

THE TWGA TIMES

PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND EDUCATION



*We do not inherit the earth
from our ancestors; we borrow
it from our children."*

— *Native American Proverb*

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Letter From the Director

Happy April, Easter, Passover and Earth Day to all of our Giraffe Friends,

April marks one third of the year completed and now it is time to make tracks like a cheetah (the fastest land animal.)

While the architect team continues to refine the vision for Tafakari, we here on the front lines are exploring ways to 1) Get noticed in the big world and 2) Find resources to make the project happen. As director it is my job to do just that: direct. So over this last two months I have been developing the plans to direct this ship to catch the wind. Between now and July we have several projects but they can only be successful with your help. If we do them right, and we all "pull together" in Swahili—"Harambe" we should see a massive shift in

our progress. 1) Earth Day April 22 is our Stop the Silent Extinction Day. In your email you will receive a tri-fold that you can print and hand out. Awareness is the first step in changing attitudes. That same day is our launch for the Virtual 5K called “*Take a Walk on the Wild Side*” Please sign up on April 22 to participate for World Giraffe Day. Grab a buddy and take a walk for giraffes. When you sign up we will send you a colorful giraffe 5K shirt to wear that day.

And finally, the biggest push of all this year; the **Tour for Twiga**. On June 22, I will be making a 180 mile “through hike” from the Great Plains Zoo here in South Dakota to the largest zoo in the country, the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. The distance of 180 miles is perfect as the average male Masai giraffe reaches 18.0 feet. This will be my biggest challenge since hiking Kilimanjaro. I’ve never done a through hike and I have no idea if I can walk 180 miles, but I’ll give it my best and you can follow the journey on YouTube and Instagram. I am looking for sponsors who will contribute 18.00 or 180.00 or any combination thereof to raise money for the preserve. If I can take a walk on the wild side for 180 miles, you can take a Walk on the Wild Side of five kilometers (3.1 miles) Let’s raise 18,000 for our giraffe sanctuary. As always, we here at team TWGA are ever grateful for your support, friendship and love of giraffes.

Kupenda na amani, *Michele and Team Twiga*

The Last Giraffe

It’s time to take giraffe conservation seriously.

In the demands of our own lives it is hard to think about giraffes as an urgent issue. When we hear about poaching or habitat loss we feel sad and think, “that’s terrible,” then we go on with our lives.

But if we take a moment to really imagine it, we might think of it differently,

“Poachers” who kill giraffes are not random individual people. They are professional hunters in camouflage with guns and knives and wire and traps. They have no compassion or empathy, in fact they are often excited by the thrill of killing a large animal. They infiltrate preserves and conservation sites and the worst part is, that the African governments have limited resources to stop them.

Their traps cause immense pain and suffering and often the animals die of dehydration or starvation. The killers will start carving up an animal before it is even dead. They will skin them, cut off their ossicones (horns) chop off their tails and take their entrails to create powders and potions for locals. It’s horrifying. But it’s not the worst news.

The newest information on giraffe survival is making our cause even more urgent. Out of 52 African countries, only 21 still have giraffes. The map of geo-located giraffes only tells us where they are, not how many.



Of the 21 countries which still have giraffes 70% of those giraffes live outside of protected areas.

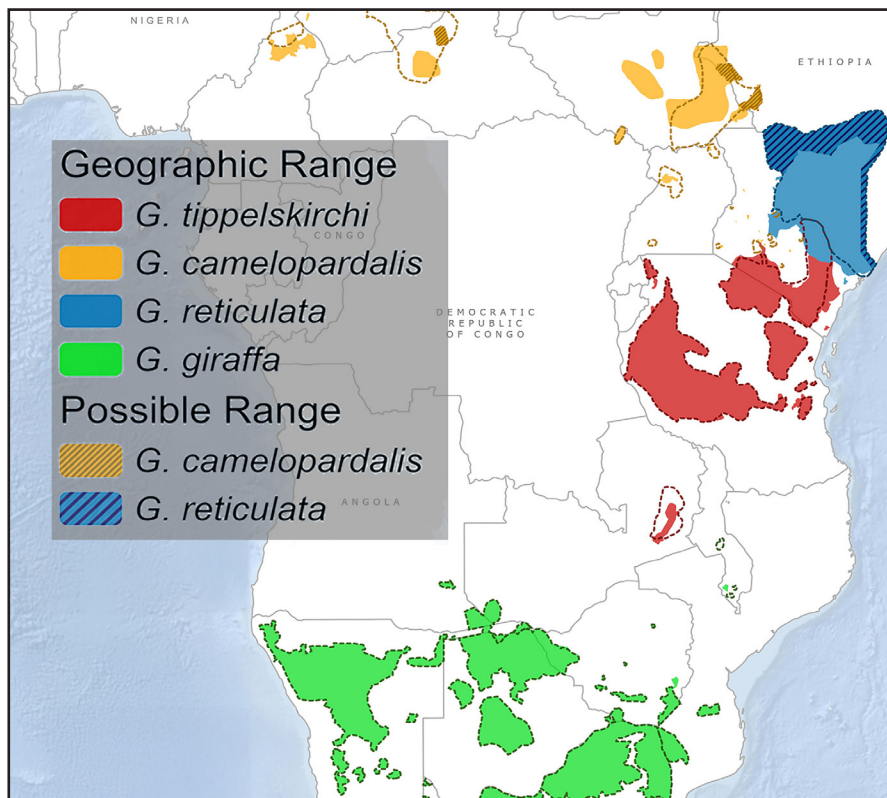
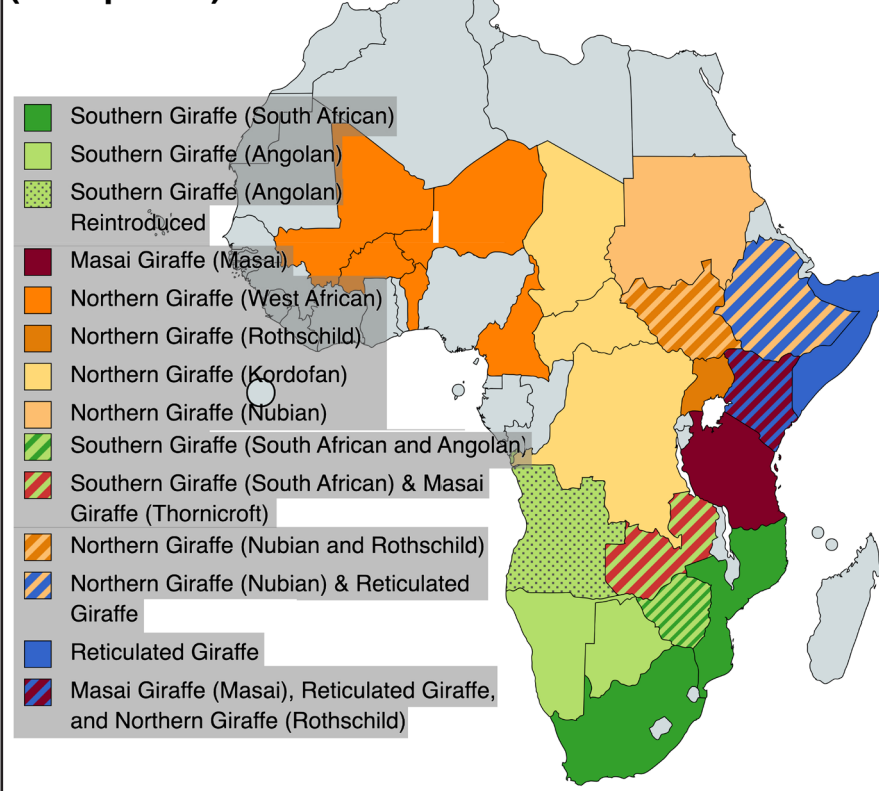
Ethiopia has reported approximately 200 Nubian giraffes. Sudan has recognized 412 Kordofan giraffes and Mozambique about 240 Reticulated giraffes. These statistics from Giraffe Conservation Foundation are pitifully small. Worse, these are numbers for the entire country, even those in captivity or used for trophy hunting.

To date there is one white giraffe left. (see cover photo) There were three but killers murdered the mother and baby. Unless we take action, it is only a matter of time until every last giraffe is gone.

I know there are people who believe that losing a single species is not catastrophic. Species are lost and new ones come into being. That would be true if the conditions of

our planet were normal. Now scientists report that we lose 150 species per day, which is significantly higher than the rate of natural background extinction. (National Geographic) Conversely, scientists discover roughly 40 to 55 new species every day. The disparity is staggering.

Giraffes in Africa Written: Species (Subspecies)



Our focus on giraffes is one part of the puzzle. Each species plays a unique role in any eco-system but in the African landscape giraffes serve a function that no other animal can. Giraffes are the only animal that can effectively prune the tops of plants and trees which contributes to their growth and propagation. Trees that are neglected suffer from diseases and become breeding grounds for pests which can spread to other vegetation. Giraffes are also home to birds called oxpeckers. They are completely dependent on their giraffe host as they eat ticks and parasites found on the giraffe. In the ecosystem the oxpecker is food for jackals and snakes. The entire system is interdependent. Giraffes are not only beautiful, they are necessary. And action is necessary if we are to save them.

In Their Own Words

This year we are highlighting the people who make and create TWGA. Follow the journeys that brought them to The World Giraffe Alliance. Part Two: Kefas' story. . . "The first time I set foot on the mountain it felt familiar. . .



Like maybe, just maybe, I was supposed to be there.

That was 24 years ago.

I still remember my first climb as a porter. I wasn't thinking about the adventure, the views, or the personal growth—I was thinking about making a living, but compared to the mines, this was a gift.

Working as a porter on Mount Kilimanjaro is no joke, and back then, there weren't restrictions like there are today. Porters could be loaded with up to 99 pounds of luggage before adding their own gear. That meant I was sometimes carrying over 110 pounds on my back. If I wanted to rest, I leaned, you couldn't remove the load.

The team liked me. I worked my way up fast, first to camp manager taking the gear up and setting up tents even in snow, rain or freezing temperatures. Later, I got another role—waiter. Waiters don't stop like porters. When you reach camp your work begins. You get up before sunrise to prepare breakfast and you work throughout. After waiter, I became a mountain chef. I did that for four years.

But just when you think everything is perfect just as it is, things change. One day, I met a client who took a real interest in me. He liked my work ethic, my toughness. I was filling in as a summit porter, which meant helping clients all the way to the top. He was impressed that I could carry three backpacks to the summit. On the way down the mountain he pulled my guide aside. He told him, "I want to help this young man go to school to be a guide." His faith in me was amazing. The offer caught me off guard. I had never thought about school but guides didn't carry heavy loads. They led the expedition. I was excited, but frightened. The problem? English. I had never expected to learn English. When I learned about the offer I nearly ran away. I was terrified of learning English, it seemed impossible. But this man didn't just promise to help me—he actually followed through, and the right way. Instead of giving money to a guide or to me, he went to the college directly. The next thing I knew, there was a call: "You're enrolled."

At the college I told the principal the truth. "I don't speak English. I'm afraid I can't learn it." He smiled and said something I'll never forget. "Don't worry. I'll start with you from the beginning. We'll break the language barrier together. I'll teach you how to learn—not just English, but any language you want. Trust me."

College was great! When I finished there was one more step, government training to become licensed. When the training opened I was there on the first day, but the program was canceled. I was so disappointed. They just sent me home. It was so long I almost forgot about it, but one day a call came through my employer.

"—You need to get to Moshi now. Training has started!" I dropped everything, found the fastest transport I could, and raced to Moshi. I passed. Now I could be a real guide. I've now been a guide on Mount Kilimanjaro for over 12 years. I've worked with 10 different companies, learning the industry inside and out. What I love best is the people. I love being there for them. Every success is my success. Every summit is my summit. I get to turn dreams into reality. The mountain let me know I was supposed to be there. Through her I have met people who have helped me with my own dreams. Kilimanjaro changes people. It is a mountain of dreams. I am the proof.

It's Not Quite Jurassic Park but Have Scientists Really Resurrected the Dire Wolf?

April 14, 2025 — For the first time in over 10,000 years, a creature resembling the legendary dire wolf has taken its first breath. Cutting-edge biotechnology has genetically engineered three pups—Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi—born in a Canadian research facility. Created by Colossal Biosciences, these animals represent a striking convergence of ancient DNA and modern science. But as the world marvels at this apparent resurrection, many scientists and ethicists are asking a deeper question: just because we can bring the past to life, should we?



Game of Thrones author George R.R. Martin helped fund the project, Dire Wolves feature heavily in his books.

Colossal used CRISPR gene-editing tools to modify 20 genes in gray wolves, targeting traits associated with the extinct dire wolf, such as size, skeletal robustness, and jaw strength. While DNA was extracted from dire wolf fossils and used to guide the edits, the resulting animals are not exact replicas. Instead, they are genetically modified hybrids designed to resemble the extinct species. The company describes this as “functional de-extinction”—reviving ecological traits rather than cloning an identical organism.

Dr. Elena Márquez, lead researcher at Colossal’s Pleistocene Revival Project commented, “. . . we’re entering uncharted territory, where science blurs with philosophy.”

on reviving extinct species could divert attention and funding away from protecting endangered ones still with us. With thousands of species on the brink due to climate change, habitat loss, and pollution, some conservationists question whether this project is a distraction dressed up as progress.

The announcement has sparked global fascination, but also serious ethical debate. Critics argue that the focus

“These are not cloned dire wolves,” says Dr. Laura Cheng, a conservation ethicist. “They’re designer animals—engineered based on what we think dire wolves were like. That raises serious questions about authenticity, ecological impact, and even animal welfare.”

There are also concerns about the animals themselves. The pups were born from domestic dog surrogates, and scientists admit they don’t yet fully understand how these hybrids will behave or what challenges they may face long term. If reintroduced into natural ecosystems, their impact could be unpredictable. Could they compete with modern predators? Would they survive? Would they destabilize existing wildlife populations?

Despite the controversy, supporters argue that the technology holds promise for conservation. The same methods used to create these pups could one day be applied to species on the edge of extinction, helping to restore genetic diversity or bring back keystone species that once supported vital ecosystems. It’s a chance, they say, to reverse some of the damage humans have caused.

But others see a darker undercurrent. “This could become less about saving nature and more about controlling it,” says Dr. Emil Akande, an environmental philosopher. “It opens the door to commodifying life—treating extinction not as a tragedy, but as a technical challenge to be solved.”

For now, Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi live in a secure sanctuary, monitored closely by scientists. There are no plans to release them into the wild, though that possibility is not entirely ruled out for the future. Their health, behavior, and ecological fit will be studied in detail over the coming years.

This isn't just a story about ancient predators revived by modern science—it's a reflection of who we are, and who we want to be. As we face an uncertain ecological future, the return of the dire wolf forces us to reckon with what it really means to save a species—and whether the line between restoration and reinvention has already been crossed.

We are the Lorax. We Speak for the Trees!



Tanzanians are being urged to plant approximately one billion trees by 2050 to help preserve Mount Kilimanjaro's rapidly melting ice cap, which scientists warn could vanish within the next 50 years due to global warming. The initiative, part of the "Save Mount Kilimanjaro" campaign launched in 2021, is led by the Nessa Foundation and supported by the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA). Currently, about two million trees are planted annually, with a focus on regions surrounding the mountain—Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and Tanga. A symbolic awareness trek is scheduled for May 17, 2025, starting from Marangu Gate, and is expected to be officiated by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa. The campaign emphasizes the importance of the glacier in supplying water, purifying air, and supporting the tourism industry. TANAPA is also encouraging the public to vote for Mount Kilimanjaro as Africa's top destination and Best Mountain, highlighting that conservation efforts enhance

Beware the Poisoned Paper



The Ecology Center's 2023 report, "Receipt Deceit: Toxic Chemicals in Receipt Paper," reveals that many paper receipts still contain harmful bisphenols, particularly bisphenol S (BPS), which has largely replaced bisphenol A (BPA). These chemicals are linked to reproductive and hormonal health risks, especially for workers who frequently handle receipts. In a study of 374 receipts from 144 major retailers across 22 U.S. states and Washington, D.C., 80% contained either BPS or BPA, a slight improvement from 93% in 2017. The use of non-bisphenol alternatives increased from 2% to 20% over the same period. However, BPS has become the dominant bisphenol in use. The Ecology Center recommends reducing printed receipts by offering digital or no-receipt options. Legislative efforts are underway: Washington State has proposed banning all bisphenols in receipts, and California is considering a similar measure requiring

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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