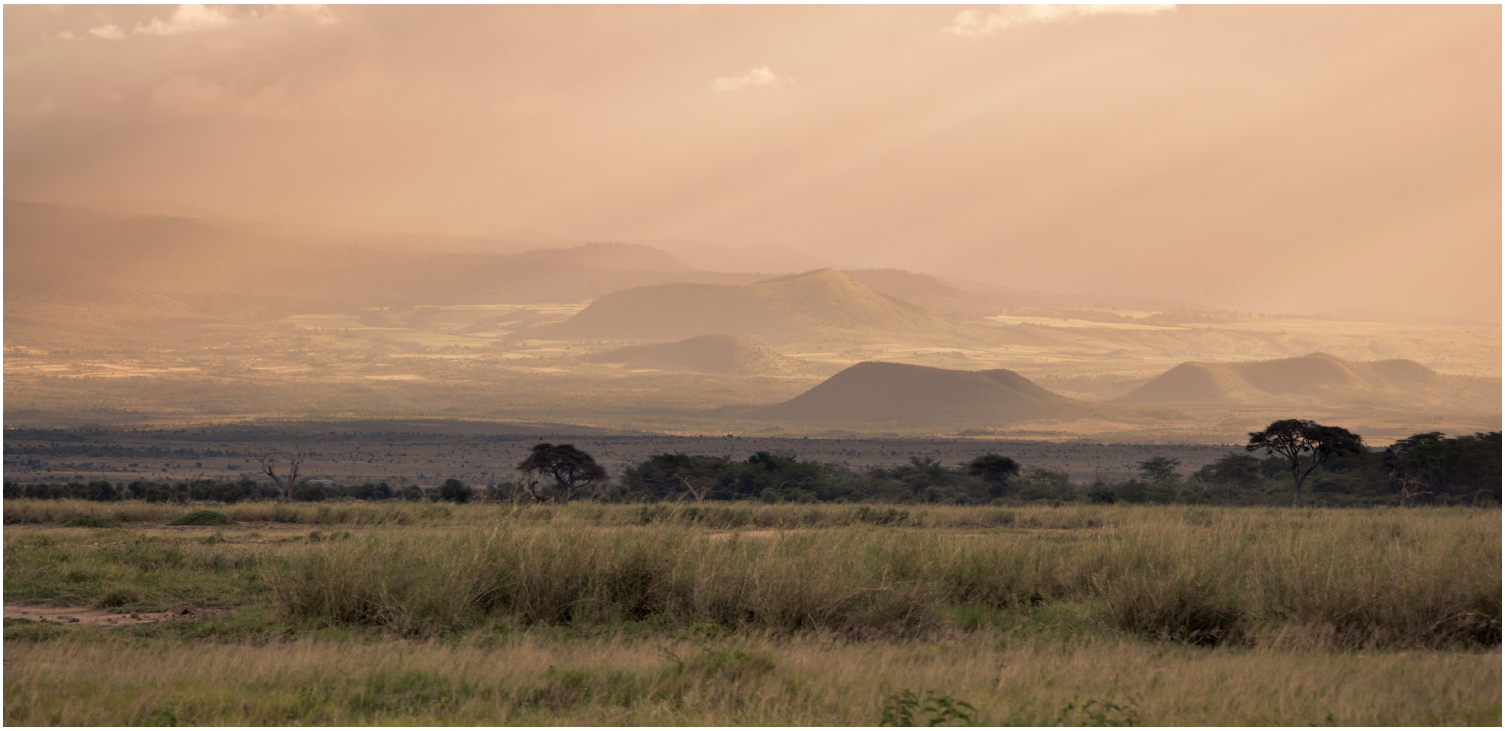
SEPT 2025 VOL. 12
TWGA

THE TWGA TIMES

PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND EDUCATION



A steppe is a grassland ecoregion with semi-arid or continental climate and little forest cover.

"The natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest."

David Attenborough

Inside This Volume

Letter from the Director

Habari Marafiki, (Hello Friends)

This is your September 2025 update. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, things are happening and we are thrilled. This year is going to end with a bang!

At present, our co-director, Kefas, is working to purchase the three acres of land adjacent to ours. This will give us a total of 8 acres. We are hoping to obtain 10 before we acquire giraffes. They need the space.

Additionally, I met with our architect, Aspen, and in November she will begin completing the plans for the wasafiri house.

But perhaps the best news is that our first building project will begin in six weeks. The caretaker cottage is the first building project and Kefas and his family will relocate here. The board agreed this was a priority because we need someone on property to oversee the upcoming development.

We have been fortunate to have resources for this first building project, but the funds will soon be gone. This is where I have to ask you to put boots on the ground for us.

In October we are beginning the Saving the Steppes of Kilimanjaro* project. This beautiful Tafakari location is part of the grasslands between Mount Meru and Kilimanjaro. Since 2020 major corporations, governments and even individuals have begun buying up the lands for industrial farming. This means wildlife and indigenous people are either eradicated or removed. Any land that is not privately owned by local people, is owned by the government. They will sell it to the first offer. We have to be first. This is a long range project in partnership with Maasai. How can you help?

Commit to being a one Dollar Donor.

We are pushing a rush campaign to get 1,000 one dollar donors. It's not the money, it's the commitment. When we present our project to private grant funders they want to see how many people are donating. They don't look at how much, just the number of donors. This signals the importance of the cause. If you can do more than a dollar, please do, we need all the help we can get, but as long as your name shows up on the monthly donation page, that is all that matters. If you are reading this newsletter, that tells us that you care. Now you can show us how much. Even one dollar says everything.

Go to the website and click donate. The dollar donation link is there. It's simple, it is safe, and it means so much.

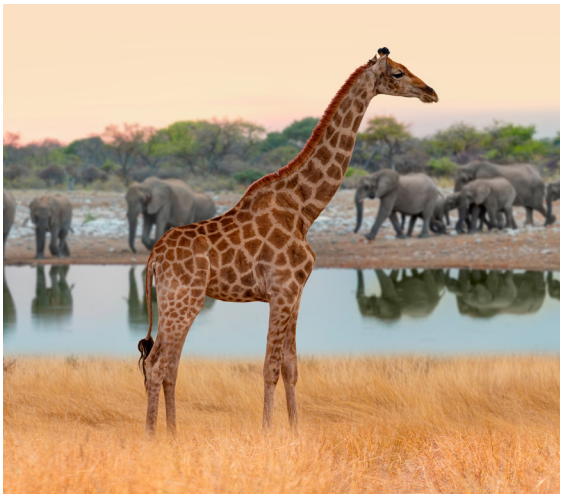
Thank you again for being part of the mission to save giraffes, their lands and the people who share their world.

Kupenda na amani (Love and peace)

Michele and Team Twiga

How to Save Giraffes and Us, Part II: Restoring Historical Range

C. Donaghue



As we indicated in Part I of our research on giraffe corridors, we have learned that efforts to save giraffes begin with integrating their range. Fragmentation exists throughout East Africa. In Tanzania alone, there are numerous populations that are separated and cannot connect. Tanzania could be linked with the Nubian fragments to create a Great Rift Valley Wildlife Corridor stretching from Tanzania through Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan (Giraffe Conservation Foundation, December 2021).

The use of bio-fragments with wildlife corridors would bring together the isolated populations through bridges. The best place to start would be in Tanzania.

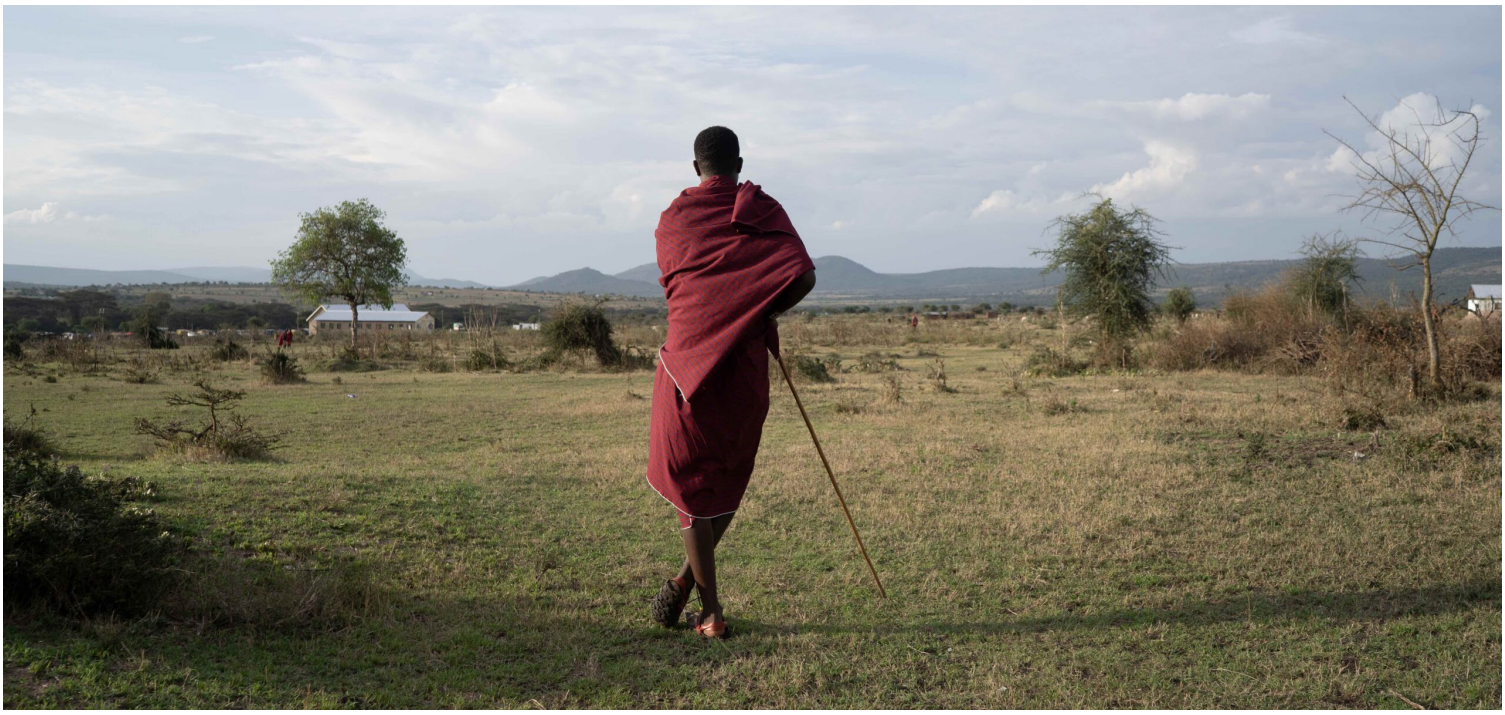
Tanzania has multiple fragments of several species of giraffes that already cross borders. By connecting the fragments in Tanzania, we would begin establishing an international wildlife corridor. Starting implementation in one country would be more practical than immediately attempting the larger task of an international corridor.

One way to encourage movement between giraffe towers is to plant acacia trees between populations, leading them toward bridges. Bridges can actually allow giraffes to safely cross roads. As unlikely as it sounds, such bridges have been successfully used in Banff National Park. Interestingly, those who built the bridges did not know that all the animals would use them.

Traversing the land, giraffes run the risk of encountering power lines, industry, towns, and human settlements. However, wildlife corridors can be created in the safest areas, such as the Y2Y (Yukon to Yellowstone) International Wildlife Corridor. That project has been so successful it has helped remove species from endangered lists.

It is something worth exploring

East Africa and 21st Century Technology



Today in Tanzania, two-thirds of the population live outside the cities. Many are pastoralists or herders. They live off the land, they migrate, they live simply—and they have no regrets.

But this way of life is rapidly disappearing.

Western ideology has overtaken the planet, and every non-technological society is being infiltrated. While environmentalists remind us that the planet is being destroyed by emissions, trash, and carbon footprints, global leaders continue to pursue ways to create *more* emissions, trash, and carbon footprints by expanding technologies into communities that don't need them.

This month in *Tanzania's Daily News*, a local online news source, two articles hailed the "good news" about the increase in modern living:

"September 22, 2025, officially opened the 8th Annual Mining Technology Exhibition for 2025… The exhibition has become a special platform where the government, private sector, large- and small-scale miners, financial institutions, entrepreneurs, and various development stakeholders gather to discuss and collaborate."

"KILIMANJARO: Ambassadors from the European Union (EU) have expressed satisfaction with the various development projects funded by EU member states in Tanzania… Before 2019, we were collecting about 1,500 liters of milk per day. Today, we are collecting over 7,000 liters daily," Kimario said. He added that the project has increased herd size from an average of one cow to three cows per household and improved incomes. Farmers are now able to educate their children and build better homes.

On the surface, this all looks beautiful and positive—but dig deeper.

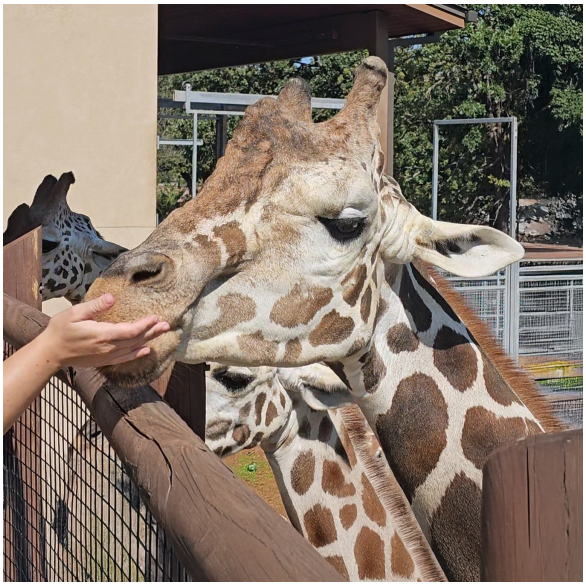
More "milk production" means more cows, using more water, more land, and creating more methane. "Educating" their children means educating them in Western ideology, culture, and industry. The goal is to produce more businesses, more workers, and more products—leading to less free time, more stress, more consumerism, and more pollution.

Better "homes"? For people who spend most of their lives outdoors, why?

Capitalism may have its place, but does it have to be in *every* place? Is there no room for simplicity, community, and harmony with nature?

Only by encouraging people to push back, to refuse to be part of the "global" community, and to embrace their own way of life can we preserve what little natural world we have left.

Meet Demetri, the Towering Star of the OKC Zoo

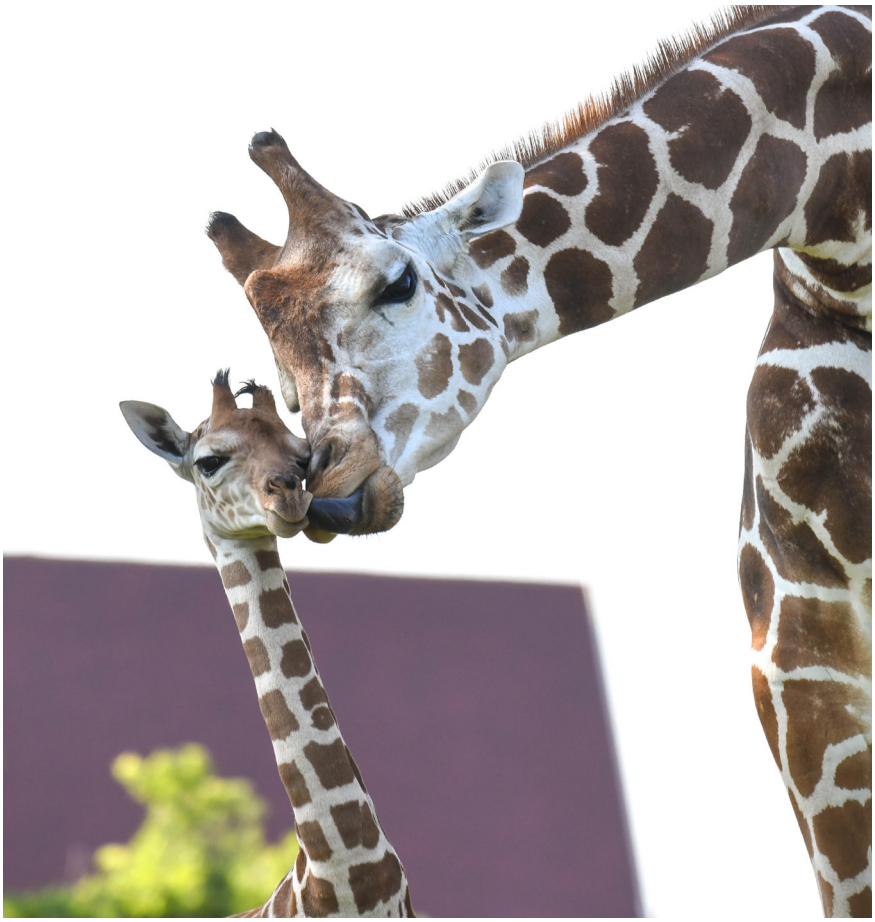


At 18 feet tall and nearly 2,800 pounds, Demetri the giraffe is hard to miss at the Oklahoma City Zoo. But it's not just his size that makes him a favorite among zookeepers and guests, it's his gentle nature, charisma, and his undeniable knack for fatherhood.

Demetri arrived in 2018 from Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas, as part of a nationwide conservation effort to strengthen giraffe populations in human care. Since then, he has become an integral part of the Zoo's herd, particularly alongside Julu, a graceful female giraffe who has captured his affection. Together, they have already raised Njeri, a spirited young calf now two years old and now they're celebrating another addition to their family.

This month, the Zoo welcomed the birth of Julu and Demetri's newest calf, weighing in at 150 pounds and already standing 6 feet tall, the baby giraffe is off to a strong start. Zookeepers report that she could soon be taller than many of her visitors, as giraffes can grow as much as three centimeters per day during their first week of life.

"Julu has been pregnant for more than a year now, so we've all been eagerly awaiting the newest member of our animal family," said Bill Smith, OKC Zoo curator. "This birth is another step in our efforts to stop the 'Silent Extinction' of giraffes."



Despite his towering stature, Demetri remains approachable and even playful. Known to happily accept bunches of mint leaves from keepers and lucky visitors, he continues to serve as an ambassador for his species, sparking curiosity and conservation awareness among those who meet him.

The Oklahoma City Zoo partners with organizations in Tanzania to protect giraffes and their shrinking habitats. With wild populations declining to about 117,000 individuals, a drop that has left giraffes extinct in seven African countries, the Zoo's conservation efforts are more urgent than ever.

So on your next visit to the OKC Zoo, be sure to look up—way up—for Demetri, Julu, and their growing family. Whether it's the sight of Demetri reaching for the highest leaves, Julu nurturing her calf, or the baby taking her first bold steps, it's easy to see why giraffes remain some of the most beloved residents of the Zoo, and why protecting them matters for generations to come.

Leave the Leaves This Fall

This fall, when the trees let go of their leaves, think twice before bagging them up. What may look like nothing more than yard waste is actually one of nature's most valuable resources and one of the simplest ways you can support a healthier environment right at home.

Leaves are the foundation of a natural cycle that has been running for millions of years. As they break down, they return essential nutrients and organic matter to the soil. This process improves soil structure, increases its ability to hold water, and provides the building blocks for stronger, more resilient plants. When you let nature do the work, you're creating healthier soil that continues to give back year after year.

Think of leaves as a free, all-purpose garden supply. Shredded leaves make an unbeatable mulch. Spread across garden beds, they block weeds, hold in precious moisture, prevent erosion, and insulate plants from harsh winter cold. On lawns, mulched leaves break down naturally, enriching the soil and helping turf grow thicker and greener in spring. In vegetable gardens, they can be composted or dug directly into the earth to boost fertility without chemical fertilizers.

Leaves do more than improve your soil they also provide shelter for countless creatures. When leaves pile up, they become winter homes for moths, butterflies, fireflies, beetles, and native bees. These insects aren't just fascinating; they're vital pollinators for many of our favorite foods, including apples, almonds, coffee, and even chocolate. By leaving some leaf litter in place, you're helping these species survive at a time when insect populations are under serious pressure.

By caring for leaves, you care for soil, plants, and wildlife. One small choice this autumn can make a big difference for the environment.

Want to learn more? Check out:

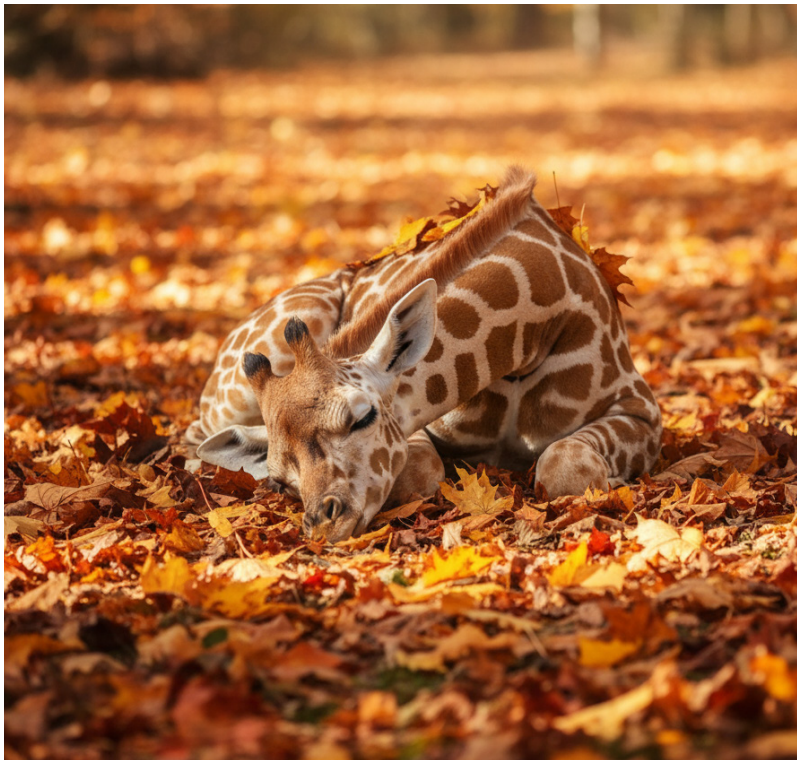
Xerces Society: xerces.org/blog/leave-the-leaves

Peace Valley Nature Center: peacevalleynaturecenter.org/the-hidden-value-of-fallen-leaves-nature-s-essential-ecosystem-players

Leaves of Autumn

Helen Barclay

When blades of grass are turning brown
And autumn leaves come floating down,
I dance with them on lawn and street
And scuffle through them with my feet.
Then to one special spot I take
All I can gather with my rake,
Heaping them high above my head
To make a giant featherbed,
Where, when I climb on top to rest,
I sink into a cozy nest.



Can You Spot Which Giraffe?

For hundreds of years, we believed that giraffes were a single species. Wherever you saw them, regardless of their markings, they were considered one species with several subspecies.

Only in the last ten years have we found conclusive new data indicating otherwise. The Giraffe Conservation Foundation, in collaboration with its partners, has released information that has startled the scientific world.

"DNA studies published starting in 2016 revealed that there are four distinct giraffe lineages which do not interbreed in the wild. The genetic differences between them are comparable to those between polar and grizzly bears." — Africa Geographic, 2025

And so, the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Giraffe and Okapi Specialist Group (GOSG) embarked on an extensive review. Prof. Janke and the SBiK-F, together with GCF under Dr. Julian Fennessy, spearheaded a continent-wide genomic study that saw researchers collect tissue samples from giraffe populations across Africa, even in politically unstable and remote regions such as Chad, Niger, and South Sudan.

The scientific evidence was compelling. Extensive genetic data proved large DNA differences between several giraffe lineages—evidence of multiple species. These genetic divergences were profound. Morphological differentiation was only one element of the physical differences. Studies of skull structure and bone shape complemented the genetic findings.

Each of the four species has distinct differences, including coloring, markings, height, head shape, and size of ossicones (horns). Some distinctions are not visible but are part of the genetic make-up, creating differences in habits and behavior patterns that are still being discovered.

Each individual species faces its own threats in the wild. The important takeaway is that ALL giraffes are in danger of extinction.

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.
 Visit: TheWorldGiraffeAlliance.org or Facebook.com/TheworldGiraffeAlliance/
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