

# THE TWGA TIMES

PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND EDUCATION



*Concept art of the Wasafiri house.*

*“Your philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices you make.”*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

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## The story of the Wasafiri House

Wasafiri is the Swahili word for travelers. It is a poignant word beyond its common meaning. The true spirit of the word was coined through the words of the great 19th century novelist Charles Dickens.

Dickens, a great observer of humanity, concluded that we are all spiritual travelers from the day we are born. We set out early navigating our daily lives, seeking safe haven, mapping out the journey day by day. But Dickens' greater observation was that the people of his time, like the people of ours, were consumed by the human preoccupation with self. He saw the metaphorical merry-go-round of people in pursuit of the brass ring, riding year after year thinking only of what they could obtain if they ever got the brass ring, but never enjoying the ride. For them there were no other riders, while on the next carousel horse one could barely hold on, and while another rider struggled to get into the saddle. Sadly, the focus is always on our own prize.

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With the eyes of compassion and humility Dickens wrote of the beauty that happens when men and women “open their shut up hearts,” and begin to think of all people as “fellow passengers to the grave.”

The word wasafiri reminds me of my fellow passengers who travel with me on the very same train, riding till we each meet our stop.

A small hill facing Mount Kilimanjaro is waiting for the Wasafiri House. It is rich with green grasses and lush trees. The warm African breeze carries the smell of ebony and jasmine and the sunlight is so pure it leaves a shower of gold on everything it touches.

And it waits for the Wasafiri House.

I would build it, but it is not mine to build. It is the property of the fellow passengers. It is a place for all who race at breakneck speed only to look out the window and imagine one stop along the way. A place where time slows down and purpose comes into focus. They walk the moonlit paths. They watch the sunburst dawns. And they hear the stories of people who have never seen a television or heard a radio.

And when they leave, their hearts are so full they must leave some baggage behind.

Today the land is empty, the coffers are bare.

But someone knows this is their house. Someone will contribute a brick, hand over a nail, and one by one encourage others.

And on the stone walkway, the names of the believers. Those who know that life is not only a destination but a journey — it is not where we travel but how.

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## Kefas’ Corner: Maasai and Cows



*In Maasai culture, cattle (enkiteng) are the absolute center of life. They are more than just livestock; they are a divine gift, a symbol of wealth, and a means of survival. The Maasai believe their God, Enkai, entrusted all cattle in the world to them!!*

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# Who are your heroes?

By Jeffrey Jackson

We often think of heroes as figures children need—people to admire and emulate. But it is a question worth asking at any age. We all need heroes: people whose lives remind us what is possible, whose values challenge us to be better, and whose example encourages us to live with purpose.

In a world often dominated by self-interest, outrage, and the pursuit of attention, it can sometimes seem as though there are no heroes left. Yet they exist all around us.

One such person, and a personal hero of mine, is David Attenborough, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday on the planet he has spent a lifetime helping us understand and appreciate.

For more than seventy years, Attenborough has been one of the world's most influential voices for nature and conservation. Through his documentaries, he has revealed the wonders of the natural world, from the depths of the oceans to remote forests and deserts few of us will ever see. More importantly, he has shown us why these places matter.

His work has educated and inspired generations, reminding us that humanity is not separate from nature but deeply dependent upon it. His documentaries do more than entertain—they challenge us to recognize our responsibility to protect the ecosystems and species upon which life depends.

I first encountered Attenborough through *Planet Earth*, captivated by its breathtaking imagery and storytelling. However, it was *Our Planet* that truly changed my perspective. It showed me that admiration alone will not preserve the natural world; only action will. Conservation is not someone else's responsibility—it belongs to all of us.

Attenborough's career began in the 1950s when he joined the BBC as a trainee producer. Through pioneering series such as *Zoo Quest* and the landmark documentaries that followed, he transformed wildlife filmmaking and brought science and nature to global audiences. His contributions have earned countless honours, including a knighthood and appointment to the Order of Merit.



Yet his greatest achievement is not any award or title. It is the inspiration he has provided to millions. At a time when environmental challenges can feel overwhelming, he has remained a voice of curiosity, reason, and hope, showing that understanding nature is the first step toward protecting it.

What makes Attenborough remarkable is not only what he has accomplished, but how he has accomplished it. Throughout a career spanning nearly eight decades, he has remained guided by curiosity, humility, and a genuine desire to educate rather than promote himself. In an era when influence is often measured by volume and visibility, he has demonstrated that quiet authority, earned through knowledge and integrity, can leave a far deeper and more lasting impact.

So yes, the world still has heroes. They are the people who dedicate their lives to something larger than themselves and use their influence for the public good.

As we celebrate the extraordinary life and legacy of David Attenborough, we are reminded that heroes are not relics of the past. They are among us, showing us what integrity, passion, and service look like. Few have done so with more grace, wisdom, and impact than David Attenborough.

## Cheers, David!

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# The Giraffe and Elephant Bond



The Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is famous for its remarkable animal stories. The rescue facility provides a nurturing and safe sanctuary for orphaned and injured wildlife. When the animals feel secure, they become playful and interactive, often displaying extraordinary emotional intelligence and forming unexpected friendships.

Lobioto the elephant was found alone in dangerous territory. He was rescued and, upon his arrival at the wildlife sanctuary, was greeted by Kiko, an orphaned giraffe.

Kiko had been assigned sleeping quarters near the elephant nursery because he was too small to stay in the standard giraffe stable.

Lobioto liked Kiko better than the other elephants and followed him everywhere. He would press against Kiko's legs to feel safe and secure.

On one occasion, a slightly larger baby elephant began bullying Lobioto. The elephant would body-slam him to claim territory or gain access to food. Kiko, standing eight feet tall, was not having it. He came to Lobioto's rescue by placing himself between the bully and his friend.

The tough young elephant thought he could outmaneuver Kiko to reach his target. However, one smooth, strong, and direct kick from Kiko made the roughneck rethink his position. He staggered briefly before trotting off in another direction.

Staff members who witnessed the exchange saw Lobioto wrap his trunk around Kiko's legs while Kiko stood sentry, ensuring there would be no further attacks.

The two slept beside each other and ate together. They were almost always seen in each other's company, demonstrating a remarkable bond that crossed species boundaries.

The sanctuary has worked to habituate and rehabilitate both animals with the expectation of releasing them into the wild as soon as they are fully mature. Their friendship serves as a powerful reminder that loyalty, trust, and companionship can be found throughout the animal kingdom.

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# I Hope We Never Have a Summer Without Fireflies...

By Julie Morgan



What is summer in the South without the alluring ambience of fireflies? While not everyone in America experiences these luminescent lampyrids, those of us who are lucky enough to witness the pure magic and whimsy of their existence gaze in awe. Unfortunately, as with many creatures in our ecosystem, fireflies are threatened or endangered.

There are over 150 species of fireflies recorded in North America and more than 2,000 species worldwide. Sadly, one in three North American species is at risk of extinction. Certain populations are declining mainly due to habitat loss, light pollution, disruption of mating behaviors, and pesticide use. Modern chemicals used to kill mosquitoes can also kill fireflies directly or eliminate the insects they depend upon for food.

Firefly larvae live underground for one to two years. Once they emerge as adults, their sole purpose is to find a mate. Their adult lifespan is only 7–21 days. Males spend their entire lives—whether one week or three—flying about and flashing a species-specific code to attract a mate. If a female on the ground flashes back the same unique code and he finds her, they mate. She then lays eggs, and both eventually die.

Males typically remain in trees, while females stay in the

grass, where they lay their eggs and their larvae later develop. Fascinating fact: many species of fireflies do not have mouths. Unless they belong to a cannibalistic species, adult fireflies do not eat. They survive on the energy reserves accumulated during their larval stage. Some predatory females of other species mimic the flashing code of males, luring them close enough to capture and eat them.

Why are these little creatures disappearing so rapidly? We have more development in rural areas than ever before, which means fewer trees, less grassland, and more light pollution. When the lawn is mowed weekly, fireflies may be harmed. When pesticides are sprayed, fireflies may be killed. When we leave bright porch lights on all night, we interfere with their ability to communicate and reproduce.

So, what can we do?

Consider creating a firefly habitat. It is a wonderful way to encourage their growth and continued existence. You can do this by planting native flowers such as Goldenrod, Coneflowers, Asters, and Cardinal Flowers. You can also add a water source, such as a small pond, and reduce the frequency of mowing.

If you have dead leaves or logs in a back corner of your yard, please leave them there through the summer—there may be

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fireflies living in them. Reduce artificial light around your porch and yard whenever possible. Finally, avoid using pesticides and bug zappers.

If you would like to learn more or participate in Firefly Watch, please visit the Mass Audubon Firefly Watch Program. Mass Audubon assumed stewardship of Firefly Watch from the Museum of Science in 2018, and the website provides up-to-date information, resources, and event listings.

Each year in early summer, Great Smoky Mountains National Park hosts a remarkable firefly viewing event during peak mating season. So the next time you have an opportunity to marvel at these glowing beetles, take a moment to reflect on how magnificent their short lives truly are—a dazzling light display that makes our world a little more magical and whimsical.

Together, we can help ensure that future generations will enjoy them as well.

“Fireflies, to me, are nighttime butterflies, dazzling the night with magical flashes of light... They remind me of life. They remind me of hope.”

— Melody Lee



## Eight UN experts say, “Conservation efforts must not come at the expense of human rights”

(Parts reprinted from Survival International)

Maasai people are struggling to maintain their right to exist in one of Tanzania’s most important tourism destinations. The Tanzanian government is evicting them in the name of conservation.

The difference between conservation and preservation is clear. Conservation sites are known for the role humans play in protecting and overseeing the natural landscape and wildlife. This has been the role of the Maasai for generations, as they do not hunt, are environmentally conscious, and live simply. Preservation sites, by contrast, are those without human contact, allowing nature to develop or decline on its own. Evicting the Maasai for conservation reasons is a direct affront to the very definition of conservation.

The Maasai of Ngorongoro have occupied the region for no less than 200 years. It was officially designated a “multiple-use area,” securing the land for the Maasai in 1959. The Tanzanian authorities have carried out arbitrary arrests, beaten and tortured residents, and suspended health services to force families out. Two commissions, appointed by the Tanzanian president, concluded that the evictions should continue and expand, citing the area’s UNESCO status to justify them.

Eight UN experts issued a public statement calling on the authorities to release the commissions’ findings. They also said: “In 1951, the Maasai were assured that they could continue residing in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in exchange for relinquishing lands to establish the Serengeti National Park. These historical commitments to Indigenous Peoples must be honored, and their human rights fully respected.”

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance said in a statement: “The World Heritage status is being used against us, without us.”

# Does it Matter?



This morning I shopped using my canvas bags. I skipped the plastic produce bags and simply placed the tomatoes and five loose apples directly into my cart. I chose a glass bottle of milk instead of a plastic jug, even though it cost \$1.25 more. I set my dishwasher to the eco cycle rather than high heat, and I bought from a local store instead of Amazon.

Does it matter?

Every year, the United States alone produces approximately 265 million metric tons of plastic waste.

Creating a single plastic bottle requires about three liters of water. When we account for the extraction of oil, manufacturing, and transportation, it can take two to three times more water to produce the bottle than the amount of water it ultimately holds.

It's easy to say, "My little changes don't matter." Why should I turn off the tap while brushing my teeth when a data center can consume millions of gallons of water every day?

Because it's about what we believe.

When we believe our choices matter, it changes how we see the world. When we make a conscious effort to conserve resources, choose environmentally

responsible products, and examine our daily habits, we develop a moral center that influences everything else.

Suddenly, we pay closer attention to our elected officials and the decisions they make on our behalf. We become less willing to support irresponsible corporations and retailers. Our choices matter because every purchase is a vote. Every dollar we spend sends a message about the kind of world we want to live in and the values we are willing to support.

Does it matter?

Yes, it does.

Your example influences others. Your awareness influences businesses. Your choices, combined with millions of others, shape markets, policies, and priorities.

From the American Revolution to the Civil Rights Movement and countless social changes in between, history has shown that meaningful change often begins with ordinary people making conscious choices.

Change is coming, and you are helping to bring it about.

One decision at a time. One dollar at a time.

Stay the course. We've got this.

# Our annual Party for the Planet celebration was a wonderful success this year!

On April 25, we joined the Outdoor Campus of Parks and Recreation in Sioux Falls for a community-wide Earth Day celebration focused on environmental awareness, conservation, and hands-on learning. The event brought together families, organizations, and community members who share a passion for protecting our planet and learning how small actions can make a big difference.

Our primary goal was to connect with the community and introduce more people to The World Giraffe Alliance and our mission. We wanted attendees to learn not only who we are, but also how conservation, sustainability, and environmental stewardship are connected. Our booth, "Heal the World," provided an opportunity for visitors to explore the concepts of and discover how plants contribute to a healthier environment by improving air quality, supporting wildlife, and beautifying our communities.

Although the event was moved indoors due to inclement weather, attendance remained strong and enthusiasm was high throughout the day. Families eagerly visited the activity stations, and children were excited to participate in hands-on projects that combined creativity with environmental education.



One of the highlights of the day was our upcycling activity. We welcomed no fewer than twenty-seven children, accompanied by their parents, and taught

them how to transform small milk containers into colorful planters. This simple project demonstrated how everyday items can be reused rather than discarded, helping to reduce waste while giving materials a second life. After decorating their containers, each child selected a plant to place inside their newly created planter. Watching their faces light up as they proudly displayed their creations was truly rewarding.



Many adults stopped by to learn more about our organization, ask questions about our conservation efforts, and discuss the importance of educating future generations about caring for the planet. Several visitors expressed interest in learning more and were encouraged to visit our website to explore our programs and mission.

One particularly memorable interaction came when a woman approached the booth and asked, "Are you from The World Giraffe Alliance?" When I replied that I was, she smiled and said, "How wonderful. I've never met anyone from The World Giraffe Alliance." Moments like these remind us of the value of community outreach and the importance of building personal connections that help raise awareness for conservation efforts around the world.