WILLIAM HOLDEN Wildlife Foundation

USA KENYA

Spring 2010

United Nations Declares 2010 The Year of Biodiversity

UN opens Biodiversity Year with plea to save world's life-supporting ecosystems

In a bid to curb the unprecedented loss of the world's species due to human activity - at a rate some experts put at 1,000 times the natural progression - the United Nations is marking 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, with a number of events highlighting the vital role the phenomenon plays in maintaining the life support system on Planet Earth.

"Humans are part of nature's rich diversity and have the power to protect or destroy it," the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is hosted by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), said in summarizing the Year's main message, with its focus on raising awareness to generate public pressure for action by the world's decision makers.

"Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, is essential to sustaining the living networks and systems that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. Human activity is causing the diversity of life on Earth to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate.These losses are irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life support systems we rely on every day. But we can prevent them."

The Convention - which opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, entered into force at the end of 1993 and now has 193 signators - is based on the premise that the world's diverse ecosystems purify the air and the water that are the basis of life, stabilize and moderate the Earth's climate, renew soil fertility, cycle nutrients and pollinate plants.

As a former UNEP Executive Director, Klaus Töpfer, stated, "If any part of the web breaks down, the future of life on the planet will be at risk." That is why the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity.

Although initial celebrations began last November under the slogan "Biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life," the official launch took place in Berlin on January 11. A host of other events - meetings, symposia, multi-media exhibitions - will follow throughout the year in venues around the world, from Trondheim, Norway, to Delhi, India, from Doha, Qatar, to Cartagena, Colombia, and from Shanghai, China, to Nairobi, Kenya, culminating in a high-level meeting at UN Headquarters in New York at the start of the General Assembly's 65th annual General Debate in September and an official closing in Kanazawa, Japan, in December.

"A wide variety of environmental goods and services that we take for granted are under threat, with profound and damaging consequences for ecosystems, economies and livelihoods," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the start of the pre-celebrations.

"In this International Year, we must counter the perception that people are disconnected from our natural environment. We must increase understanding of the implications of losing biodiversity. In 2010, I call on every country and each citizen of our planet to engage in a global alliance to protect life on Earth."

Looking at the economic costs of action or inaction, a recent UN-backed Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study estimated loss of natural capital due to deforestation and degradation at between $2 trillion and $4.5 trillion every year - "a staggering economic cost of taking nature for granted."

"It is estimated that for an annual investment of $45 billion into protected areas alone, we could secure the delivery of ecosystem services worth some $5 trillion a year," it said. "When compared to current financial losses on the markets, this is not a big price to pay. Sound ecosystem and biodiversity management, and the inclusion of Natural Capital in governmental and business accounting can start to redress inaction and reduce the cost of future losses." For more information, visit http://www.unep.org.

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Dear Friends,

Although the education center was closed for the later part of 2009, our outreach programs at our rural schools continued as usual, as did our Bongo Awareness Program. During the closure, due largely to the drought conditions, we were able to complete needed renovations to our campground facilities and our educational exhibits.

When the rains returned in December, however unseasonable, they were a welcome break in the desperate cycle of dry weather suffered everywhere in Kenya. With water flowing, we were able to replant and restore our wetlands water reclamation and our model organic gardens. All our practical installations have been given a facelift and we officially re-opened our doors the beginning of February.

Thank you all for your unwavering support during these difficult times.

Warmest Regards,

Stefanie Powers
President

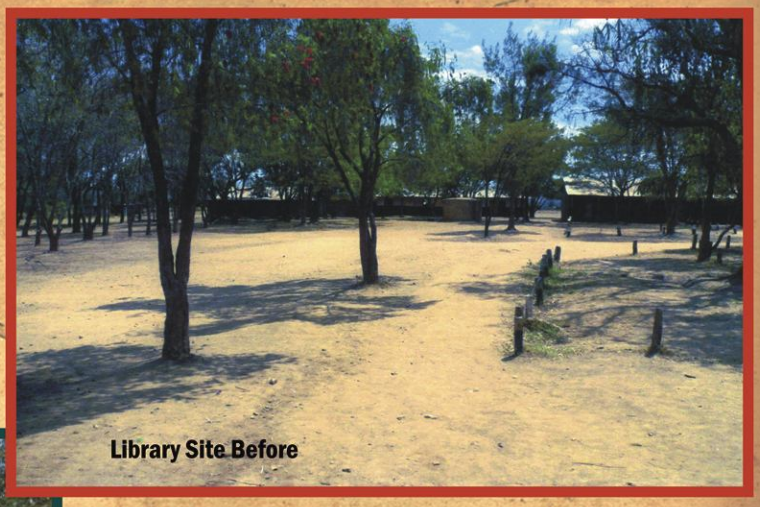
Education Center News

Julie D. Powers Memorial Library Project Completed

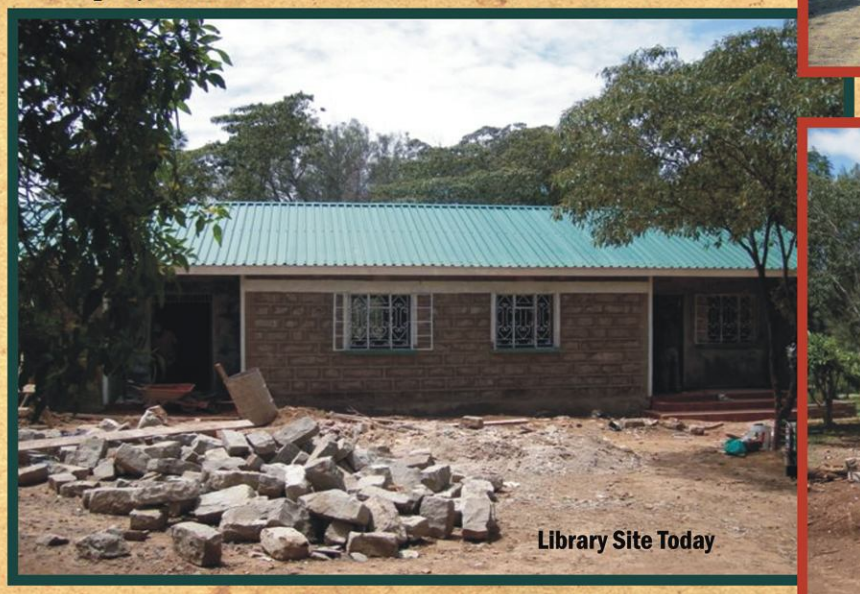
We are delighted to share with you these photos showing the completion of the Julie D. Powers Memorial Library at Guara Primary School, built from the funds raised from those loving friends of our chairman to honor her beloved Mother.

The dedication ceremonies will be conducted later this year when our chairman returns to Kenya.

The headmistress, teachers and parents of Guara are thrilled to have the long-awaited library, which also contains offices for the Headmistress, Anne Muricki, and the Deputy Head.



Library Site Before

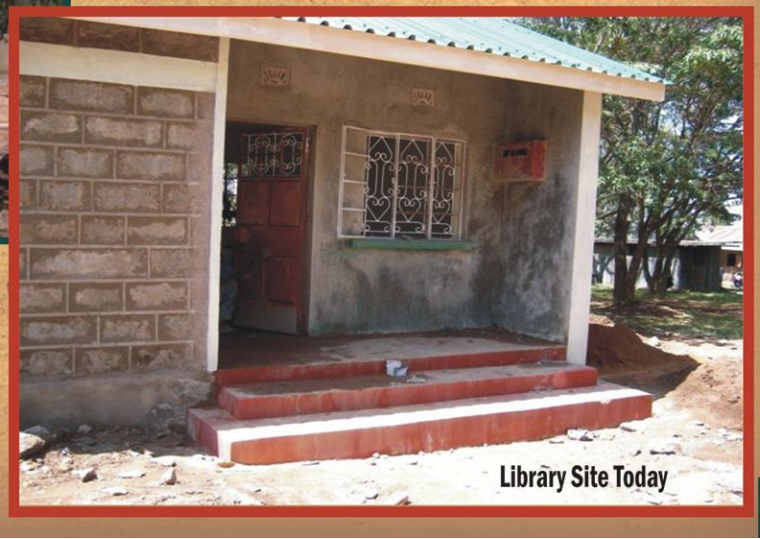


Library Site Today

Library Site Today

Library Site Today

Thank you Charles, and thanks to all of you who made this project possible with your generous donations!



Library Site Today

Given that construction began in January of 2010, we are extremely impressed with our contractor, Charles Kingori Gitonga, who managed to complete the project in record time.

Charles also built for us the library and kitchen at Mlima Primary School and the kitchen at Wathituga Primary School.

WHWF Mourns the Passing of Julian McKeand

Director of the William Holden Wildlife Foundation
Original Founder of the Mt. Kenya Game Ranch

Julian McKeand was not only a beloved friend of William Holden and Stefanie Powers, and a director of the William Holden Wildlife Foundation, but he was one of the trio of partners (along with William Holden and Don Hunt) who purchased and founded the Mt. Kenya Game Ranch.

Julian was a renowned professional hunter turned conservationist, who organized the first camel safaris in Kenya, leading his clients into the bush and imparting to them his love of nature and wildlife.

His knowledge of Kenya and his understanding of animal behavior were unparalleled.

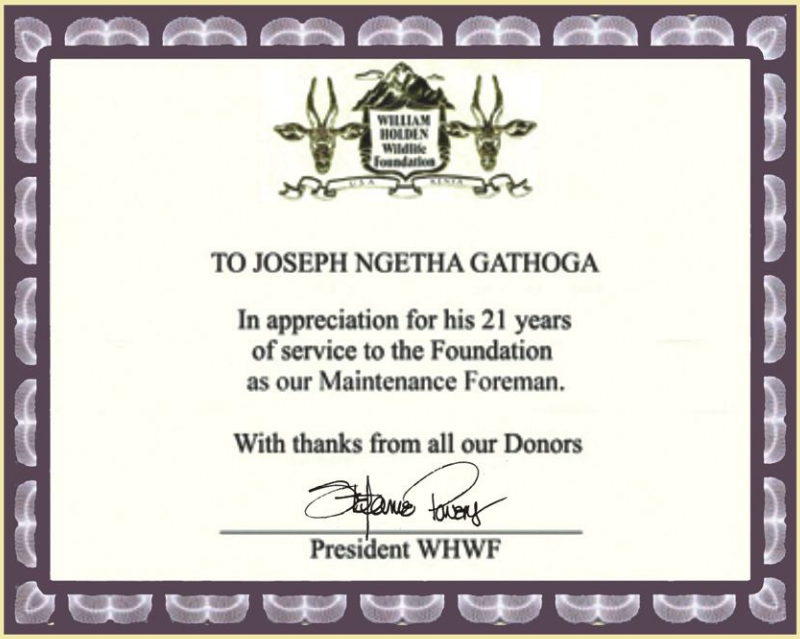
But over all his life's achievements, he was first and foremost a loving husband and soul mate to his wife Jane, and a dear and loyal friend to those who had the privilege of that position in his affection. We will miss him very much.

Julian McKeand
1930 – 2010

Congratulations to

JOSEPH NGETHA GATHOGO

who was honored by WHWF Directors for his 21 years of service as our Maintenance Foreman!



Kenya Drought Kills Wildlife, Crops & Threatens Millions

The worst drought to hit Kenya in over a decade has killed at least sixty African elephants and hundreds of other animals. Some of the animals died of thirst, while others starved due to lack of vegetation or succumbed to diseases or infections resulting from weakened immune systems, according to wildlife officials. Droughts are frequent in the region - there have been four in the past decade alone - and the losses they inflict on herders can quickly push pastoralist families into poverty.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the elephants have not been getting enough fodder, especially the young ones, according to a Kenya Wildlife official. Young elephants are unable to keep up with their mothers' pace while grazing, and aren't tall enough to browse tall trees which are about the only remaining food source.

Many of the country's other familiar species—including lions, crocodiles, zebras and wildebeests—are also suffering and could start dying at troublesome rates, especially grazers and browsers, wildlife officials say. Conservation officials have been working to protect some animals by feeding or relocating them. Tsavo West National Park rangers have been laying out hay for hippopotamuses, and the Kenya Wildlife Service has moved ten white rhinoceroses from Lake Nakuru to Nairobi National Park, partly because the sunbaked land can no longer support the large animals.

Hundreds of cattle, and acre upon acre of crops, have died. For many, this is the third straight year of crop failures. Life has never been easy for the poor in Kenya, but now conditions are more desperate than they have been for a decade. The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) has said that 3.8 million Kenyans are at risk of starvation and in need of emergency food aid. The international aid group Oxfam estimates that nearly 23 million people across East Africa face severe hunger after five years of little to no rain.

Water scarcity has also deepened the long-simmering struggle between wildlife and the people who live near protected areas. Cattle herders, in search of water and grazing land, started driving their animals deep into the Masai Mara National Reserve, the Tsavo West National Park and other reserves. The Kenya Wildlife Service reported that rangers recently pushed ten thousand cattle out of Tsavo West. Conservationists worry that if herders continue to be turned away from the resources of the national parks, they will begin killing wildlife, even though the country's game animals are the heart of its tourism industry.

Though the drought is a national problem, the parched lands of the north are taking the biggest hit, where some villages haven't seen rain in years. Rift Valley inhabitants have turned to eating cactus because corn and wheat prices have skyrocketed.. Some have resorted to pig feed to stay alive, after hiking 20 miles for a gallon of water. Even where water is available, it's unsanitary, which can have extreme health consequences.

In Nairobi, even well-to-do neighborhoods often go without running water for periods of time. Since Kenya relies on hydro-power for most of its electricity, less rain means less power, and frequent blackouts

More and more men are leaving their families, simply walking away because they cannot bear the shame of not being able to provide for their families. Unemployment has risen, leading to more crime in the cities. Fights over the sparse natural resources have reignited ancient tribal rivalries.

New program allows herders to purchase livestock insurance

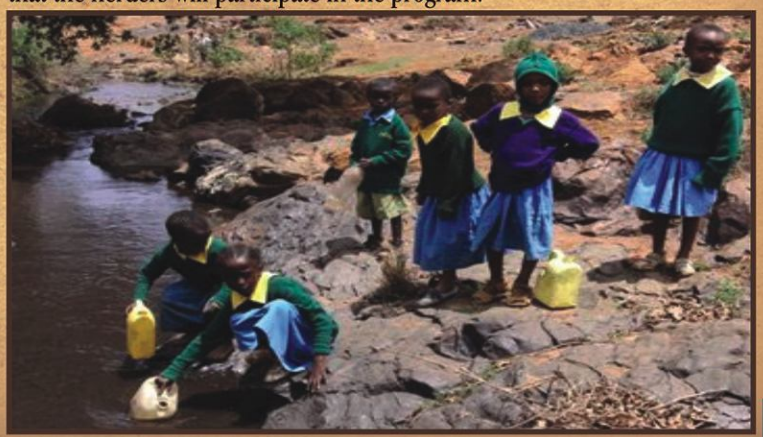
Despite all the damage the drought has done, there is some hopeful news. Thousands of herders in arid areas of northern Kenya will soon be able to purchase insurance policies for their livestock, based on a first-of-its-kind program in Africa that uses satellite images of grass and other vegetation that indicate whether drought will put their camels, cows, goats and sheep at risk of starvation.

The project was announced in northern Kenya's arid Marsabit District by the Nairobi-based International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI),the micro-finance pioneer Equity Bank and African insurance provider UAP Insurance Ltd.

The livestock insurance program will use satellite imagery to determine potential losses of livestock forage and issue payouts to participating herders when incidences of drought are expected to occur. If successful in the Marsabit District, where few of the 86,000 cattle and two million sheep and goat populations, valued at $67 million for milk and other products, are rarely slaughtered, the program would be offered to millions of pastoralists and livestock keepers in other parts of east Africa.

The data on forage availability are derived from satellite images of plant growth in the region that are part of a global survey known as the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, a database regularly updated by American scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Given the complexity of index-based livestock insurance, ILRI and its partners developed an insurance simulation game for local communities to explain the key features of the insurance policy and tested it across the Marsabit District. ILRI reported that many of the herders who played the game became intensely involved in the simulation, so they are optimistic that the herders will participate in the program.



Challenges to the Planet's Biodiversity

Impact of nature's invading alien species is measured for first time

Invasive Alien Species, ranging from disease and plants, to rats and goats, are one of the top three threats to life on this planet, according to a new publication coordinated by the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP).

Most countries have made international commitments to tackle this threat but only half have introduced relevant legislation and even fewer are taking adequate action on the ground.

The publication, *Global Indicators of Biological Invasion: Species, Numbers, Biodiversity Impact and Policy Responses*, looked at 57 countries and found that, on average, there are 50 non-indigenous species per country which have a negative impact on biodiversity. The number of invasive alien species ranged from nine in Equatorial Guinea to 222 in New Zealand.

A total of 542 species were documented as invasive aliens, including 316 plants, 101 marine organisms, 44 freshwater fish, 43 mammal, 23 bird and 15 amphibian species. According to Prof. Melodie McGeoch, the lead author on the publication and member of the Centre for Invasion Biology, these numbers are a significant underestimate. "We showed that regions with low development status and little investment in research have lower than expected numbers of invasive aliens." An increase in the number and spread of alien species, which adversely affect the habitats they invade, is nonetheless attributed to a substantial rise in international trade over the past 25 years.

"While some threatened species on the IUCN Red List have improved in status as a result of successful control or eradication of invasive alien species, a growing number are more threatened owing to increasing spread and threats from non-indigenous species," says Dr. Stuart Butchart from BirdLife International. "This shows that although we are winning some Battles in the fight against invasive species, current evidence suggests that we are losing the war."

If left uncontrolled, invasive alien species can have a serious impact on native species. The pathogenic chytrid fungus, which was entirely unknown until 1998, is thought to be the cause of the decline and extinction of many amphibian populations around the globe. The disease caused by the fungus can be spread by humans and a host of other species, ranging from exotic fish to African Clawed Frogs.

But the impact of invasive alien species can be successfully controlled.

"It's likely to be more cost effective to prevent the spread of invasive species in the first place than to tackle the biodiversity crisis once they have become established," says Dr. Bill Jackson, IUCN's Deputy Director General and Chairman of GISP. "With sufficient funds and political will, invasive species can be controlled or eradicated. This will allow native species to be saved from extinction, but countries need to dramatically improve the way they deal with the problem." For more information, visit www.iucn.org.

36% of world's species face extinction

The latest update of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species™ shows that 17,291 species out of the 47,677 assessed species are threatened with extinction.

The results reveal that 21% of all known mammals, 30% of all known amphibians, 12% of all known birds, 28% of reptiles, 37% of freshwater fishes, 70% of plants and 35% of invertebrates assessed so far are under threat.

Of the world's 5,490 mammals, 79 are Extinct or Extinct in the Wild, with 188 Critically Endangered, 449 Endangered and 505 Vulnerable.

A World Without Fish? It's Closer Than You Think!

Can you imagine a world without shrimp cocktail? Fish & chips? No Shamu at Seaworld? Tuna salad? Scientists from the European Project on Ocean Acidification (EPOA) have determined that the rising acidification of the oceans will wreak havoc on marine ecosystems if levels of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the atmosphere continue to rise.

Ocean acidity has increased by 30% since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and will accelerate in the coming decades. This rate of change, according to the EPOA, is many times faster than anything experienced over the last 55 million years. They predict that if atmospheric CO_2 levels continue to rise as expected, by 2050 conditions for warm water coral reefs will be marginal at best, and we can expect extinctions of some species. By 2100 70% of cold water corals may be exposed to corrosive waters.

Most vulnerable to the attack of higher acidity, scientists say, is any creature that makes a calcium carbonate shell, such as oysters and coral.

Coral reefs are the most biologically diverse habitats on the planet. They provide food, resources and coastal protection to hundreds of millions of people and are under significant and sustained threat from climate change, which causes ocean temperatures higher than corals can survive (evidenced by coral bleaching), as well as by increasing ocean acidity.

Though reef resembles rock, it is actually made up of a teeming colony of anemone-like creatures known as polyps. These tiny organisms wave their tentacles in the currents to snatch tidbits of food, all the while secreting shells to anchor their trunks. After the animals die, layer upon layer of their skeletons create the exotic structures we call coral reefs, but, according to scientists, they will begin to crumble as corrosive waters undo the work of countless generations of polyps.

The oceans currently absorb 25% of the CO_2 produced by burning fossil fuels and deforestation, so climate change would be far worse were it no for the oceans. This hidden ocean 'service' has been estimated as an annual subsidy of US$60 to $400 billion per year to the global economy. However, the oceans pay a steep price for performing this function.

When CO_2 from the atmosphere combines with water, it produces carbonic acid (it also puts the fizz in soft drinks) and decreases carbonate ions, a key building block of marine animals' shells. As the oceans grow more acidic (corrosive), this carbonate becomes increasingly scarce, hindering the ability of shelled organisms to make and maintain their homes. Like human bones impacted by osteoporosis, their exoskeletons will grow thin and brittle or simply dissolve, as was the case in research tests by EPOA scientists.

Creatures in imminent danger include mollusks and crustaceans such as clams, oysters, lobsters, and crabs; large sea creatures for which shellfish is a dietary staple, notably seals, otters, and walruses; and most troublesome of all, plankton and other microscopic food sources that sustain the great whales and fish big and small. Scientists in Germany have determined that acidification affects not only marine habitat in general, but individual fish as well.

As ocean acidity increases, there will be fewer areas where corals can survive, threatening every species of marine life that depends on them. That could sound the final death knell for a critical human food source, which is already in peril due to over-fishing and other unsustainable industry practices. This will affect not only major economic industries, but may also threaten food security in regions especially dependent on seafood.

Biologists at the University of Colorado - Boulder have published a study in the February 2010 edition of the journal *Global Change Biology* that indicates the longer growing seasons accompanying global warming may inhibit forests' ability to absorb carbon dioxide and make them more susceptible to the ravages of wildfires and bark beetles, which thrive in the warmer climate. That means even more CO_2 in the atmosphere.

Aggressive and immediate cuts in the approximately 79 million tons of CO_2 we emit to the atmosphere every day are necessary to slow the progress of ocean acidification, as well as global climate change.

For more information, see www.epoca-project.eu/.

Rural Colombian Women Bring Life to Desertified Land

Native and rural peasant women from southern Tolima province, in the center-west portion of Colombia, are rejuvenating the environment and changing their lives in the process.

Since 2001, the non-governmental organization Manos de Mujer (Women's Hands) has led the effort to regenerate their forest ecosystem and thwart encroaching desertification by planting trees and growing natural crops without the use of chemicals and pesticides.

The project extends over 50 towns, rural villages and Pijao reservations, which border the human-made Tatacoa desert. The Tatacoa was a tropical dry forest with trees for the past several millenia, until cattle ranching ravaged the ecosystem. It now spans over 205 square miles and advances at a rate of over 1.5 percent annually.

Of the roughly 1100 women involved in the project, approximately 900 are Pijao, an indigenous tribe whose once far-reaching population has fallen precipitously.

Javier Múnera, an economist turned activist, manages and organizes activities for Manos de Mujer. A 1998 aqueduct construction project to bring potable water to the community of Covaima brought him to the area. The project was financed by the Americas-Spain Solidarity and Cooperation Organisation, an NGO headed by Yolanda Villavicencio, a Colombian-Ecuadoran woman with relatives from the area. Skillful management by Villavicencio and Múnera brought the project in at over $10,000 under budget. They used the leftover capital for salaries for 400 families.

That simple project evolved into Manos de Mujer, which was founded to try and halt the encroachment of the Tatacoa. Manos de Mujer receives funding from two international Catholic development agencies.

The womens' gardens range in size from just over half an acre (a quarter hectare) to 1.25 acres (half hectare) to 2.5 acres (one hectare). The Colombian government has practically left them on their own, so, initially, they learned by doing.

Now they attend workshops from the regional university every two weeks or so on agricultural and ecological subjects such as composting, natural fertilizers and water cycles. Academia provides them with the science of agriculture and ecology, and, in return, they share their real-world experiences and discoveries with the academics.

Desertification is the gradual transformation of habitable land into desert. It is usually caused by climate change or by destructive use of the land.

In Colombia the group receives support from state institutions such as the the Agricultural Research Corporation for specific issues.

The women take pride in growing plantain, cassava, corn, green vegetables, melons and other fruits without weed killers or chemicals, using only cattle dung for fertilizer and plantain and other leaves to retain moisture. During the summer dry season, when water is often rationed, they water every plant just a little, to bountiful result.

By planting over half a million trees, they lowered the temperature in a region that ranges from 86-104 degrees F. But that effort barely made a dent in the over 15 million trees scientists say are needed to stop the desert's advance toward habitable land.

The women involved in the project are no longer easily discouraged by the daunting scope of their endeavor, because they witness the many transformative effects of their dedicated labor, not only on their surroundings, but on their lives as well.

Working the land has inspired a sense of empowerment and renewed self-worth that only self-sufficiency can fuel. Women who had been victims of spousal abuse on a daily basis have found the courage to stand up to their abusers and break the cycle of violence.

Generations of women -- grandmothers, mothers, daughters, cousins -- tend the land together with gratitude and purpose, providing not only sustenance for their families, but creating a shining example for future generations that if they protect and nurture the land, the land will provide for them and their families in abundance.

SUPPORT WHWF WITH A DONATION

I want to carry on with the work of the William Holden Wildlife Foundation.

Enclosed is my contribution of: ☐ $250 ☐ $100 ☐ $50 ☐ Other $_____

☐ Please check this box if your donation is for the Julie Powers Memorial Scholarship Fund

WILLIAM HOLDEN Wildlife Foundation
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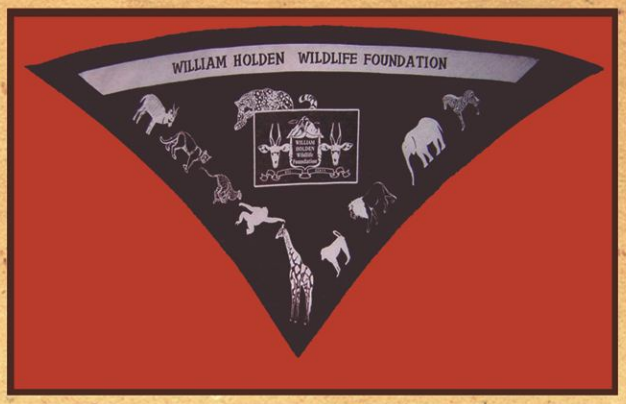


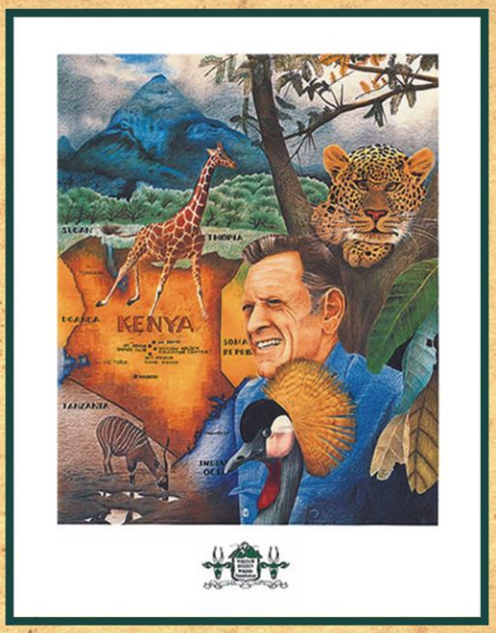
GREETING CARDS
(boxed set of 12)
$18

WHWF LOGO T-SHIRTS

All of our t-shirts are imprinted with soy-based inks. Our off-white logo t-shirts are made of Fortrel EcoSpun, produced from recycled plastic bottle caps. Our dark green and black t-shirts are 100% cotton.

$20 + shipping

Please specify color and size



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Greeting Cards (boxed set) SHIPPING: $3 US $5 CAN / $7 INTL	$18		$3	
Greeting Card Brochure	FREE			
WHWF Poster SHIPPING: $3 US $5 CAN / $7 INTL	$15		$3	
WHWF Logo T-Shirts (please indicate size/color selection) SHIPPING: $2 US $4 CAN / $6 INTL Recycled Bottle Cap T-shirt (Off-White Only) Size: ☐S ☐M ☐L ☐XL	$20		$2	
100% COTTON Size: ☐S ☐M ☐L ☐XL Color: ☐ DARK GREEN ☐ BLACK	$20		$2	
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