

Report on Laikipia

We have made a large commitment of £60,000 to the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) in Kenya over the next two years.

The district of Laikipia is immediately north East of Mount Kenya and for those of you who know nothing of this initiative, the LWF was established in 1992 when thirty-one major private landowners joined with eighteen

indigenous communities,

twelve tour operators

and various individuals

to form an organisation

whose mission statement

is: 'To conserve the integrity of the Laikipia ecosystem by creatively managing its natural resources to improve the livelihoods of its people.' This is a first in Kenya and it is fair to say that the venture has the potential to become a model for regional wildlife management across East Africa.

The key is integrating community development needs and wildlife management aims. In short, the primary activities of the LWF are to maintain ecosystem integrity, establish and develop community conservation and micro-enterprise projects in wildlife dispersal areas as well as develop wildlife enterprises.

You may ask what relevance this has to rhino conservation. Well, approximately half of

Kenya's rhino population is protected on private land in Laikipia, in five sanctuaries. Despite the security afforded to rhino by those sanctuaries, poverty, insecurity and land use changes in communal dispersal areas around them continue to be a threat to rhino conservation efforts. The sustainability of rhino conservation in Laikipia and the rest of

Kenya rests mainly in

the integration of

conservation benefits

in surrounding

communities, the

establishment of income generating community development projects, and bringing more land under conservation management.

It is with this in mind that we have been asked to support the community liaison officer (CLO) programme in Laikipia whose role will be to spread livelihood benefits and conservation management into communal wildlife areas. The funding requested is to cover salaries, transport, mobile radio communications and training programs. The proceeds from the Rhino Cycle Kenya, combined with central office funds, will go to support the programme for the next two years. □

David Stirling

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