



Eco News from

Malewa Wildlife Lodge + Kigio Wildlife Camp

Outstanding Eco-lodges in the heart of the Great Rift Valley

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Becoming an Ecolodge

Dear all,

Over the past two months we have made tremendous progress on our journey to make Malewa Wildlife Lodge as environmentally sustainable and socially con-scious as possible. We will carry on with these efforts as we open Kigio Wildlife Camp, our second lodge in the Kigio Wildlife Conservancy (KWC). We have begun a number of projects in collaboration with the villages bordering the Conservancy, we have given our staff an eco-training and improved our operations by finding sustainable ways to use resources and minimize our wastes, and we have begun a dialog with local environmental organizations to draft a management plan for KWC.

In the following descriptions we are sharing with you our progress and visions for the future. Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in receiving future updates or if you would like to be further involved in one of the projects listed below. For those of you who have stayed at the lodge and offered your feedback and support during our fireside discussions, "Asante sana!"



The setting for many fireside discussions...

Heather Arrowood
Environmental Consultant
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The chief (center in khaki) and local elders from the communities bordering the Conservancy visit the lodge to discuss collaborative efforts.

Community Projects

It is important to us that the lodge and the camp benefit the communities surrounding Kigio Wildlife Conservancy. We hire local people and buy local prod-ucts whenever possible. We want the local communities to be proud of KWC. If local people benefit from con-servation and tourism, then the Conservancy will be protected and illegal poaching and firewood harvesting will be minimized. To find meaningful ways to benefit local people, we have been involving local leaders and elders in the development of projects. The following projects are the result of these collaborative efforts and discussions.

Lamwe Organic Farm

Our goal is to buy all the produce that we use in the kitchen from local farmers. This will reduce trips to the city to stock up and it will help the local economy. To realize this, the lodge is helping a group of 15 farmers, men and women, from Mwitumberia and Langalanga villages to start an organic garden at the border of the two villages. The group has decided to call themselves "Lamwe," a combination of their two village names. With the help of local organic farmer John Motura, we are training the participating farmers on organic alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Organic practices are better for the long-term health of the soil and environment. Plus by growing organically, we will have access to high quality organic produce that many of our guests have indicated they prefer. So far we have planted our first seedbed with onions, to-matoes, leeks, cabbages, lettuces, cooking greens, broccoli, cauliflower, beets, and artichokes. In addition we have direct seeded zucchini, eggplant, carrots and herbs. The lodge has begun to compost its food waste and this compost will be given to the farm to fertilize the soil.



Our trainer, John Motura, prepares a seedbed at Lamwe

School Firewood Project

One of the resources that we use regularly at the lodge is firewood. The water in our rooms is heated with kuni (wood) boosters and we spend the cool evenings gathered around the fireplaces. Currently we are collect-ing deadwood from the Kigio Wildlife Conservancy to meet our firewood demand, however this is not an ideal solution. Deadwood is important to the local ecology because it hosts many insects and microorganisms. For the short-term we are planning to harvest exotic invasive species from the Conservancy for firewood, but once these have been eliminated we need a long-term solution.

For this reason we are currently working with two primary schools in the villages bordering KWC to plant woodlots for firewood production. Years from now branches from these trees will be harvested by the schools and sold to the lodge for firewood. The schools can then use the profits for supplies, fieldtrips, and other education programs.

So far we have planted 350 trees at two schools and hope to include an additional school in the coming months



Children at Moridati (left) and Mwega (right) Primary Schools plant trees for our School Fire-wood Project.

Malewa Community Products

The lodge makes an effort to buy as many of its supplies locally as possible. Our dish soap and some cleaning supplies come from a local man who makes them from aloe vera and other local plants. Our honey that we serve at breakfast comes from a women's group in Mwitumberia village who harvest it from their bee-hives. Our carpets at Kigio Camp come from a local group of artisans who weave with handmade looms.

We would also like to make these products available to our guests for purchase. This is another impor-tant way the lodge can contribute to the local economy. Some of the local products we plan to sell to guests are sisal and wool baskets and handbags, jewelry from recy-cled milk cartons and magazines, bar soaps, honey in recycled glass jars, placemats, beaded pillows and coasters, carpets and fabrics, among many other items.

Each purchase will be accompanied by a business

card, like the one below, with a photo of the person who made the item so that guests know who is benefit-ing from their purchase. A portion of the proceeds will fund future community projects. We hope to make these items available shortly from our website www.kigio.com.

Malewa Community Products

Paul Mungai from Beggi Village makes necklaces out of magazines and milk cartons, donated by the lodge, as part of the **Maua Self-help Group**. The lodge looks for creative people who can find ways to reuse our waste.



Community Tours

Another way for tourists to contribute to the local economy is through community tours. For each tour a fee is collected and donated to the community. Tours can include going to local schools, taking a basket weav-ing class with a local women's group, planting trees in the villages to offset the carbon emissions from a flight, and watching traditional Kikuyu dances.

Guests can take a trip to Gilgil Spinners and Weavers where a collection of artisans spin wool dyed with local plants and weave fabrics and carpets on handmade looms.



A loom at Gilgil Spinners and Weavers

Access to Clean Water

Lack of water is the preeminent concern identified by community leaders. Most people depend on the nearby Malewa River for water, but this water is un-suitable for drinking and irrigation of crops is a serious problem for those who do not immediately neighbor the river. This year was a particularly dry year and many crops have failed. Since most people living in the communities bordering KWC are subsistence farmers, many people are struggling to pay for food this year. We are partnering with the regional water authority to develop a plan for the communities bordering KWC so that everyone has access to clean drinking water. If you would like to make a donation to this effort, please contact us at Conservation@kigio.com.

Environmental Education

On Aug 5 we hosted our first field trip within KWC. Our resident naturalist, Stephen Nyaori, took 30 school children from Mwega primary school on a walking tour of the Conservancy where they saw



giraffes, warthogs, waterbuck, impala, and zebras. They then were given a tour of the lodge and operations by our community coordinator, Francis Wachuma. He showed them our solar panels and kuni boosters and explained our mission of environmental sustainability. We want to continue this partnership with the schools, not just through fieldtrips, but also by helping to develop their



Stephen with the students

environmental curriculum. We encourage guests to get in-volved in this project and hope they will visit schools in the future to give presentations. If you have ideas and would like to get involved please contact us at Conservation@kigio.com

Waste Management

We look for creative ways to manage our wastes. We compost our organic waste, recycle what we can, and look for innovative ways to reuse what is left. For example, we donate our magazines and milk cartons to a local group who makes them into jewelry. We do-nate our empty glass jars from the kitchen to a women's group who fill them with honey to sell. We give some of our empty water bottles to a local man who fills them with dish soap, shampoo, and toilet cleaner for sale.



We train our staff to be environmentally sensi-tive, to use water sparingly, to sort waste, to pick up litter whenever they see it, and to explain to guests what they are doing and why.

Nassir Jattan and Francis Wachuma dig a compost pit for the lodge (left). Jewelry made from milk cartons and magazines (right)



Wildlife Conservation



We are happy to announce four new members to our population of Rothschild's Giraffes this past month! This brings their numbers to 29 within the Conservancy. Rothschild's Giraffes are one of the two most endangered of the 6 identified giraffe species in Africa. National Geographic has recently estimated their numbers at only a few hundred in the wild. We are proud to hold such a significant portion of the remaining members of this species. We plan on partnering with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), environmental organizations, and universities to increase research on this species and others within the Conservancy. We hope to host students from the KWS training institute on their internships in the coming months to improve conservation and research, to educate local students, and to inform our guests. We are currently drafting a management plan for KWC and we will be consulting wildlife biologists to conduct habitat viability and carrying capacity assessments to determine if there are other endangered or threatened species, like the black rhino, that would be appropriate for reintroduction. If you are interested in sponsor-ing or being involved in any of these efforts please contact us at Conservation@kigio.com.

Female giraffes are verp protective of their newborns. We tracked this mother with her few-day-old newborn from a distance and hid behind bushes to get close enough to capture them in a photo



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