

Newspapers in Africa are full of reports these days about human-animal conflict. Every day we read about elephants invading farms and trampling people, of lions attacking livestock and of herders retaliating against the lions, of out-of-control bushmeat snaring, and so on. We also hear about the burgeoning human population and how this is resulting in invasions of protected forestlands and wildlife reserves in the search for land. Poverty-stricken squatters degrade the land by tree clearance, poor cultivation, and overgrazing, all leading to desertification and to the drying up of rivers and streams. It's all pretty depressing.

Kenya has lost about 60 % of its wildlife over the past two decades, due mainly to the movement of people into former wildlife habitats and the annihilation by these people of the animals that lived in and around the sites of the new settlements. The new immigrants cannot bear the costs of having to put up with the wildlife.

Roughly 30 % of the lost wildlife has been poached within Kenya's national parks and reserves. Not surprisingly, the poached

bushmeat snares are being found in just about every PA in Kenya, not to mention PAs in most other African countries.

The migration spillover areas north of the Maasai Mara National Reserve, around the Aitong Hills, can be viewed as the harbinger of what we shall be seeing pretty much everywhere. Fifteen years ago, the Aitongs were, to look at, indistinguishable from the Mara – grassland savannah brimming with wildlife. The subdivision of group ranches, however, into smallholder plots, or for subleasing to wheat farmers, has meant that the wildlife must now seek greener pastures elsewhere.

As wildlife spillover areas outside PAs become settled, there will be escalating calls for electric fences to be erected – to protect the people and their farms from animals, and to protect the animals from people. This has already happened with the Lake Nakuru and the Shimba Hills PAs, and it is now also occurring with the Aberdare and Nairobi PAs. The same will eventually transpire for other PAs.

In the cases of Tsavo East and West, and other PAs that are too large to fence, the

funds generated by PA tourism income. Not only that, but it was also supposed to share 25 % of the revenue with people living around the PAs, to gain community support for conservation. Instead, the KWS has needed donor funds to continue operating, even at the near paralysis levels of recent years, and communities are not receiving the promised 25 %.

The KWS, in the absence of a major overhaul, will not stop PA encroachment and wildlife poaching. The task is simply too expensive, requiring professional wildlife conservation knowledge and management skills now lacking at key posts within the KWS. Such an effort would also require committed political support and a rational wildlife management policy – both conspicuously absent in Kenya.

If we have to write off Government trust land and national parks and reserves to save Kenya's wildlife habitats and their biodiversity, then what have we got left? We have private large-holdings and privately managed group ranches. Fortunately, such areas are widely distributed in Kenya and are already game rich – or were until fairly

In private hands?

If Africa is to save its wildlife and intact habitats, then highly motivated landowners will increasingly have to enter the fray, argues Dan Stiles.

animals are of those species that make for the best eating, but also killed have been elephants, rhinos and big cats, which offer trophies that can be sold. The State-run Protected Areas (PAs) do better than State trust lands in conserving wildlife, but certain kinds of private land do best of all. For example, wildlife numbers have increased over the past 20 years in those areas falling under the purview of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum and the Nakuru Wildlife Conservancy (see Ian Parker's articles in SWARA Vols. 26:3&4 and 27:4). These areas are composed of large, privately managed ranches.

As long as the number of rural poor people continues to increase in Africa, wildlife and their habitats will continue to disappear. There are good reasons to believe that the numbers of rural poor will go on increasing for the foreseeable future. They will need land. This is a fact that must be faced. Communal trust lands will be the main battleground, but many Government-run PAs will lose ground as well. Already, it is common to see cattle grazing in the Maasai Mara and the Tsavo PAs, and

landless poor will whittle them down to smaller, core areas that can be fenced. This is inevitable. Kenya will then have a number of San Diego Zoo-type wildlife parks with non-migratory populations, which will present huge management problems.

The San Diego Zoo model is the most optimistic prognostication. If funds cannot be found for fencing, people will simply carve away at the unmarked PA boundaries, as they are doing now in the forest PAs. In the end, the unfenced PAs will be gobbled up, along with the vegetation and the wildlife. This will not happen tomorrow, but it will happen. What is to stop it?

Subsidised by the Government, State PAs cannot support themselves financially from non-consumptive wildlife use only, i.e. game viewing. The Kenya Wildlife Service's most useful contribution has been one of demonstrating this point. Set up in 1989 with the aim, indeed obligation, of being self-sufficient, it has not been able to achieve this goal in any one single year since its inception.

The KWS was meant to operate from

recently. As long as wildlife habitats remain, even if these are depleted of game, there is still a chance of rehabilitation and conservation. The most promising Districts for this in Kenya are Laikipia, Samburu, Kajiado and Nakuru.

Some people living or working in these districts have increasingly begun to use quite sophisticated strategies for conserving and, where necessary, rehabilitating habitats and wildlife. The principal idea was borrowed from southern Africa, mainly South Africa and Zimbabwe, and involves converting a big chunk of land (usually a private ranch) into a non-profit trust, most commonly termed a wildlife conservancy. Examples in Kenya are the Lewa and Ol Pejeta wildlife conservancies in Laikipia and Selenkay and Shompole in Kajiado.

There are many others. Today, they derive their income primarily from tourists and through hosting researchers. Many ranch cattle as well. Some of these conservancies offer wildlife viewing and landscapes rivalling the best that can be found in Kenya's PAs. Moreover, many have special attractions not available in the

PAs, such as night drives, hiking, horse or camel-back game viewing and chimpanzee and rhino sanctuaries (where you can actually see and touch rhinos).

The conservancy concept started out with the privately owned ranches, but it is now spreading to the communal ranches of the Maasai and Samburu, some of which have been grouped together to form a number of Community Conservation Areas. The well-known Il Ngwesi conservancy in Samburu, consisting of an 'eco-tourism' lodge and game viewing area, is managed by the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, which is professionally run.

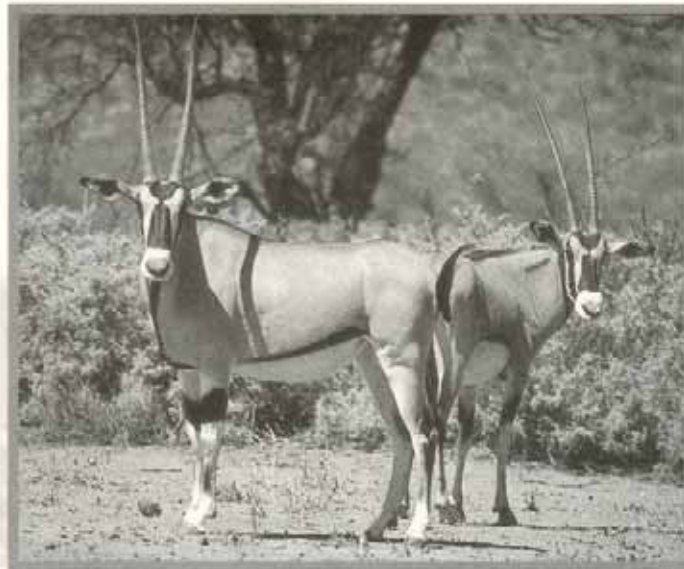
Will the conservancy model work under the management of a group of livestock herders who do not have professional management skills? Can a wise council of elders make the myriad long-term and day-to-day management decisions needed to create and maintain a wildlife conservancy? Probably not.

The traditional communal decision-making process leading up to a consensus will not work. It is too slow and inefficient. An effective management team is needed, led by a single manager, who knows how to set up and maintain infrastructure – roads, fencing, an air strip, a tourist lodge, staff housing, vehicle maintenance, maybe a rhino sanctuary, the stockades for translocated animals, veterinary services, and on and on. Most conservancies in Kenya receive donor funding, since returns from tourism and research alone are not sufficient to cover the considerable costs. Proper accounts must also be kept, subject to an annual audit.

Running a wildlife conservancy is hard work, complicated and expensive. But the results are impressive. Where well managed, wildlife has increased in numbers on the conservancies, security has improved, local community members find jobs, and the soils and vegetation have remained sound. In Laikipia, there are plans to link contiguous ranches and conservancies with open corridors to allow movement of wildlife over larger areas, thereby overcoming some of the drawbacks of fencing.

For those people in Kenya living with the wildlife, the contrast of community conservancies with State-run PAs is stark. PAs forbid most or all types of natural resource consumptive utilisation or land

use, and they also exclude people – except those holding an entrance ticket (in principle, anyway). The KWS runs the overall management, sometimes in conjunction with the Forest Department, and private companies pay leases and other fees to the KWS for their lodges, camps, vehicles and so on. The KWS pockets the entrance fees, except in the case of county council reserves (e.g. Maasai Mara, Samburu). The surrounding people receive very little, if anything, of positive value from the presence of a PA in their midst, and they suffer the lost opportunity costs of exclusion from the land, as well as the costs of wildlife depredation.



With a community conservancy, it is the leaders of the community who have overall responsibility for laying out policy and for determining how revenues are to be obtained, shared out and used. The community has a direct interest in lodges, camps and tourist activities, albeit often in partnership with private tour operators. The conservancies usually employ staff from the community, so bringing more income to the community. It is the community's land and, up to a point, its members benefit from the land's resources.

The two models of wildlife conservation are coming into conflict with each other. The national Protected Area model has been termed 'fortress conservation' by Dan Brockington, a British anthropologist, in reference to the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania (SWARA Vol. 25:3). He argues that in Mkomazi community-based conservation would work better and be fairer than an exclusion zone park or reserve.

The Mkomazi case can be generalised

to apply to many PAs in Africa. Mike Norton-Griffiths, a noted environmental economist, has made the point that Kenyan wildlife policy, which at present bans any consumptive use, actually promotes incentives for most landowners to get rid of their wildlife. His calculations show that game viewing and bird shooting do not bring in enough income to compensate for the costs of maintaining wildlife – costs incurred through damage to crops and infrastructure, introduction of disease to livestock, and so on.

If consumptive use were to be allowed, including game cropping for meat and the sale of by-products (such as ivory, hides and horns), a pre-tax profit of 60–80 % can be attained.

As southern African and Kenyan private conservancies have shown, wildlife numbers increase when the wildlife is worth something to the landowners. Dr Imre Loeffler, Chairman of the EAWLS, once posed the rhetorical question: How many goats do you think there would be if their owners could not sell or eat them? The answer is obvious, and the question is certainly applicable to wildlife.

Norton-Griffiths suggests that perhaps some form of public-private co-operative ventures could be worked out in which private professionals manage State trust lands, or even PAs, for profit. Everyone benefits: the private investors make a profit from revenues generated by wildlife and biodiversity-rich habitats, Government and tax-payers can put the savings towards other uses, valuable ecosystems are conserved, and the literally downstream benefits of healthy land, such as flowing rivers, will provide hydroelectricity and water to people and industry.

It seems fairly clear that politicised and inefficient Government wildlife management agencies alone will not be able to meet the conservation challenges of the 21st century. If Africa is to save its wildlife and intact habitats, then highly motivated non-governmental organisations and landowners will increasingly have to enter the fray.

In the next issue of SWARA, I shall describe some of the more promising private ventures that have started up in Kenya to conserve the country's dwindling wildlife.