

# THE TWGA TIMES

PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND EDUCATION



*471st St Sioux Falls*

## Tour for Twiga—the 180 Mile Hike

On June 22nd one day after World Giraffe Day, Michele Mattingly, co-director of The World Giraffe Alliance, will make a through hike of 180 miles for giraffe conservation awareness.

Since 1980 40% of the world's giraffes have disappeared. Giraffes are extinct in 7 African countries. For every four African elephants, there is only one giraffe.

The hike will kick off at the Great Plains Zoo in Sioux Falls South Dakota with treats and information. From there the group will attend the 40th anniversary screening of Out of Africa. Michele will begin her hike that afternoon.

Much of the hike will occur in desolate areas without access to hotels, campgrounds or even

water. For that reason a local RV dealer will provide a support vehicle for sleeping and food and, most importantly, restroom access.

"I'm terrified and excited." Michele shared. "This is three weeks of constant walking in remote areas. Thank goodness for the escorts!" Local volunteers will accompany Michele throughout her journey, signing up for 3-12 miles each.

Asked why she chose this journey Michele said, "I just want the message out there. It is my hope people will see the commitment and feel inspired to donate. We cannot allow a world without giraffes."

Be part of the Awareness Walk. If you would like to be an escort, donate, participate or support the mission in any way, contact [theworldgiraffealliance.org](http://theworldgiraffealliance.org) or call 818-268-1000 to speak with one of our volunteers.



## Letter From the Director

Dear Giraffe Friends,

Summer is upon us. We opened our RUN WILD campaign on Earth Day and will continue until World Giraffe Day. This virtual 5K: RUN WILD-THE RACE TO SAVE GIRAFFES is only 30.00 and every dollar makes a huge difference in supporting the effort to buy land. Thanks to all of you who joined the race. You are Giraffe Heroes. Asante sana-many thanks.

If you have not signed up, please go to the website and JOIN THE RACE!

The “Tour for Twiga” will launch the day after Run Wild. On June 22nd at 8:00 am we will have a Launch party with treats and information to launch the walk. We will talk about our charity and why support is so critical. The same weekend we will sponsor the movie Out of Africa on its 40th anniversary at State Theater in downtown Sioux Falls. We are always looking for ways to bring awareness and encourage sponsors.

Please share the mission on your social media and with friends and family. We need your help. Giraffes are disappearing while we struggle to find resources to save them.

I leave it in your hands.

Kupenda na amani

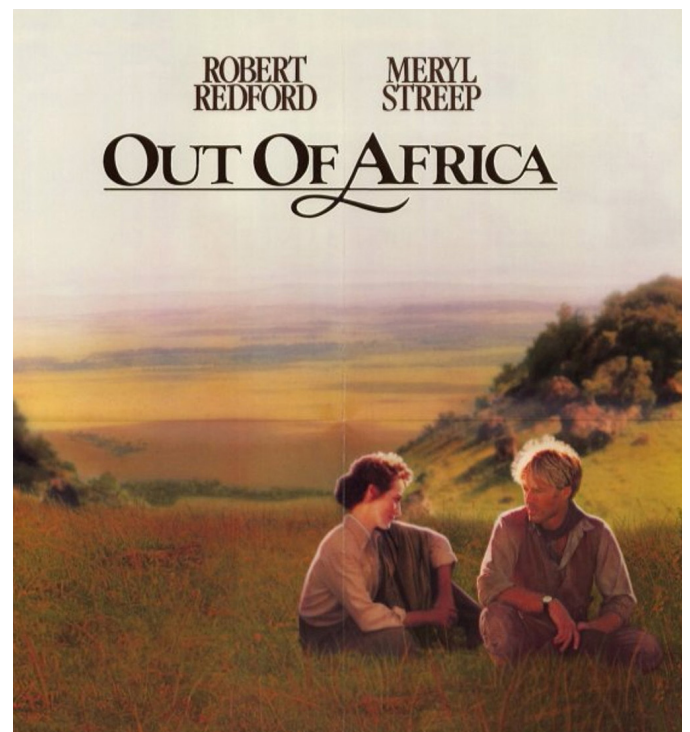
Michele and Team Twiga

**“Heroes in real life don’t wear masks and capes. Sometimes they don’t stand out at all. But real heroes can save a life - or many lives - just by answering the call in their heart.”**

—Victoria Arlen

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## Meet the Newly Crowned Mrs. Colorado Regency International, a Voice for Giraffes, Amanda Buckle.

Amanda Buckle has been a dear friend to Julie Morgan, our TWGA Public Relations Officer, for many years. When Amanda won the Mrs. Colorado RI competition, she was asked which charity she would like to support. It was an easy pick for her.

Amanda will be taking our message to, “Stop the Silent Extinction” on her tour, sharing our mission to preserve, conserve, and educate the public about saving not only giraffes but also the land they inhabit.

In addition Amanda will be our standard-bearer wearing a “World Giraffe Alliance” shirt and a giraffe pin on her sash. We could not ask for a better advocate.

We are grateful and humbled by her decision to support TWGA.

She is a voice for our giant friends who are being pushed off their land, hunted as trophies, and poached for black market sales.

Amanda reminds us all to stick our necks out and speak up for our silent giraffe friends.

On behalf of all of us at The World Giraffe Alliance, thank you, Mrs. Colorado, for your dedication to the preservation of the world’s tallest animal.

## Oops. We Missed World Endangered Species Day

We may have missed World Endangered Species Day on May 17, but June brings several important opportunities to highlight wildlife conservation—especially World Giraffe Day on June 21st!

### June 5 – World Environment Day

A global UN observance promoting environmental awareness. It often emphasizes biodiversity and the protection of species and habitats.

### June 8 – World Oceans Day

Celebrates the role of oceans in sustaining life and calls attention to threats facing marine species, from plastic pollution to overfishing.

### June 14 – Shark Awareness Day (unofficial)

Raises awareness about shark conservation and the fights the negative bias these essential play-

ers in our marine ecosystems have received.

### June 21 – World Giraffe Day

Organized by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, this day marks the longest day of the year in celebrating the world’s tallest land animal. It’s an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges they face in the wild; habitat loss, poaching, and population decline.

World Giraffe Day draws attention to the silent extinction threatening these iconic animals and supports conservation efforts across Africa. It is a key moment for education, community outreach, and fundraising to help ensure a future where giraffes not



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# Are You Ready for Dust Bowl 2.0?



*Images of billowing clouds of dust like this one were posted to social media by those experiencing the disruptive event,  
But mainstream media gave little attention.*

This month a massive dust storm swept across Illinois, darkening skies and interrupting life from Bloomington to Chicago. This level of dust storm hasn't been seen in 90 years and it has led to Chicago's first ever dust storm advisory. 60 mile an hour winds kicked up dry topsoil, reducing visibility, causing highways to shut down, and setting off alarm bells not just about weather—but about the dire state of land management and agriculture across the country.

This “freak” storm will of course draw comparisons to the disastrous Dust Bowl of the 1930s. But what's the cause? The root of the problem lies in the state's transformation: once home to over 22 million acres of wet prairie, Illinois is now dominated by two-crop style of agriculture—mostly corn and soybeans. Much of the land is left bare between growing seasons because water is a precious commodity and with dryer hotter off seasons, there's little to prevent topsoil from being swept away.

Topsoil loss isn't just an agricultural issue affecting farmers and the future of food stability, it's also a public health risk. Dust storms carry fine particles into the air that can aggravate respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchitis but what's more concerning is that it can contain remnants of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals turning a dust storm into a toxic event.

Losing topsoil also means losing the most productive layer of farmland. Without urgent changes in how we manage soil, such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and restoring natural windbreaks, some of our most valuable Midwestern farmland may be headed for a new era of environmental and health crises. This isn't just a bad day for driving or planting. It's a wake-up call.

*By Jeffrey Jackson May 16th*



# Authoritarianism and Resistance: In Uganda



*The opposition leader Kizza Besigye and his aide Obeid Lutale in a steel dock at the Ugandan military court.*

One of the most disturbing facets of life in East Africa is the political turmoil. Developing countries traditionally have problems maintaining checks and balances and corruption is the result.

According to The Guardian news outlet, the Ugandan opposition party states that the incumbent president is using military courts to stop dissent. Yoweri Museveni is accused of manipulating the courts to stop his opponent ahead of next year's election.

Kizza Besigye and Obeid Lutale were both detained and charged before a military tribunal for "illegal possession of firearms" "threatening national security and treachery." More disturbing is that a law is being introduced to try civilians before military tribunals.

Ugandan citizens will go to the polls in January of 2026 in what will be the seventh election where Museveni is the "lead candidate." Museveni became president in 1986 after a six year war to remove his opponent president Milton Obote.

Historian Mwambutsya Ndebesa said Uganda is experiencing "The Curse of Liberation." He stated that leaders who have liberated people from repressive regimes in Africa think they are "entitled to rule." They will do any and everything to maintain power.

As Uganda approaches its 2026 elections, the resilience and determination of its citizens remain central to the struggle for democratic governance. While international support can amplify calls for justice, true and lasting change must come from within—driven by Ugandans who continue to demand accountability and uphold their right to political expression. The situation in Uganda also reflects a concerning global trend: the resurgence of authoritarian practices under the guise of national security and stability. It is a reminder that the erosion of democratic norms anywhere should concern us all, and that vigilance, solidarity, and informed engagement are necessary to safeguard freedom in every part of the world.

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# Reconnect and Reground

It's easy to feel overwhelmed these days—species decline, environmental crises, political chaos, plastic pollution, and AI anxiety. The nonstop stream of bad news, amplified by social media, only deepens the dread. (Seriously—take a break from scrolling.)

That's why we're offering a simple reminder: go outside and touch grass. Yes, literally. Step away from the screen. Feel the sun on your skin, listen to the birds, breathe deeply. Reconnect with the real world—it's still here, and it still matters.

Being informed is important, but so is knowing your limits. Activism fueled by burnout won't last. We need beauty, hope, and rest to keep going. Even small, grounded actions can create real change.

The World Giraffe Alliance started with one thought: We don't want to live in a world without giraffes. For founder Michele, that became her *ikigai*—her reason for being. What's yours? If you're not sure, step outside. You might find it where the grass meets your fingertips.

The world may feel like it's falling apart. But perhaps, we're the ones who can help it hold together.

So go on—take a walk, breathe deeply, and touch some grass.

## Are You Enjoying the Newsletter?

Are you enjoying the newsletter?

The World Giraffe Alliance is just that, an alliance, and this newsletter is a true labor of love. There aren't many of us working on it, so hearing from you means a lot.

If you're enjoying the newsletter, please send us a quick email and let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

And if you'd like to contribute articles, photos, ideas, or something else, we'd be thrilled to have you involved.

Team Twiga



The World Giraffe Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to the preservation of giraffes and the land they inhabit. Through global collaboration, we educate, raise awareness, and take action to protect nature and save these gentle giants.

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