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National parks are not enough to protect Kenya's wildlife

A survey of 30 years of wildlife data shows the need for integrated landscape conservation that combines parks with private and community-based conservation

Nairobi, Kenya – For the past half-century or more, conservation goals have focused on saving endangered species and establishing national parks, which now cover 10% of the earth's land surface. But do parks really protect wildlife, and more importantly, biodiversity? Survey results from Kenyan scientists who looked at 30 years of wildlife data published today in PLoS ONE show that though vital, Kenya's parks are insufficient to protect species.

“The decline in Kenya's park populations is not surprising, given the inherent shortcomings in their design. Only a modest portion of the annual migratory range of large herbivores is included in Kenya's parks,” said senior author Dr. David Western in a paper titled *The Status of Wildlife in Protected Areas Compared to Non-Protected Areas of Kenya*, co-authored with Samantha Russell and Innes Cuthill.

“We need a radical review of conservation policies in East Africa in order to sustain biological diversity, ecosystem function, and ecological services,” said Western, who was raised in Tanzania and has been studying wildlife and people in Kenya for 40 years. “To do that we must monitor wildlife in and outside parks. We must also foster local conservation efforts and encourage ‘parks beyond parks’ to protect vital landscapes outside national parks.

“Quantification of species trends and the factors governing population and ecosystem viability are vital to forecasting, planning and managing wildlife populations, and in auditing the success of alternatives conservation policies and practices.”

Dr. Western co-founded the African Conservation Centre (ACC) in 1996 in Nairobi and today he remains on the board of directors; the African Conservation Fund is the U.S.-based support organization for ACC.

More about Dr. Western’s science and conservation work may be found at <http://www.AfricanConservationFund.org>

or contact African Conservation Fund to schedule an interview. High-resolution images are available.

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