	Partnership with Samatian Island Lodge	Rothschild's giraffe
Meibae Community Conservancy	2006	Samburu	P	115,900	12,500	24	100,000		Grevy's zebra, wild dog
Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy	2007	Somali (Abdulla)	P	19,000	14,500	24	66,000		Hirola, topi, buffalo, lion
Biliqo-Bulesa Community Conservancy	2007	Borana	P	364,000	10,000	24	79,000	Game-bird shooting	Lion, elephant
Mpus Kutuk Community Conservancy	2007	Samburu, Turkana	P	52,500	5,300	22	42,000	Campsites	Elephant
Nakuprat-Gotu Community Conservancy	2010	Borana, Turkana	P	39,300	15,000	17	47,000	Game-bird shooting, partnership with Joy's Camp (Cheli & Peacock)	Beisa oryx, lion
Ndera Community Conservancy	2010	Pokomo	A	15,000	6,500	11	30,000		Tana red colobus, Tana River mangabey
Nasuulu Community Conservancy	2011	Borana, Somali, Turkana, Samburu.	P	34,900	6,000	13	42,000		Elephant, Somali ostrich
Leparua Community Conservancy	2011	Borana, Somali, Gabra, Turkana, Laikipia Maasai, Samburu.	AP	34,200	3,500	23	39,000		Elephant

A = Agriculturalist
 AP = Agro-pastoralist
 P = Pastoralist



2. GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

The tourist lodge owned and managed by Il Ngwesi conservancy commands magnificent views over an archetypal African landscape. At the foot of the hill on which the lodge is perched there is a deep pool, shaded by large thorn trees, where wild animals drink in the evening. Beyond, grasslands mottled with scrub ripple away towards the jagged peaks of the heavily forested Mathews Range.

330 - Conservancy rangers have attended the Kenya Wildlife Service training course at Manyani

Nowadays, elephant, lion and buffalo are the most dangerous things you're likely to encounter in Il Ngwesi. But it wasn't always like that. In the early 1970s, 18 Maasai moran – or warriors – were killed in one day, ambushed by Somali shifta on the aptly named Hill of Blood. The local warriors were armed with spears; the shifta with automatic weapons. "In those days, and for a long time afterwards, everybody here used to sleep with their shoes on, because they never knew when the next attack would come," says Gabriel Nyausi, the first conservancy manager.

A similar story can be told for many areas which are now managed as community conservancies. Cattle raiding has a long history in northern Kenya, but the levels of violence rose during 1990s. AK-47s imported from Somalia could be easily acquired – and still can be – on the black market in towns like Isiolo and Marsabit. The Somali and the Borana are said to have been the first tribes to use these weapons, but others soon followed their example.

Livestock herders often compete for pasture and water, and many of the worst conflicts have occurred when droughts have forced

different tribes to migrate to the same area. This is one of the reasons why Kom has seen so much violence: when forage has been scarce, Borana, Rendille and Samburu have come here in search of the last available grazing. Competition for grazing land also set tribe against tribe in Nasuulu. After a decade of unrest, the elders decided it was time to settle their differences.

"We were exhausted by all the suffering," recalls Joshua Kipich, the vice-chairman of the conservancy's finance committee. "We realised that nobody was benefiting, all of us were losing. So we vowed: no more killing, no more poverty creation." However, wanting peace is one thing; winning the peace is quite another.



Peter Lempatu, NRT's pilot, receiving the outstanding trainee award at the KWS Manyani Field Training School.

Opposite: Warriors from Melako conservancy limber up on the evening before the Kom peace marathon.



Conservancy rangers have helped to reduce armed banditry and poaching. Mpakayo Kumlahau, assistant conservancy warden in Melako, says he takes great pride in his job.

Improving security

In 2010, 85 conservancy rangers were trained by the Kenya Wildlife Service at its Manyani Field Training School; two years later, NRT paid for a further 245 rangers to attend a three-month course. Namunyak conservancy's 54 rangers were among those who benefited. When the rangers were away, there was a noticeable increase in highway banditry and poaching, according to Patrick Lembwakita, the assistant chief in Wamba. "There's no doubt in my mind that the conservancy rangers have played a role in reducing crime, and they were certainly missed when they were away at Manyani." He says they are now better drilled than they were in the past and have a keener understanding of how to gather and share intelligence. The training was worth it, even if it caused some inconvenience at the time.

Many conservancy rangers have been accorded Kenya Police Reserve (KPR) status and provided with government weapons by the police. This means they are better able to protect wildlife and the local communities. Around 90% of the arrests for banditry and cattle rustling in and around Namunyak are carried out not by the regular police, but by conservancy rangers.

"Everybody here used to sleep with their shoes on, because they never knew when the next attack would come."

Gabriel Nyausi, NRT Regional Coordinator

"One of the great benefits of the conservancies having well-trained rangers with KPR status is that this helps to control the use of arms," suggests John Kiboi, assistant chief of police in Isiolo. All too often, he says, individuals outside the conservancies who have KPR status misuse or mislay their weapons; some even go on cattle raids themselves. The District Commissioner for Merti expressed his appreciation in similar terms when he attended the Kom peace marathon in 2012. "It makes the government's job much easier when arms are issued to the



Radio communication has helped conservancies to keep in touch with the police and reduce crime.

conservancy rangers,” said Chedo Toum. “They have a very important role to play in maintaining the peace.”

The rangers and the conservancies are benefiting from the use of modern communication equipment, much of it provided by NRT. VHF radios have been issued to rangers, local government officials and the police. “In the old days, the first thing you

would know about a raid was when it happened,” says Tom Letiwa in Namunyak. “Now, if we see footprints that might belong to poachers or cattle rustlers, we alert the police and KWS, as well as neighbouring conservancies like Melako and Sera.” The use of radios in areas where mobile phones cannot operate also means that the authorities can be swiftly informed of medical problems, such as recent outbreaks of cholera in Mpus Kutuk, Sera and Kalama.

3 ethnic groups are represented in the 9-1 anti-poaching unit



Safeguarding one of northern Kenya’s most valuable assets.

A special force

The northern conservancies of Biliqo-Bulesa, Melako, Namunyak and Sera have benefited greatly from the presence of a mobile anti-poaching unit, known by its call sign 9-1. Established in 2008 and supported by NRT, the unit’s influence and efficacy have increased in recent years as a result of training provided by a former British Army officer.

The 9-1 unit consists of 12 rangers drawn from the four conservancies where it operates. “They are not a military response force, but they now have the skills and equipment they need to look after themselves, do the job properly, and support KWS in the field,” says the officer. “During the past year the rangers have given a good account of themselves in half a dozen ‘contacts’ with poachers.” Three of the 9-1 rangers had also received advanced medical training, and on several occasions they had used these skills to save the lives of civilians wounded by bandits.

The training and provision of better equipment has transformed 9-1’s operational success. To illustrate the point, Jackson Letori, the unit’s commander, describes how he and his

colleagues were recently ambushed in the east of Biliqo-Bulesa. They had been following poachers' footprints for some hours when a flock of doves erupted from a waterhole, alerting the poachers to their arrival. The rangers immediately came under heavy fire.

"In the past, before our recent training, we would all have been killed," says Jackson. "We'd have been ambling along, with our rifles over our shoulders." This time they were well prepared, arms at the ready and alert to any threat. The rangers fell to the ground, then fanned out. One of the rangers was injured, but after a 30-minute fire-fight the poachers fled, leaving their weapons and the paraphernalia of their trade. One was arrested later and charged with attempted murder.

When the 9-1 unit was established, the decision was taken to recruit rangers from the various different tribes in the area. This has been one of its great strengths. "There is no way that 9-1 could have done such important work in Biliqo-Bulesa if they'd gone there with just Samburu or Rendille," says Ian Craig. "This is a Borana area, and it would have been impossible to work there without Borana rangers."

The multi-tribal nature of the 9-1 team also means that it can establish friendly relations with local communities wherever it goes. Jackson and his colleagues frequently spend time in the villages with the elders and moran, discussing security and encouraging them to support their work. Indeed, winning hearts and minds is part of their job. One of the reasons why elephant poaching declined in the second quarter of 2012 was because local people were naming and shaming the local poachers.



A peace meeting between Borana and Samburu elders, held in Kom.

More talk, less conflict

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance that NRT attaches to encouraging better relations between tribes. In the case of Nasuulu, the board agreed to recruit a team of rangers that would reflect the area's ethnic diversity. It consists of three young Borana, three Samburu, three Somali and three Turkana. "We were seriously worried that when we put them together they might kill each other, but they are now such good friends they've even given each other nicknames," says board member Joshua Kipich. Although they have yet to receive weapons, or training at Manyani, the rangers have helped to reduce the level of poaching and cattle raiding.

NRT staff spend a good deal of their time encouraging dialogue between different conservancies. Reuben Lendir, the conservancy manager in Sera, believes that the inter-board meetings, held three times a year, between his conservancy, Melako and Biliqo-Bulesa have played a significant role in reducing conflict. Just as importantly, NRT and the conservancies have arranged numerous meetings which have brought together moran – the people who tend to be at the sharp end of conflict – from different tribes.

“When we set up Sera conservancy in 2001,” recalls Reuben, “there was a terrible lack of security. At times, groups of over 300 warriors, many armed with AK-47s, would come through the area to steal thousands of cattle.” There are still sporadic raids, but they tend to involve a dozen or fewer individuals, and the number of livestock stolen is in the tens or hundreds, not the thousands. Reuben also believes that the work of the grazing committees – these are discussed in the next chapter – has helped reduce conflict and cattle rustling.



NRT’s research and monitoring team with rangers in Ishaqbini.



Warriors in Meibae conservancy during a grazing management training session.

Crisis management

NRT’s Conflict Resolution Team has played an important role in creating the conditions for peace. Led by a retired senior chief and nine elders known for their skills in conflict resolution, the team has intervened in a range of difficult situations. For example, it helped to mediate between Samburu and Rendille over grazing rights; this led to the development of new bylaws, agreeable to both sides. On another occasion, the team helped to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between Samburu and Lekurruki communities which had been fighting over the use of pasture. The skills of the elders were also deployed to defuse tension in Ruko conservancy, where the Pokot and Lchamus communities were arguing about where to site a new school.

“Perhaps the biggest success we have had, where the stakes were highest, was in Shaba

National Reserve,” says Tom Lalampaa. This is a popular destination for safari tourists, to the east of Kalama community conservancy. In 2010, when the region was in the grip of a serious drought, Borana, Rendille, Samburu and Turkana livestock owners invaded the reserve with some 10,000 cattle. Tourists were attacked, lodges were closed, wild animals were killed for meat and the county council rangers fled. The government sent 400 soldiers to restore the peace. Eight were immediately killed in clashes with the pastoralists.

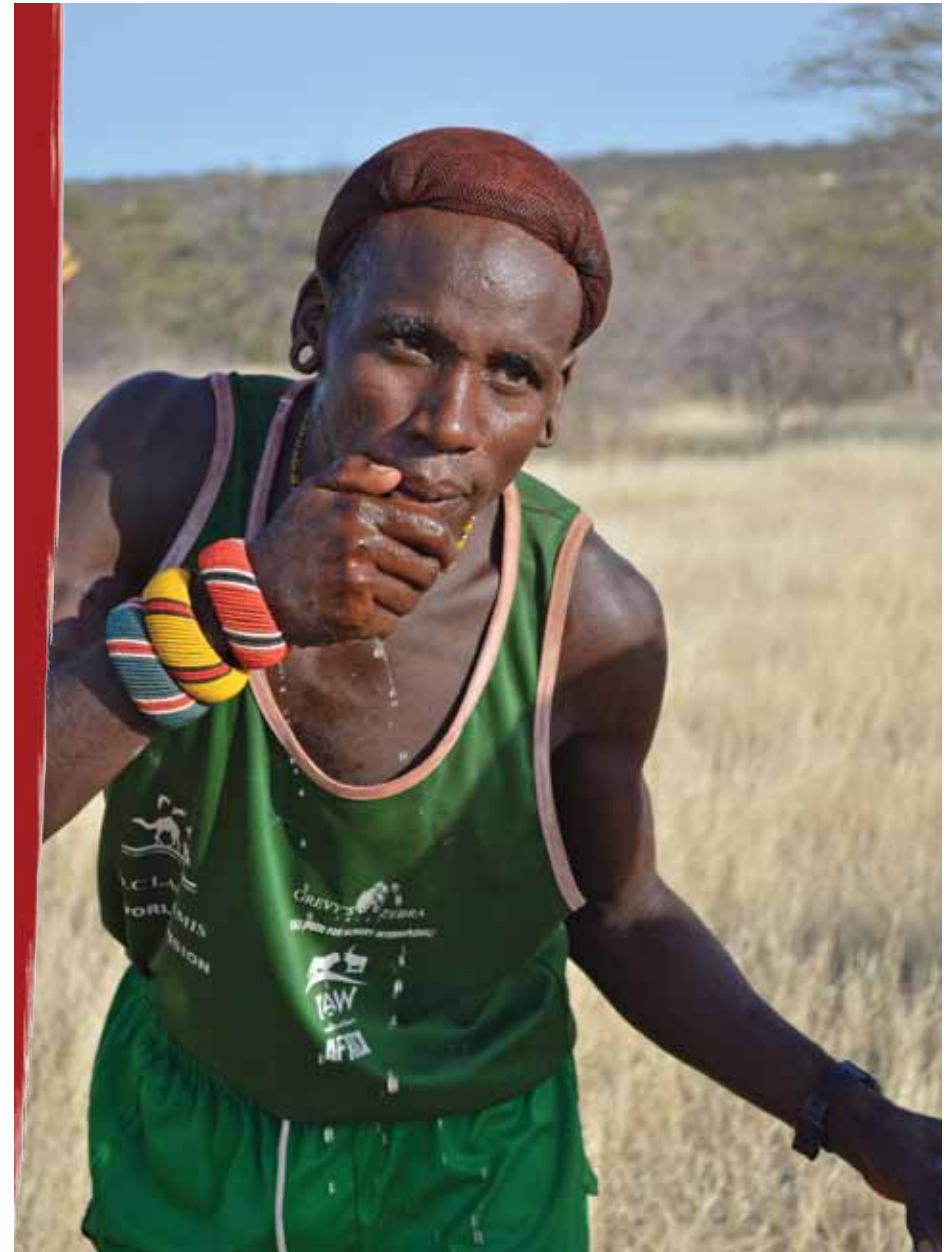
*“One thing is sure – if we have peace,
it will be because the youth want
peace.”*

Mohammed Jirma, Biliqo-Bulesa ranger

“That’s when the government and Isiolo county council asked if we could help,” says Tom. “We said we’d give it a try.” NRT put together a team of inter-ethnic elders to negotiate with the pastoralists. “They spent several weeks there, talking to the cattle owners, discussing possible solutions, explaining how much damage this was doing not just to Shaba but to the local economy,” says Tom. Eventually, the pastoralists agreed to move out. Within two months, Shaba was almost back to normal.

Running for peace

The first Safaricom Marathon was held at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in 2000. It attracted 180 runners and raised US\$50,000 for local conservation and welfare projects. By 2012, the marathon was attracting over 1,000 runners, including some of Kenya’s leading athletes. Jointly organised by Safaricom, Lewa and the Tusk Trust, the marathon now raises over US\$500,000 a year, NRT being one of the beneficiaries. No other marathon takes place in such a spectacular setting or in such close proximity to wildlife. Little wonder, then, that it is considered one of the top 10 ‘must do’ marathons in the world.



Cooling off. Many of the young men who competed in the Kom marathon said this was the first time they had interacted with members of other tribes.

The Kom marathon, in contrast, receives no press coverage and attracts nobody apart from the runners and a small number of people associated with the five community conservancies which the runners represent. Nevertheless, it is an event of profound importance. The first Kom marathon – the race begins and ends among the ruins of the town – was held in 2011. It was such a success that another was held the following year, attracting some 50 moran (and one brave girl).

“We have come to bring peace between the Borana and the Rendille,” says a young Rendille from Melako conservancy. As he catches his breath – the Melako moran have been limbering up in the late-afternoon sunshine – he and his friends reflect on their reasons for being here. “It is not just the Borana who are to blame for the fighting,” says another. “We Rendille have been equally at fault.” Most of these young men are still at high school, and some speak English. However, one of the runners is an older moran who is very much a warrior, with the traditional jewellery and plaited hair. “I just want peace,” he says. “I’m trying to be a role model for other moran like me.”

It is less than three years since 15 people were killed at Kom, but this now seems like a distant memory. The evening before the 2012 marathon, the moran share a meal, tell stories, dance and sing. The following day, the runners set off just before dawn. A ranger from Biliqo-Bulesa, here as part of the security team, nods approvingly. “This is very good, seeing these young men from different tribes spending time together,” says Mohammed Jirma, a Borana from Biliqo-Bulesa. “One thing is sure – if we have peace, it will be because the youth want peace.” The signs are that many do.

US\$ 500,000 is raised every year by the Safaricom Marathon on the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

Ranger pay and conditions – a mixed story

In 2012, NRT conducted a comprehensive audit of the rangers’ skills and living conditions in community conservancies. The audit revealed that rangers are remarkably dedicated and perform to a very high level, given the difficult conditions under which they must operate. They face many challenges on a daily basis, including the threats posed by poachers and banditry, relatively low levels of pay and poor accommodation. Improving the rangers’ welfare is a key priority for NRT and the conservancies.





3. CONSERVING WILDLIFE & NATURAL RESOURCES

“One of the great achievements of the conservancies is that they are giving a future to northern Kenya’s elephants,” says Ian Craig. We have just landed in his two-seater Piper Super Cub in a sandy lugga – a dry riverbed – in a remote part of Sera conservancy, and we are lunching on strong tea and tinned sardines in the shade of the doum palms. Recently, he explains, the carcass of a giraffe that had been stripped of meat was found near here – a sure sign of poachers. “Within 15 or 20 km of where we’re sitting, there’s a gang of poachers and they may already have killed some elephants,” says Ian. “We are searching for them – and we will follow until completion.” By ‘we’, he means rangers working for KWS, the conservancy and 9-1.

US\$ 9,000 - the value of an elephant to a poacher in northern Kenya



Simon Lerondin, a driver from Sera conservancy with a tusk recovered from poachers.

Opposite: The future of Kenya’s elephants hangs in the balance.

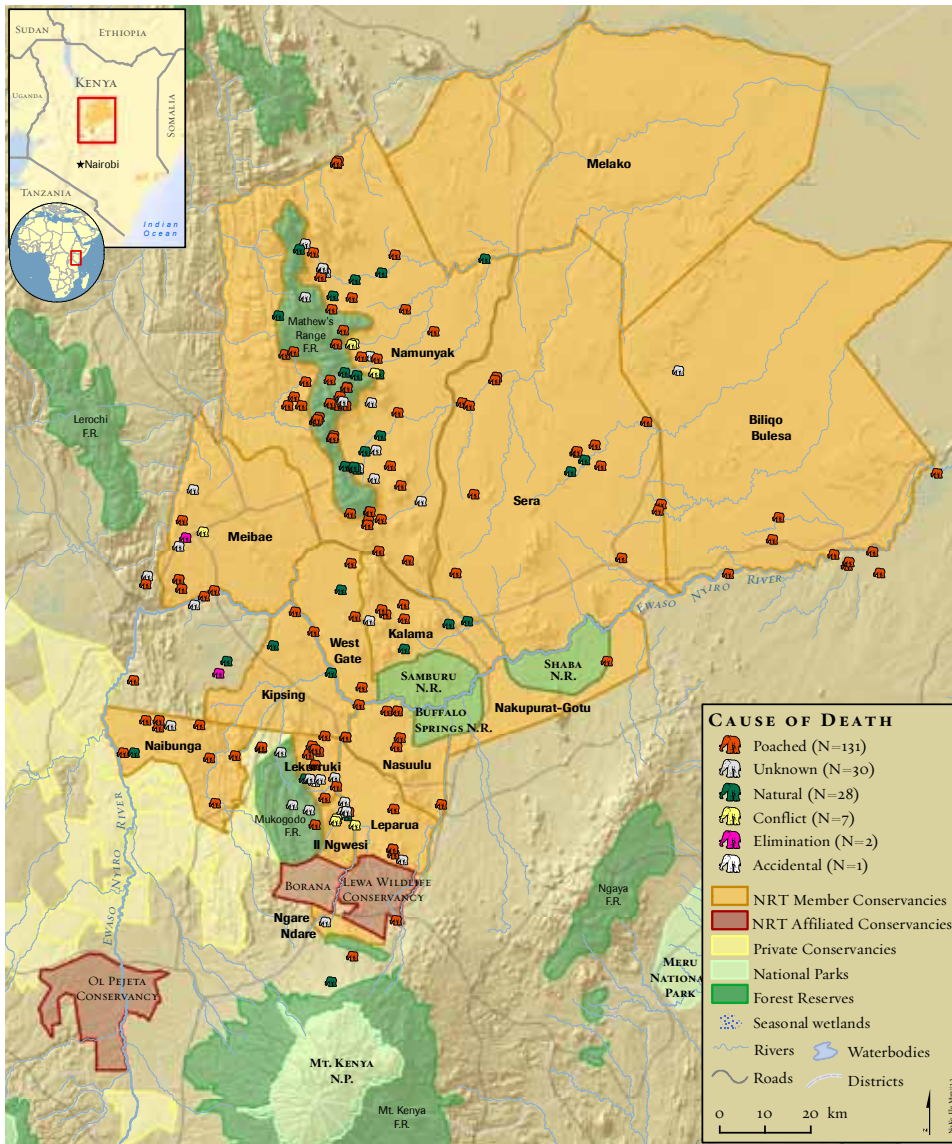


The vast majority of elephants are killed to satisfy the demand for ivory in China.

In 1973, there were over 160,000 elephants in Kenya. In less than 20 years, poaching had reduced the population to just 20,000. In 1989, the Kenyan President appointed Richard Leakey as head a new government department, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). Generously funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), KWS launched a vigorous anti-poaching campaign. The elephant population gradually increased, and it had reached 32,000 by 2010.

The population would be rising still had it not been for the temporary lifting of the ban on the sale of ivory, sanctioned by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 2007. This was designed to allow certain countries in Southern Africa to sell off their ivory stocks to China and Japan. It was supposed to be a one-off sale, but by creating a new market the measure seems to have stimulated a new wave of poaching. A few years ago, ivory would fetch US\$20 a kg on the black market in

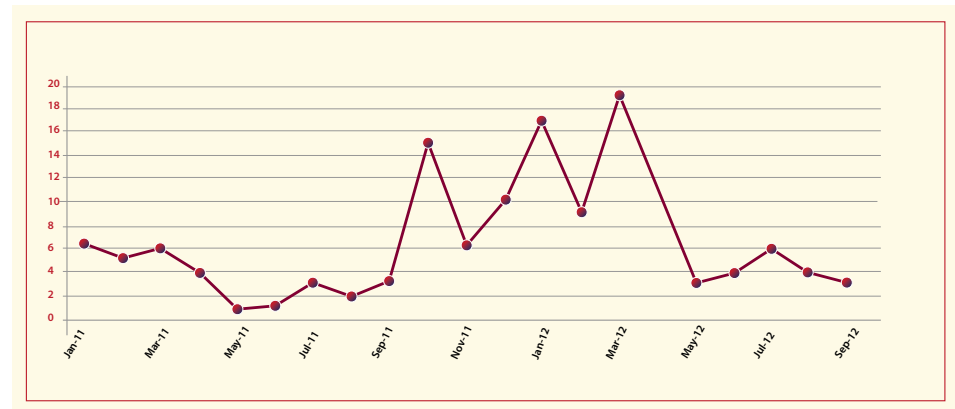
Monitoring elephant mortalities January 2011 - September 2012



a town like Wamba; now the price has risen to US\$120. That means that the tusks from a large elephant, weighing 35 to 40 kg, are worth around US\$9,000 to poachers – an enormous sum of money in rural Kenya. This is just a small fraction of the retail value of ivory in China. According to the Environmental Investigation Agency, a small polished tusk can fetch US\$35,000; a pair of ivory chopsticks, US\$200.

In 2010, 66 elephant carcasses were found within the NRT conservancies. Less than a third had been killed by poachers. In contrast, 87% of the elephants which died outside the conservancies had been killed for their ivory. This suggests that the conservancy rangers, KWS and 9-1 were managing to keep some control over the level of poaching in the conservancies.

22 elephants were killed in community conservancies in March 2012. By May, the figure had fallen to three.



Trends in the number of poached elephants (January 2011 - September 2012).

“One of the reasons why people will come here is because they want to see the elephant in a great African setting. That is why it is so important that we win the war against poaching.”

Ian Craig

During the following year the number of elephant carcasses found in the conservancies rose to 101, over two-thirds of which had been killed by poachers. Matters got worse still during the first three months of 2012. “I was getting one or two texts every day from the conservancies, telling me where elephants had been killed,” recalls Ian Craig. In Namunyak alone, 19 elephants were shot by poachers between January and March. Virtually all the ivory was destined for China; the same was true for Africa’s poached rhino horn.

However, the level of poaching declined dramatically in the second quarter of the year. In March, 20 elephants were killed in the conservancies. In April, the figure fell to 12; in May, to just three. “KWS made a dramatic response to the high levels of poaching, using lethal force,” explains Juliet King, a zoologist who manages NRT’s research and monitoring programme. “That made a big difference, as poachers realised there was a high chance of being killed in the field. At the same time, the KWS rangers were very well supported by the conservancy rangers and our 9-1 team.” According to conservancy managers, the return of their rangers from the Manyani Training School helped to reduce the level of poaching and banditry.

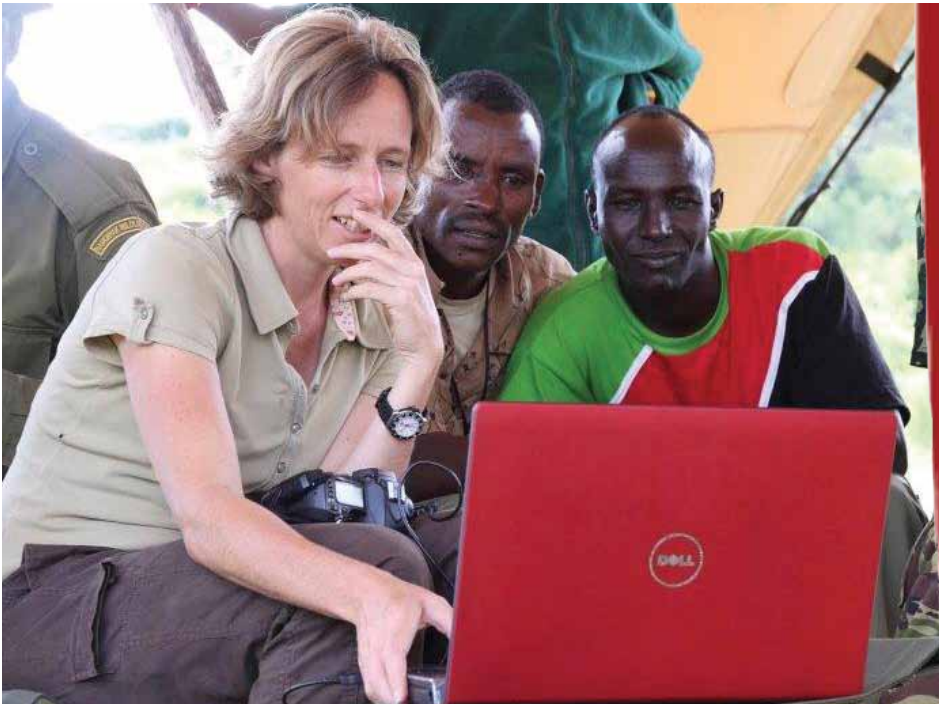
The vast majority of poachers – the people who do the dirty work on the ground – are locally known. Increasingly, communities are coming forward to name them. To give just one example, the District Commissioner in Wamba recently called all his chiefs

together and provided them with the names of local poachers. “Some of the chiefs actually brought the poachers to Wamba, others were given a severe warning about their future behaviour,” says Juliet. “There’s no doubt that this social pressure is beginning to have an effect.” Unfortunately, the courts continue to treat poachers leniently, frequently imposing fines that are derisory when compared to the profits made from poaching.

“I believe we will only begin to see the real value of these conservancies in 30 or 40 years time,” says Ian Craig. Imagine a stable Kenya with good economic growth. Imagine that the number of tourists rises from the current 1 million to 3 or 4 million. The famous national parks, like Tsavo and Maasai Mara, are already full to bursting, and many visitors are already looking for a wilder, more natural experience. “I see northern Kenya as the next big wildlife-based tourist destination,” says Ian, “and one of the reasons why people will come is because they want to see the elephant in a great African setting. That is why it is so important that we win the war against poaching.”



Cheetahs are among the predators found in Ishaqbini community conservancy.

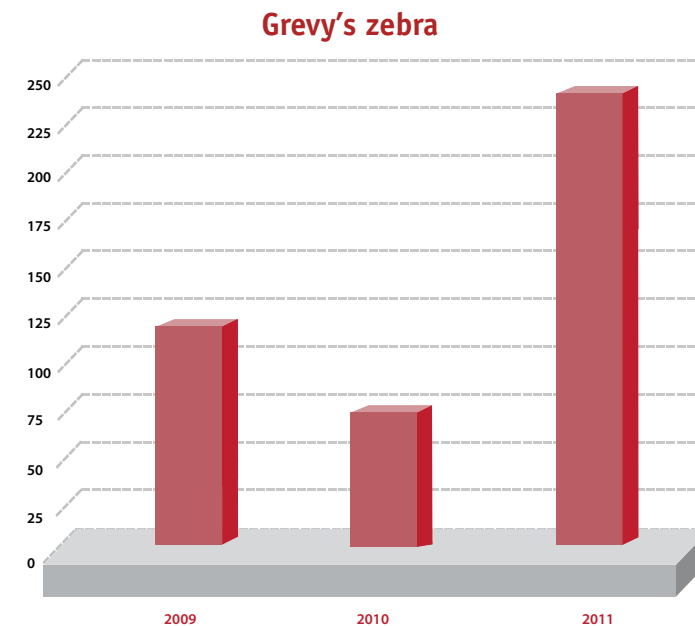
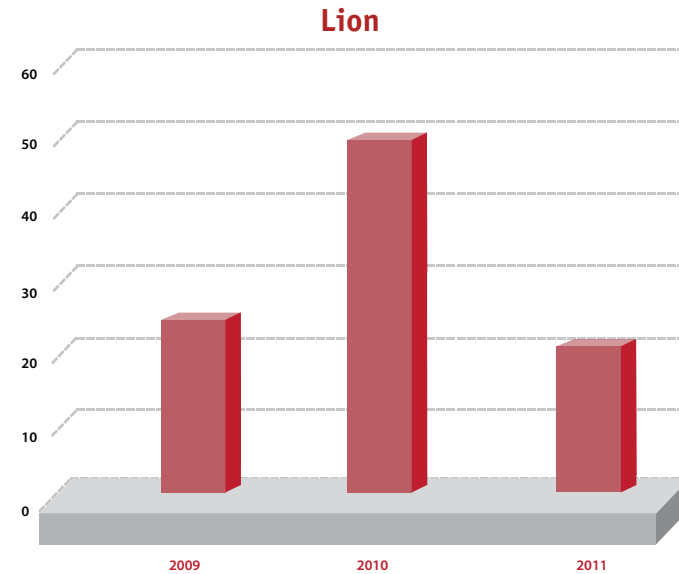


NRT zoologist Juliet King with research & monitoring assistant Sinyati Lesowapir and Namunyak assistant conservancy warden Augustine Lereesh.

Monitoring success (and sometimes failure)

Soon after NRT was set up, Juliet King recognised the need to establish a simple, cost-effective system to monitor changes in the abundance of wildlife in the conservancies. This led to the development of the Conservancy Management Monitoring System, or CoMMS. "Ecological monitoring is generally a highly complex process, requiring considerable scientific expertise and expense," says Juliet. CoMMS, in contrast, requires little external scientific input, relying instead on the skills and knowledge of conservancy managers and their rangers.

The monitoring system, which is one of the first of its kind, was piloted in Sera in 2005.



Rangers routinely monitor wildlife populations and are able to detect changes in abundance. These are two species in Sera conservancy.

It is based on measuring the relative abundance of species, gauged not by their absolute numbers but on sightings by rangers. Initially, conservancies which adopted the system compiled a paper database. Once it became clear that the system was working well, rangers were provided with global positioning system (GPS) devices so that they could record the exact location of every sighting. They were then trained in computer skills and taught how to prepare abundance histograms and maps.

By 2011, approximately 200 rangers were gathering data on a daily basis over some 900,000 ha. “The fact that CoMMS elephant data is now being used as part of the CITES Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme shows that it doesn’t require teams of scientists to produce credible, reliable information,” says Juliet.

In all but one conservancy – Ltungai, which has been plagued by conflict and poaching – wildlife populations are either stable or increasing. Sera is typical of the more successful conservancies. Between 2006 and 2011, buffalo and eland populations remained stable, while sightings of elephant, giraffe, cheetah, Grevy’s zebra and oryx increased significantly. One of the few species which seems to be declining throughout the region is lion. This is because they are frequently shot and poisoned in areas with high populations of livestock.

Saving the flagship species

NRT and the conservancies seek to protect all wildlife, but certain flagship species besides the elephant have received special attention. One of the great success stories concerns the highly endangered Grevy’s zebra, 93% of which are found in northern Kenya. The population declined from around 15,000 in the 1970s to 2,000 by the end of the century, largely as a result of disease, hunting and the loss of suitable grazing land. An anthrax vaccination programme and improvements in rangeland management, introduced by the Grevy’s Zebra Trust and the conservancies, have helped to boost the population. Around 60% of all the zebras are now found on land owned by local communities, and frequently they can be seen grazing in the company of cattle.

Another species which has received special attention is the hirola, the world’s most endangered antelope. Largely confined to north-east Kenya, the hirola suffered greatly from an outbreak of disease and from hunting during the latter decades of the last century. The main culprits were refugees from Somalia, Kenyan government forces – they refer to bushmeat as Combo 11, as opposed to Combo 10, the standard army rations – and communities living to the west of the Tana River. As a result, the hirola population was reduced to a few hundred individuals, many of which are to be found in Ishaqbini community conservancy.

During the 1960s, and again during the 1990s, the government attempted to establish populations of hirola in Tsavo East National Park, with mixed success. The hirola proved so easy to kill that it was locally known as ‘the stupid antelope.’ Fortunately, the hirola



Improvements in rangeland management are critical to the survival of Grevy’s zebra in NRT conservancies, and are leading to an increase in populations.

is revered by the Abdullah Somali, the main ethnic group in Ishaqbini, and they were happy to set up a core conservation area of 2,000 ha within the conservancy to protect the hirola. However, predators thrived in the core area too: in just one year, lion and wild dog reduced the hirola population by 15%.

With the support of NRT and KWS, and funding from The Nature Conservancy, an area of 3,000 ha has now been fenced off as a predator-proof hirola sanctuary. "It's very exciting having an intervention to safeguard an endangered species on this scale, taking place within a conservancy with the full support of the local community," says Juliet King. She believes that the mid-2012 population of 48 individuals in the sanctuary will rise rapidly. Before long, their progeny will be used to repopulate areas where the hirola has disappeared.

60% of the world's Grevy's zebras are found on land owned by local communities.

Private conservancies such as Lewa and Ol Pejeta have had great success in building up rhino populations. There is no reason to suppose that community conservancies could not do the same, and NRT is supporting the creation of a rhino sanctuary in Sera conservancy. In June 2012, a team of 40 unemployed local men was hacking a path through the thorny scrub along the line of the projected fence in Sera. The project had been approved by KWS, and conservancy manager Reuben Lendiria hopes that Sera will soon be home to some 20 black rhinos. The local communities will undoubtedly benefit. "The sanctuary will create jobs and attract tourists," he says. "That will help us to increase our revenues, which will mean there is more money both for development projects and conservation."

A brief word here about the relationship between KWS and the conservancies. Shortly after Richard Leakey took charge of the government's wildlife programme – in 1989, the



Sera conservancy has carved out a new fence line through the bush for its rhino sanctuary, using local labour.

Wildlife Conservation and Management Department became the Kenya Wildlife Service – the decision was taken to establish a Community Wildlife Service. "At the time, most local communities were very hostile to wildlife, and that's one of the reasons why wild animal populations were declining outside the national parks," says Munira Bashir, Head of Community Enterprises at KWS. "Around 70% of wildlife is to be found outside the national parks, and it was clear to us that wildlife would only thrive if communities became more involved in conservation, and benefited from the presence of wildlife."

Around the time Il Ngwesi and Namunyak were being established as the first community conservancies in northern Kenya, KWS was helping rural communities in the Shimba Hills, near the coast, to set up Mwaluganje community conservancy as an elephant sanctuary. All three conservancies benefited from the financial assistance of USAID's

Conservation of Biodiverse Resource Areas (COBRA) Project. Since then, KWS has been a keen supporter of community conservancies and NRT. “We look at NRT as a model of how to support conservancies, and we’d like to see something similar replicated in other parts of the country,” says Munira. The NRT model is helping to drive the development of new government regulations for establishing, registering and managing community conservancies in Kenya.

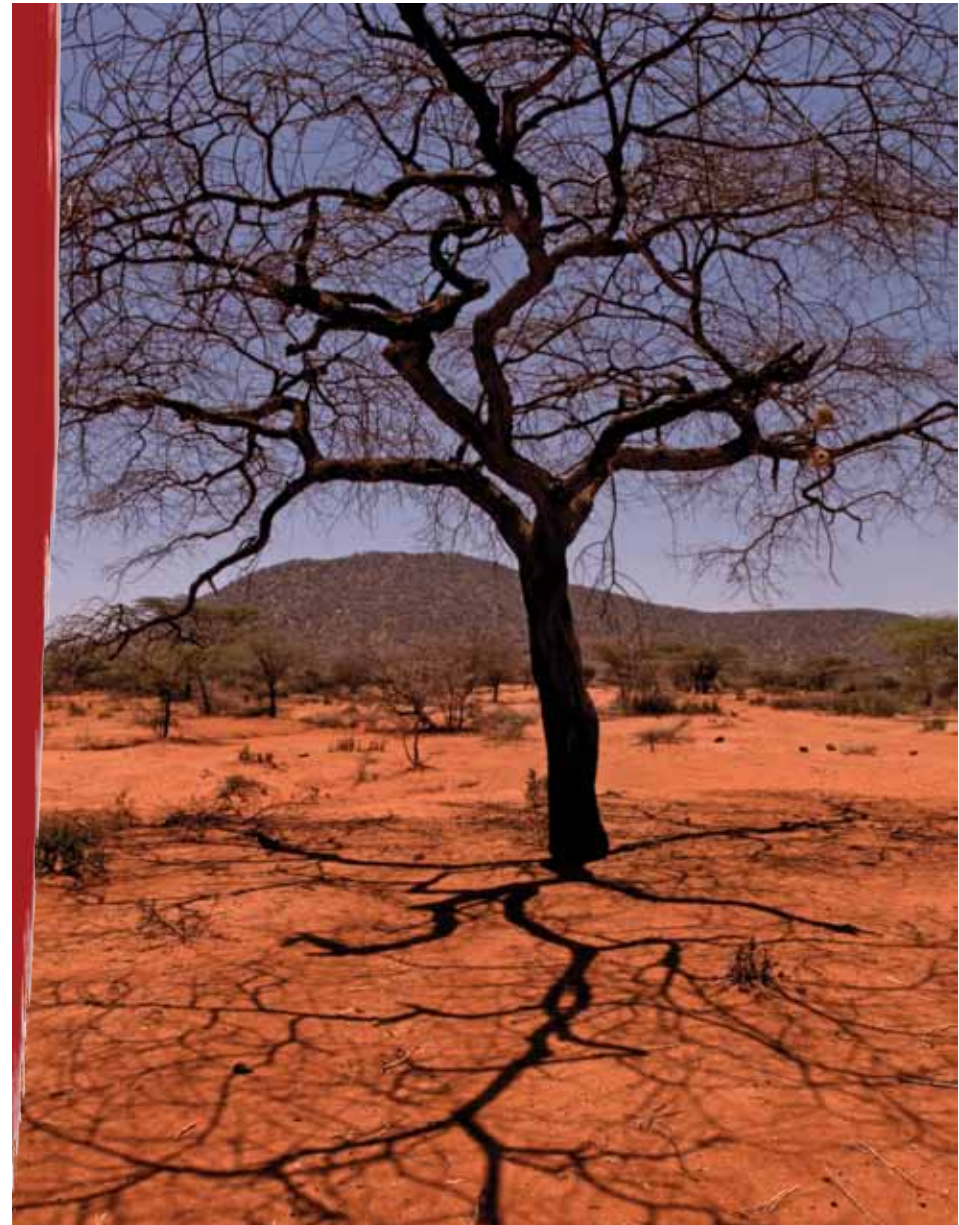
Managing the rangelands

In many of the conservancies, and over much of northern Kenya, poorly planned grazing by domestic livestock has had a devastating impact on the landscape. All too often, you will see herds of skinny animals moving over tracts of bare red earth, searching for scarce fodder. This is a miserable state of affairs not just for the livestock and their owners, but for wild animals too. However, there is a solution – one which many conservancies have begun to embrace.

“When I was a child, the grasslands here were in very good condition,” recalls Michael Lesachore, the chair of West Gate conservancy’s grazing committee. “But there were many fewer people then, and many fewer cattle than there are now.” By the time the conservancy was established in 2004, large areas were almost devoid of perennial grasses, with much of the soil bare all year round.

West Gate identified a relatively small core zone to be managed for wildlife and tourism. Cattle were excluded, and before long the vegetation began to recover. In the buffer zone beyond, the condition of the grassland steadily worsened: heavy rains opened up deep gullies in the landscape and an invasive shrub, *Acacia reficiens*, took over much of the area. It was time to act.

Following a study tour to a pioneering grazing scheme in Zimbabwe, organised by NRT and the Grevy’s Zebra Trust, a group of elders agreed to introduce a new system of livestock management on 1,200 ha of land in the buffer zone. “The main objective of



Ravaged by poorly planned grazing and drought, areas such as this are urgently in need of better management. In many conservancies, new grazing practices are restoring the grasslands and benefiting both cattle and wildlife.



Before and after: better grazing management has helped to improve the the grasslands in West Gate conservancy.

the holistic rangeland management programme is to improve the condition of the soil and ensure that there is good grass cover all year round,” says Peter Leshakwet, NRT’s grazing coordinator.

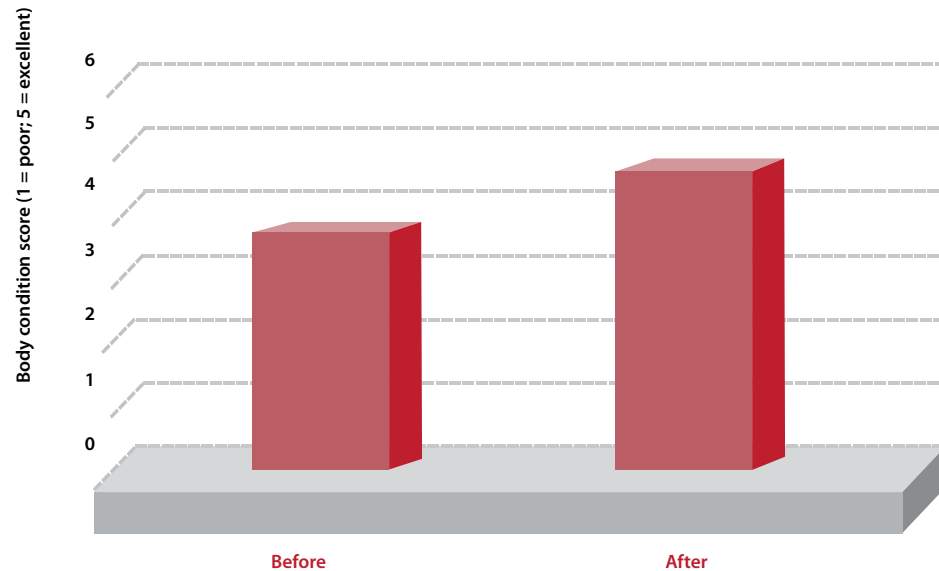
This involves a number of measures, including bunching of cattle. Traditionally, cattle are scattered across the landscape. Bunching brings large herds together in one place for limited periods of time. “This helps to break up the hard pan – the encrusted soil surface – and fertilise the soil,” says Peter. “One of the main aims of the programme is to limit the amount of time animals spend in one place, and make sure they eat what’s in front of them. They must not be choosy.”

The first phase of the programme involved 200 head of cattle owned by 20 pastoralists.

“We began in June 2010 and worked out a system of moving the cattle around over a four-month period,” explains West Gate’s grazing coordinator, Joseph Letoole. “The land was then left to rest, so that the grass could rejuvenate.” The conservancy also conducted a perennial grass reseeding programme and began eradicating the invasive Acacia. This led to such an improvement in rangeland condition that the conservancy was able to increase the number of cattle in the area to 500 head, belonging to over 102 families, the following season.

“We look at NRT as a model of how to support conservancies.”

Munira Bashir, Kenya Wildlife Service



Using their own system of assessing the state of their livestock, pastoralists in community conservancies have found that better dry-season grazing management improves the condition of their cattle. *Graph courtesy of the Grevy's Zebra Trust.*

“The community now accepts that this is the best way to manage the grasslands,” explains Peter Leshakwet, “and we’ve had similar success and support in the other conservancies, such as Kalama and Lekurruki, where we’ve introduced holistic rangeland management.” In West Gate, oryx, Grevy’s zebra and other wild herbivores are now returning to areas they had previously shunned for lack of forage. Just as importantly, the cattle have benefited too.

“I really appreciate this new regime,” says Joseph Leporole, an elder who served for 15 years as a councillor for West Gate. “You only have to look at the condition of the cows which have been involved in the grazing programme, and those we kept at home around our bomas, to see the difference.” Earlier in the year, he had sold some of his cattle to NRT. The animals which had benefited from the new grazing regime fetched 28,000 Kenyan shillings (US\$330); the ones that he had kept at home, which were the same

age, were sold for 21,000 Kenyan shillings (US\$250). The lesson is clear: better grazing management translates into healthier, fatter cattle and higher incomes.

Since 2008, NRT has been monitoring the impact of grazing management in the conservancies. In most cases, vegetation cover has increased and the area of bare ground has decreased. However, this is often a slow process, the benefits being seen over years rather than months. The best grasslands are to be found where there are relatively high densities of livestock and wild herbivores, but the livestock must be well managed. The holistic rangelands management programme is showing how this can be done.



Oryx are among the many herbivores to benefit from improved grazing regimes.

THE WEST GATE STORY

Most families in West Gate still live in low, lozenge-shaped dwellings constructed from mud, branches and hide. The moran stride about the landscape in all their finery; the women wear a great weight of colourful beadwork on their shoulders; young girls and boys with tall spears follow cattle and goats back to their boma at nightfall. The casual visitor might surmise that the way of life in this arid and remote part of northern Kenya has changed little from one generation to the next. But first impressions are deceptive.

“When I was growing up, cattle were allowed to graze everywhere and the grasslands were seriously degraded,” says Tom Lalampaa, NRT’s community development manager. “People would cut trees for firewood without thinking of the consequences, and poaching wiped out giraffe and many other animals. Most children didn’t go to school. There was a lot of conflict with neighbouring tribes and nobody would ever think of coming to invest in tourism or any other enterprise. But there have been huge changes since then.”

In 2004, the elders decided that the best way of addressing the many problems they faced was through the creation of a community conservancy. They asked Tom, the only person in the community to have received a university education at that time, to be the first manager. This is when the transformation of West Gate began.

Tom is not sure when he was born: probably around 1973 or 1974. He spent the first four or five years of his life herding livestock. Then one day a government official suggested to the elders that it was time to send some of the children to school. Tom was one of six young boys who were taken on the long two-day walk to the nearest town, Wamba. “We were half naked when we arrived – we had never worn good clothes before – and we were each given a shuka to wear,” recalls Tom. The shuka served as a school uniform during the day and a bed sheet at night.





At the end of each term he and his young Samburu friends would walk home, through countryside thick with wild animals, often to find that their semi-nomadic families had moved on. “It didn’t bother us, because we would always track them down in the end,” he recalls. Of the six boys, three made it to high school, and one – Tom – to university in Nairobi, where he gained an MBA in Strategic Management, an MA in Project Planning and Management, and a BA in Social Work.

“Since the conservancy was established, there has been a complete turnaround in the fortunes of the communities,” says Tom. “Right now, there are 14 young men from West Gate who are studying at university and another 26 at college.” All are being supported by bursaries provided by the conservancy, using the money raised from tourism.

The conservancy has also supported the expansion of Ngutuk Ongiron and Lpus Leluai primary schools, and it is paying the fees of several schoolteachers and supporting various pre-schools. Wildlife populations have increased and better grazing management has improved both the quality of the rangelands and the health of the cattle. The conservancy is now by far the largest employer in the area, proving jobs for about 90 people.

“What makes this story all the more interesting,” says Mike Harrison, NRT’s chief executive officer, “is that West Gate has gone through some difficult times. It hasn’t all been plain sailing.” Not long after Tom moved to NRT, in 2006, the conservancy suffered a long period of incompetent management. The community eventually lost patience, disbanded the board, sacked the management and senior staff, and elected a new board. With the help of NRT, West Gate has now been transformed into a model conservancy. In 2009, and again in 2011, West Gate won NRT’s Conservancy Performance Award, which recognises the highest achievement in terms of performance and good governance.



Tom Lalampaa (top left) and scenes from West Gate conservancy.



4. STIMULATING THE ECONOMY, IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS

Since 2008, pastoralists in Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy have sold over 600 cattle to NRT through its 'Linking Livestock Markets to Wildlife Conservation' programme. In the last round of sales, in January 2012, 132 families sold 266 cattle at an average price of 32,000 Kenyan shillings (US\$375).

In the past, says Nura Ali, who represents the village of Dima-Ado on the conservancy board, the pastoralists here used to make a ten-day trek to Isiolo to sell their cattle. On the way they spent money on food and lodging and risked losing animals to cattle raiders and bandits. "It's totally different with the NRT programme," says Nura. "NRT buys the cattle here and we get paid straight away. We also get a better price." During

"It's totally different with the NRT programme. NRT buys the cattle here and we get paid straight away. We also get a better price"

Nura Ali, Dima-Ado village pastoralist

the last sales, he was paid 35,000 Kenyan shillings (US\$410) for a cow which would have fetched no more than two-thirds of that in Isiolo.



Cattle are vitally important to the economies of most community conservancies.

The pastoralists in Biliqo-Bulesa are keen to sell more cattle through NRT's livestock programme, and they are well aware of the fact that NRT expects something in return. "We will only have access to the programme if we manage the conservancy properly, and look after the wildlife," says Nura. "If we don't, then NRT won't buy our cattle."

In 2008, NRT devised criteria to monitor performance in the conservancies. The conservation leverage tables, as they are known, are based on an evaluation of three factors. The first is governance, as good governance is seen as the foundation of successful community-based conservation; the second assesses the conservancies' achievements in terms of improving habitats and encouraging wildlife; the third evaluates their success – or otherwise – in improving livelihoods and local incomes.

"In everything we do, we are seeking to link conservation with the welfare of the pastoralist communities," says Juliet King, who helped to devise the tables. Although most of the funding which sustains the conservancies still comes from donors, commercial enterprises, such as the livestock programme and tourism, are playing an increasingly important role. They are improving local livelihoods and, at the same time, encouraging better management of wildlife and natural resources.

Opposite: Conservancy cattle are fattened up at Ol Pejeta prior to slaughter.

Quid pro cow

Pastoralists in northern Kenya face many challenges. These include a lack of good information about the prices which cattle are fetching in the main market centres, the great distances which must be travelled between the more remote conservancies and livestock markets, and exploitation by unscrupulous dealers. The NRT programme is helping to overcome some of these problems. By mid-2012, over 1,800 pastoralists from 11 conservancies had sold 4,415 cattle to NRT for a total value of 97 million Kenyan shillings (US\$1.17 million).

Ol Pejeta plays a pivotal role in the programme. The conservancy is not only one of the great wildlife sites in northern Kenya, supported by Fauna and Flora International, it is a commercial ranch, renowned for the high quality of its Boran breeding stock. "There was no point in reinventing the wheel, and the programme has relied heavily on Ol Pejeta's expertise," says Caroline Karwitha, NRT's livestock programme manager.

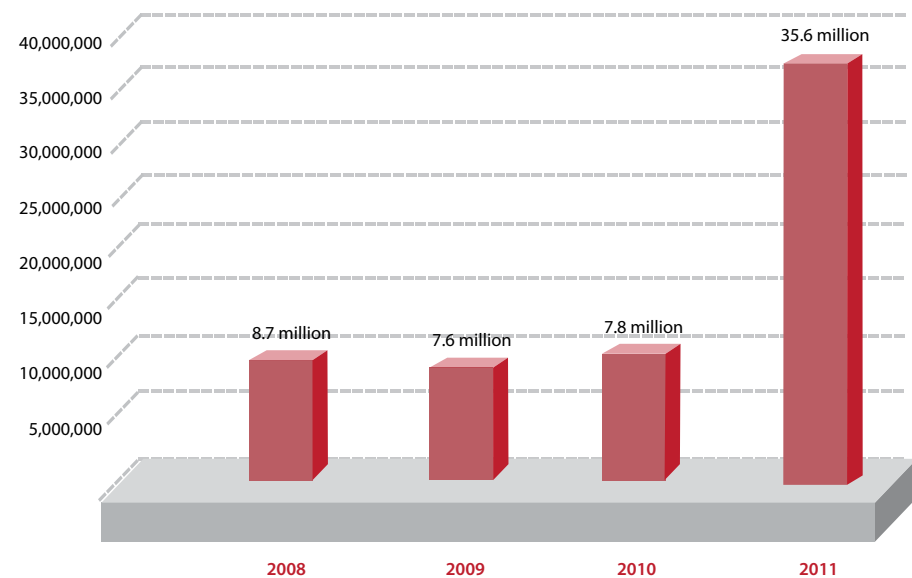
Once NRT has decided where to buy the next batch of cattle, it alerts the conservancy,

which lets pastoralists know how many cattle the programme will buy and where and when to gather for the sales. On the chosen day, Ol Pejeta livestock manager Giles Prettejohn identifies which animals he wants – frequently, pastoralists will come with two or three times more cattle than will be bought – and grades them according to quality. The prices are agreed, and a few days later NRT will return to the conservancy to make cash payments. NRT does its best to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the programme. The average number of cattle bought is often no more than two per family.

US\$ 400,000 - NRT livestock purchases from 450 pastoralists in 2011



Giles Prettejohn, Ol Pejeta's livestock manager, at a cattle market with local elders.



The revenue generated (in Kenyan shillings) from NRT's livestock programme.



Stamp of approval. Cattle identified with the conservancy brands awaiting slaughter at Ol Pejeta.

NRT then hires teams of herders to trek the cattle to Lewa – from some conservancies this can take up to two weeks – and the animals are held in quarantine for 21 days to ensure that they are not carrying diseases such as contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP). Another team of herders then trek the

cattle to Ol Pejeta, which takes another four or so days. Many arrive in scraggy condition, but after a few months on nutritious pasture, with access to minerals and vitamins, they will be in good condition for slaughter and the market.

“The cattle from the conservancies vary considerably in quality,” says Joseph Mathenge, deputy livestock manager at Ol Pejeta, as he walks among some of the recent arrivals from Biliqo-Bulesa. “Many of these are females and they’ll end up as standard class. But some of the steers are of higher quality, and they will fetch a better price in the market.” Ol Pejeta makes little in the way of profit from the livestock programme, but this is beside the point. “Conservation is at the heart of what we do,” says Joseph, “and we’re very proud of the way this project is helping pastoralists and encouraging them to conserve wildlife.”

The project is helping to stabilise the market and taking some of the risk out of selling. At present, NRT covers the costs of the project and returns the profits to a capital fund for future purchases. Discussions are currently underway about introducing a 2.5% levy on the purchase price. This would be returned to the conservancies, together with 5% of the sales price at Ol Pejeta, which is already returned to conservancies as a reward

for good governance, conservation and rangelands management. Samburu County has agreed to return 40% of the county council levy on the sales and purchases to the conservancies. It is hoped that other counties will shortly follow suit.

Over the coming years, the livestock programme will steadily expand. “At the moment, we are buying around 1,200 cattle a year, but aim to increase this to 5,000,” says Caroline Karwitha. “We’re also going to look at purchasing small livestock like sheep and goats.” Unlike the women’s bead trade (see Box: The bead business), which is subsidised by NRT, the livestock programme is a genuinely commercial operation, with the profits being plowed back into the conservancies.

The merits of high-end tourism

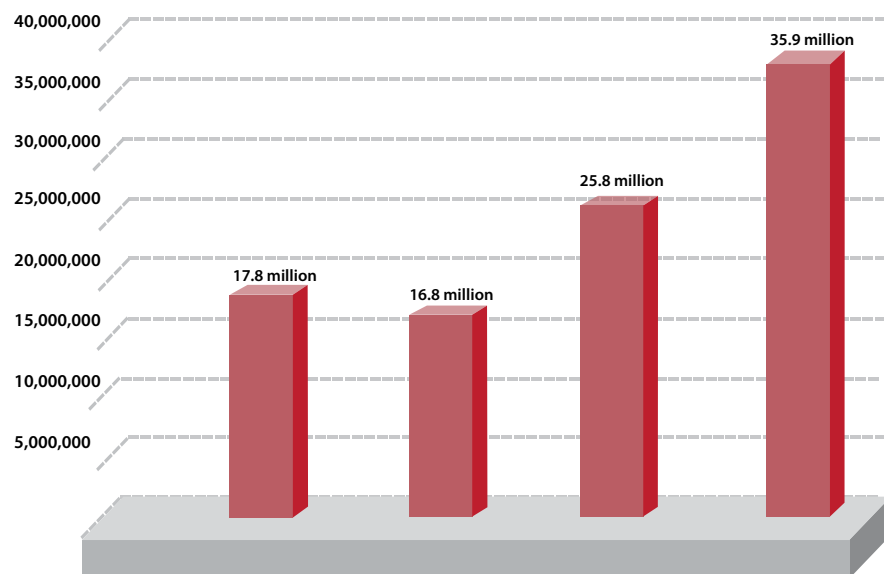


A room with a view. In 2011, Sarara Lodge contributed US\$210,000 to Namunyak conservancy.

Most tourists who visit Kenya on safari head for its famous national parks, to Maasai Mara, Tsavo, Amboseli and Mt Kenya. Some will visit the lesser-known wildlife reserves like Buffalo Springs, Shaba and Samburu, all close neighbours of the community conservancies. And a select few, the wealthy minority, will have the good fortune to spend time in the conservancies themselves, staying at some of the finest lodges in Africa. The emphasis here is on experiencing wildlife much as the locals do, away from the hurly-burly of tourist buses and multi-vehicle game drives.

200% - The increase in the conservancies' tourist revenue between 2008 and 2011

Gaze across the breakfast table in Sarara Lodge, at the foot of the Mathews Range, and you could imagine you're in the Garden of Eden. Elephants cluster around the pool below the lodge; beyond, wild dogs scuffle across a rocky outcrop; giraffes lope through the scrubland. During the course of the daily game drives you will see a great variety

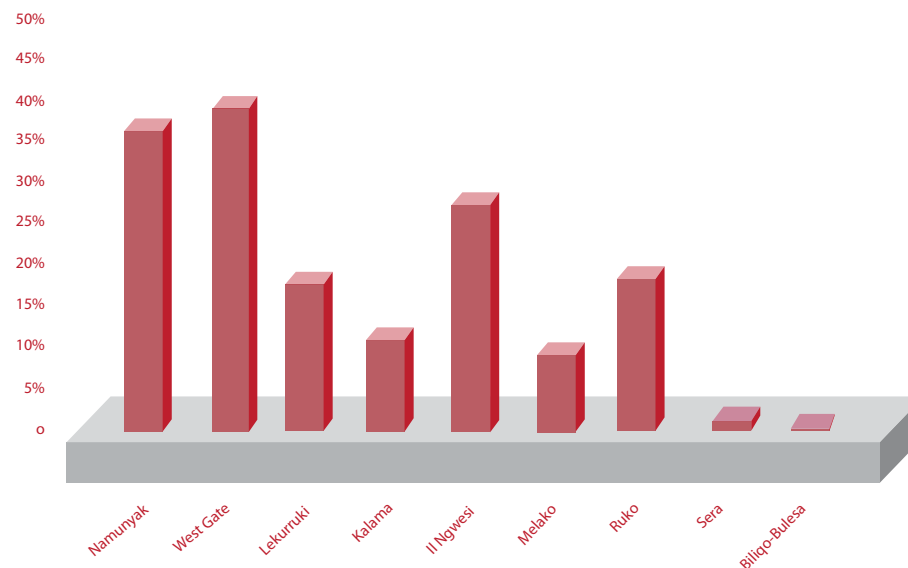


Tourism income to community conservancies (in Kenyan shillings).

of wildlife and scarcely any humans, save for a few spear-carrying warriors and herders.

During the peak season, visitors to Sarara and similar establishments – tourist facilities are now found in 10 conservancies – pay up to US\$800 a day. A significant portion of this goes to the conservancies. Sarara contributed 18 million Kenyan shillings (US\$210,000) to Namunyak conservancy in 2011; Sasaab Lodge 8 million shillings (US\$95,000) to West Gate conservancy; Saruni Lodge 4 million shillings (US\$48,000) to Kalama conservancy.

These ventures require significant capital investments, and significant trust and understanding on the part of the communities. NRT has played an important role in brokering deals between investors and the conservancies, involving lengthy negotiations over legal terms, the duration of agreements, fees, security, jobs and so forth. In the case of Sarara, the conservancy gave Piers Bastard, a well-known safari operator, the rights to establish a mobile camp in 1995. Two years later, a gas fridge exploded, burning the camp down. The Tusk Trust, recognising the important role which tourism can play in conserving elephants and other wildlife, provided finance to build a new



The percentage of the operational budget financed from the income of tourist ventures from nine conservancies.

lodge. Recently modernised, the lodge is now owned by the conservancy and managed by the Bastaard family, to the benefit of both parties.

“Piers understands the market, and he knows how to attract the sort of clients who can afford to come to places like this,” says Titus Letaapo, who was the Namunyak conservancy manager before he became a regional coordinator for NRT. Many other lodges, such as Sasaab, are owned by the investors, rather than the conservancies, and managed on a long-term lease, generally with an agreement that on the expiry of the lease – say, after 30 years – ownership will be transferred to the conservancy. However, some conservancies have opted to manage the tourist facilities themselves, with mixed results.

From a guests’ point of view, it would be hard to fault Il Ngwesi Lodge, which is owned and managed by the Laikipiak Maasai. The tented rooms are magnificent, the views wonderful, the service charming and the wildlife plentiful. However, the lodge has failed to yield the profits which were anticipated when it was established, seldom exceeding 1 million Kenyan shillings (US\$12,000) a year. There is a lesson to be learnt here, says NRT’s Gabriel Nyausi, who was the conservancy manager when the lodge was developed. “There are times of the year, even during the high season, when some or all of the bandas are unoccupied,” he says. “The truth is that marketing is a significant challenge, and it isn’t something in which the community have any expertise.”

All the same, experience over the past decade has proved that tourism can make a significant income for many conservancies. This provides an incentive for conservation: the tourists will only come if there is plenty of wildlife to see. Daryl Black, the manager of Saruni Lodge in Kalama conservancy, tells a story which illustrates the symbiotic relationship between tourism and wildlife. After Ian Craig had shown a potential investor a possible site for a lodge, they spent a day looking for wildlife. “They saw hardly anything,” explains Daryl, “and Riccardo Orizio, who was thinking of investing here, expressed his concern. He said it was beautiful, but

without the wildlife, the tourists wouldn’t come.”

Ian managed to convince Riccardo, an Italian writer and safari guide, that the wildlife would return. It was just a question of time, as the conservancy was still in its early years. And sure enough it has. “Without leaving the lodge, you can see ostrich, gerenuk, dikdik, oryx, Grevy’s zebra, elephant and giraffe,” says Daryl, “and last night you could hear lions and hyenas.”

Put in pecuniary terms, the message is: look after the wildlife, and the tourist dollars will roll in. In 2011, the gross tourist income for all conservancies was 36 million



NRT frequently brokers agreements between investors and community conservancies. NRT chief executive officer, Mike Harrison, West Gate conservancy chairman, Ltepesuan Lesachore, and the director of Tamimi Ltd, Michiel Hoogerwerf, celebrate the signing of an agreement which gives Tamimi a 30-year lease to operate Sasaab Lodge.

give just one example, USAID paid for the installation of a pumping system which now provides water to the village of Dima-Ado in Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy. This has made an extraordinary difference to the lives of local people, especially the women and children. "Before we had this well," explains Alima Salesa as she draws a stream of fresh water into a plastic container, "we had to travel 20 km on foot to a small dam. It was a three-hour trip, and we had to do it three or four times a week." Not only has the well, which was installed in 2010, dramatically reduce the women's workload, it has helped to transform the health of the children. "If you'd come here before we got the well, you'd have seen how dirty our children were," says Roge Sime, the mother of one of the 9-1 rangers. "We could only wash them about once a month. Now, the children can have a shower every day." There used to be outbreaks of typhoid in the village, and not long ago several people died from cholera. These diseases, believes Roge, could now be a thing of the past.

"Before we had this well, we had to travel 20 km on foot to a small dam. It was a three-hour trip and we had to do it four times a week."

Alima Salesa

The provision of infrastructure, such as roads, airstrips, health clinics and water systems, has undoubtedly benefited local communities in the conservancies and, in some situations, the wildlife as well. However, Mike Harrison believes that the issue of ownership constantly needs to be addressed.

"The conservancies will often say that they need such-and-such a development – say, a water pump or a classroom – and NRT has gone looking for funds," he says. Assuming a donor has been willing to provide the finance, the pump or the classroom has been built.

"A year or two later, if the pump breaks down, or the roof of the classroom is blown off, the conservancy will come back and ask us to fix it. That's something that we shouldn't have to do. We are careful to say: 'No, you are the owner and you're the ones responsible for maintenance now, but we can help if you need it.'"

Mike also believes that NRT should be more systematic in terms of deciding what it will fund. "We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we are a conservancy support organisation, not a general development agency," he says. "That means that we should give priority to doing things where there is a clear link to conservation."

There is, however, one exception to this: education. The demand for education is so high in northern Kenya, and the government provision so limited, that he believes NRT should continue to support improvements in schools and education. Kenya has a national average school enrolment rate of 95%, but this falls to 23% in the drylands of northern Kenya. Lewa already has a comprehensive education programme and a dedicated education officer. NRT is in the process of developing a similar programme in partnership with Lewa, and by mid-2012 it had begun the task of raising funds and recruiting an education officer.



Funds raised from tourism have helped to pay for many water projects in the conservancies.

THE BEADS BUSINESS

Before I began making jewellery, we used to live off blood, meat and milk – that’s all we had to eat,” says Pilaso Lekoomet. It is market day in Sere-Olipi and Pilaso is one of around 30 women who have come to sell the jewellery they’ve made over the past month to NRT Trading. Once she has been paid, Pilaso will head for the market. “With the money I’ve made, I’m going to buy rice, maize and beans,” she says. She stresses that the rice will be the best quality Pishori rice.

In 2011, 848 women from six different conservancies manufactured jewellery which they sold for 7.2 million Kenyan shillings (US\$85,000) to NRT Trading. Set up in 2006 to develop micro-enterprises for women, NRT Trading provides training, credit, product designs and a market for over 80 women’s groups. It also sells the jewellery to overseas clients, such as zoos in the US and Australia.

848 women sold bead craft to NRT Trading in 2011, three times more than in 2008

“When we introduced our ideas to the women in Kalama and Sera, they had a wait-and-see attitude,” recalls Celina Butali, who manages NRT Trading. “It took some time to convince them that they could use their skills in beadwork to make a significant income for themselves.” However, it wasn’t long before the business began to flourish.

Talk to any of the women and they will tell you much the same story. Their endeavours have provided them with a degree of independence from their husbands. “In the past, we always had to ask our husbands for money when we wanted to buy anything, either for ourselves or our children,” says Hafaro Galimogle, who chairs a woman’s group in Laisamis, on the eastern border of Melako conservancy. “But now we’ve got our own money, we are able to pay for our children to go to school and buy better food.” She has used some of her earnings to get piped water installed in her house. Others have bought mobile phones, goats and domestic appliances.

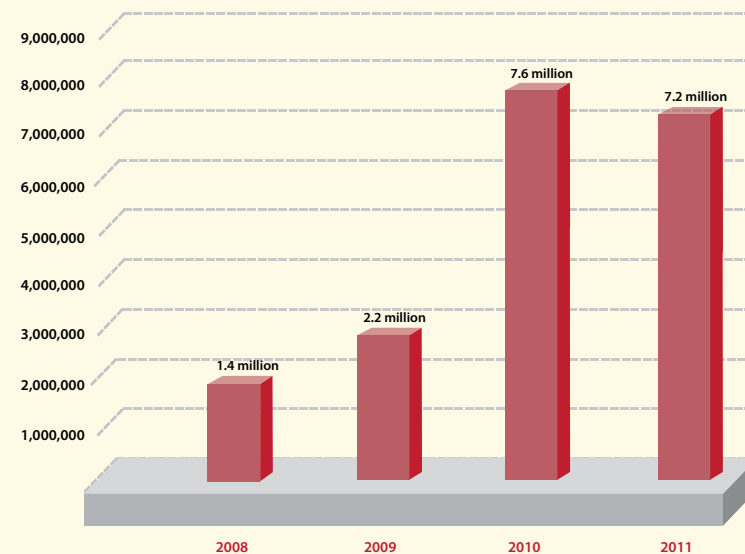




Before she heads for the shops, Pilaso, a young mother with four children, explains that her jewellery income has not only improved the health and diet of her family, but made her life easier. "I spend several hours most days making jewellery," she says, "but that's far easier than collecting and selling firewood, as I used to in the past."

With support from Safaricom, USAID, Zoos Victoria in Australia and others, NRT has been able to establish a microcredit programme worth 2 million Kenyan shillings (US\$23,500). So far none of the women's groups have defaulted; all have paid back their loans on time. The microcredit schemes have enabled individuals and groups to set up enterprises which are providing new sources of income. To give just one example, Noong'uta Lemarle, a Samburu woman in Kalama conservancy, took out a 10,000 Kenyan shillings (US\$120) loan to buy a solar panel. People in her village now pay her a small fee to charge their mobile phones.

Although NRT continues to subsidise the trading programme, a new business plan is being developed. This will help to consolidate and expand the market so that it covers all the operating costs, while at the same time providing a steady income to increasing numbers of women in the conservancies.



The income, in Kenyan shillings, from bead work sold to NRT Trading.



5. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

In March 2012, the Presidents of Kenya and South Sudan and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia launched what will become the biggest and most ambitious infrastructure programme in Africa this century. The Lamu Port – South Sudan – Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) is designed to transform regional economies by increasing trade and transport from east to west, from Kenya to Cameroon, and from south to north, from Nairobi to Addis Ababa. Recent studies estimate that the project will cost at least US\$22 billion.

“It’s important that the conservancies have a voice, and make their views known at an early stage while the project plans are still on the drawing board.”

Mike Harrison, NRT’s CEO

This will have a profound impact on northern Kenya, with the two transport corridors, which will include four-lane highways and high-speed rail, crossing at Isiolo. This dusty and sometimes violent small town, currently home to a population of around 45,000 people, is destined to become a ‘resort city’ with industrial facilities, conference centres and five-star hotels. This is part of Kenya’s ‘Vision 2030’ for long-term growth and development.

So how will this affect the conservancies? “Our concern is that there has been no proper environmental or social impact assessment,” says Mike Harrison. “This doesn’t mean that we are opposed to the project. If it’s done well, it could have a tremendously positive effect on northern Kenya, by bringing jobs, access to new markets, investment and so forth.”

However, if the project is carried out without due care for the local population and the environment, LAPSSET could have a devastating impact. Roads and pipelines could slice through wildlife migration routes; mass immigration could disrupt the traditional way of life of the pastoralist communities; ecotourism – a major income earner for many conservancies – could suffer; corruption and poaching could increase.

NRT is helping the conservancies to understand what the new developments will mean for them. “It’s important that the conservancies have a voice, and make their views known at an early stage while the project plans are still on the drawing board,” says Mike. They will need to show, when making their case, that they have viable businesses generating money from tourism and livestock.

There are other challenges beside the LAPSSET project. Recent oil discoveries in northern Kenya will lead to a proliferation of pipelines and roads, some of which could



Community conservancies have a vital role to play in protecting wildlife in northern Kenya.

Opposite: Northern Kenya’s community conservancies encompass a rich mix of habitats. Mountains near Wamba.

go through or near conservancy land. The population is steadily rising, in line with that of the country, which now has eight times as many people as it had half a century ago. Climate change and unpredictable weather patterns may pose just as great a threat to local communities. Droughts regularly lead to catastrophic livestock losses and significant increases in malnutrition.

“Better land management, more diverse sources of income, better education, strong governance systems – these lie at the heart of the conservancy model and they will give communities the resilience to cope with change in future,” says Mike.

Money matters

Donations are currently a major source of funding for the conservancies. At present, most donors tend to favour particular conservancies, to whom they channel funds through NRT. This is convenient for donors, as NRT’s involvement offers them quality assurance. However, the transaction costs are high. In 2012, 21 different donors provided funds ranging from US\$10,000 to US\$100,000. Processing these funds takes time and money and NRT would like to encourage donors to put their money into a pooled fund. NRT would then be responsible for distribution, and it could use the funds as a way of encouraging good performance.

Some conservancies are particularly well supported by donors; others – especially those which are out of the way and lack any great tourist appeal – have much greater difficulty raising funds. “If we had a pooled fund, we could make sure that there is a fairer distribution,” says Mike. “After all, we are all in this together.”

At present, it costs around US\$1.5 million a year to run the current 19 conservancies. Approximately US\$1.2 million comes from donors, US\$0.3 million is raised by commercial enterprises, and there is a very small contribution from government. NRT would like the balance to be more even, with a third coming from donors, a third from commercial enterprises, and a third from government. This will involve boosting commercial

activities within the conservancies. Encouragingly, KWS is determined to increase support from government.

In 2012, the Treasury allocated US\$180,000 to KWS to support community conservancies. “This is evidence of our close relationship with the government, and KWS’s recognition of the role these conservancies play in conservation and security,” says Mike. KWS is also in the process of amending the wildlife regulations so that these recognise the role of community conservancies. This will undoubtedly give them greater legitimacy.

By 2012, another 23 communities in northern Kenya had applied to NRT to help set up their own conservancies.

Such has been the success of the conservancy movement that NRT is receiving more and more requests for membership and help. By mid-2012, NRT was providing support for 19 conservancies. Another 23 communities had expressed a desire to establish conservancies and join NRT. “It is important that we don’t overstretch ourselves as a support organisation,” says Mike. To avoid that, NRT is in the process of establishing a number of independent satellite organisations. These will be able to fulfil a similar role to NRT for new conservancies in the more remote parts of northern and coastal Kenya.

The communities who manage the conservancies do so not just for their own benefit. Their activities also benefit the country as a whole. They are protecting the environment and creating a safe haven for wildlife. They are improving the way the land is managed. They are improving security and reducing conflict. And they are enhancing their own welfare and creating the conditions which will help future generations to prosper. In short, the government, and the people of Kenya, need the conservancy movement.

Opposite: Community conservancies are protecting some of the finest landscapes in Africa.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

Successful community-run conservancies are rare things in Africa. And the Northern Rangelands Trust, an umbrella organisation set up by community conservancies to provide them with support and guidance, is an even rarer thing. It is a real privilege for me to take over the reins as the Chief Executive Officer of NRT from Ian Craig, to help consolidate and extend the organisation's extraordinary success.

NRT is not a non-governmental organisation in the accepted sense; rather it is a support organisation rooted in the local community, drawing its mandate from the Council of Elders that guides its business. NRT seeks to maintain the values of its member conservancies, their vision for the coexistence of livestock, wildlife and people, and their strong sense of the need for different ethnic groups to work and live together in peace.

The story told in this booklet provides a snapshot of NRT's vision, the complexity of issues, and the diversity of people who have made community conservancy a reality in northern Kenya.

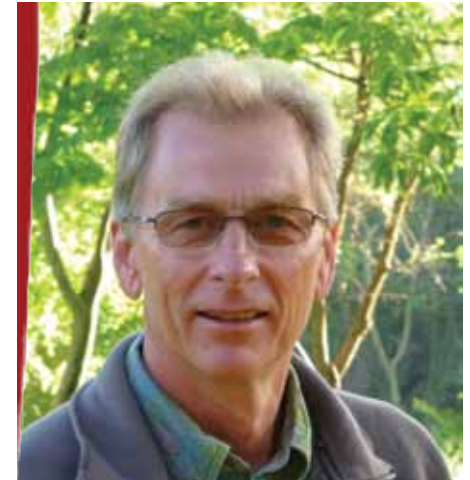
Inevitably, many of the people who have made NRT a success do not feature in these pages. There are many passionate and dedicated staff in NRT. There are committed leaders in the conservancies who have pioneered new ways of conserving wildlife and developing livelihoods and peace. And there are numerous financial supporters and working partners whose collaboration has – and will continue to be – invaluable.

Together they have helped to develop an inspirational model for sustainable development and conservation in these arid landscapes. They have helped to build the confidence of marginalized people to take charge of their own development. The conservancies now have the strength to face an uncertain future – a future with a changing climate, a future with a potential scramble for oil, a future under new county governments – with confidence and a strong voice.

I hope you have been inspired!

Mike Harrison

NRT's Chief Executive Officer





**NORTHERN
RANGELANDS
TRUST**



In the harsh environment of northern Kenya, communities struggle with frequent droughts, poor health care, sparse government services and the threats posed by cattle rustling and ivory poaching. They also carry the burden of ethnic rivalries that continue to threaten peace and development. But all this is beginning to change – thanks to a new movement based on community conservation.

By the end of 2012, community conservancies operating under the umbrella of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) were managing over 2 million ha of land and safeguarding the future of a wide range of species, from elephant to Grevy's zebra, hirola to rhinoceros. However, the conservancies are about much more than conservation: they are using wildlife to generate the capital needed to help communities improve their welfare and bring peace.

With the help of NRT, the conservancies have created over 500 permanent jobs and improved the livelihoods and welfare of tens of thousands of people. They have generated millions of dollars of investment, brought much-needed services to remote areas – for example, over 1000 young people benefited from school and university bursaries in 2011 – and helped to change the mindsets of marginalised communities, who are now increasingly willing to take charge of their own destinies.

This remarkable story – a rare example of conservation for the people, by the people – is the subject of this booklet.

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