



Protecting Endangered Species in  
East Africa with WCS



**POSTCARDS**

FROM THE

**FIELD**

**GALA 2020**



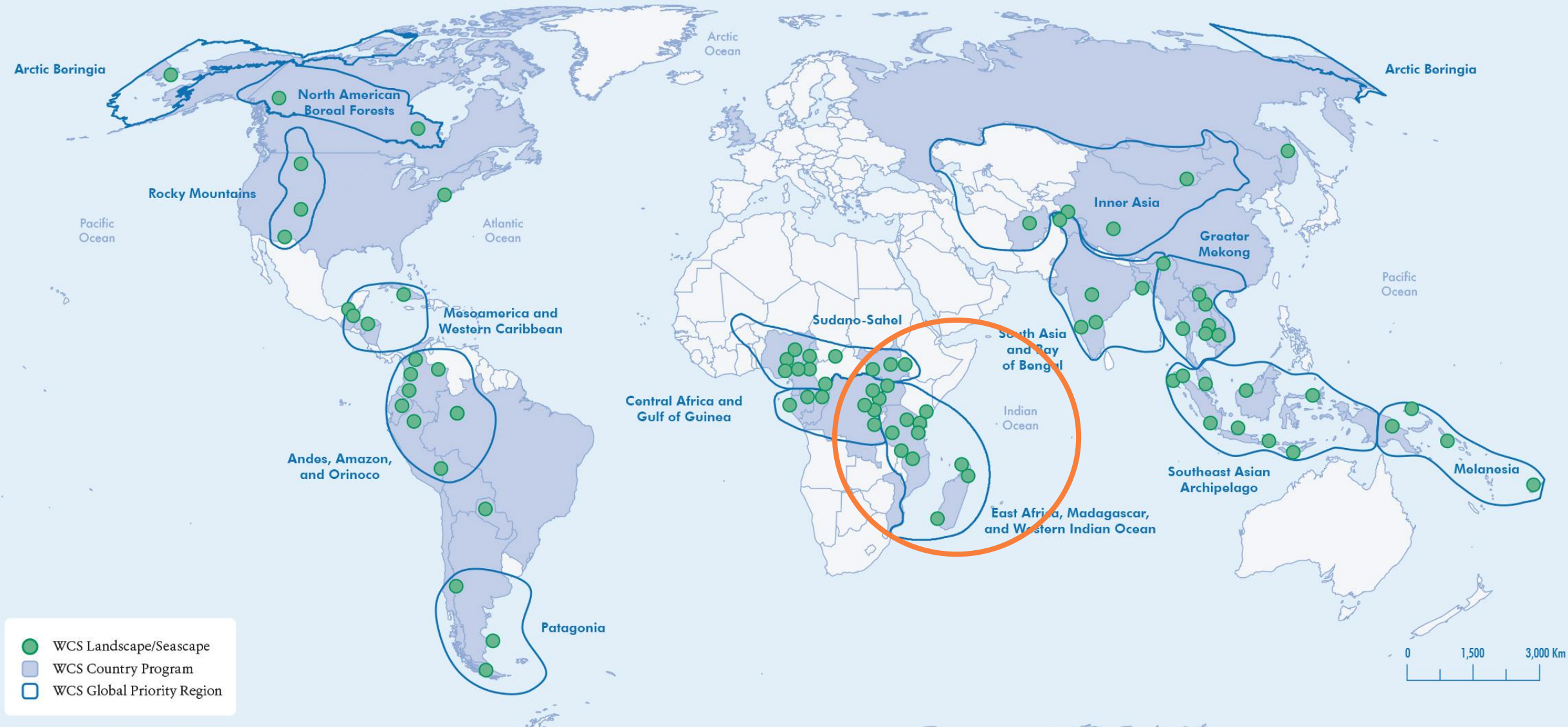


PHOTO: AARON NICHOLAS

Hello, friends of wildlife! My name is Mark Gately, and I'm the East Africa Regional Director for WCS. I'm sending these postcards from my home base in Kigali, Rwanda, and I'm excited to take you on a journey to WCS's Eastern Africa protected regions today.







The landscapes we're visiting in Mozambique and Tanzania are part of WCS's East Africa, Madagascar, and West Indian Ocean Region, one of the priority areas we have identified as critical to protecting the million species threatened with extinction worldwide.





This area includes Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, and the Western Indian Ocean. Today, we're headed to Niassa Special Reserve, a massive protected area in northern Mozambique, and three large landscapes in Tanzania: Tarangire, Ruaha-Katavi, and the Southern Highlands.







PHOTO: MARK GATELY

First, let's head to Mozambique and Niassa Special Reserve. Here, WCS works with the government of Mozambique to manage the area. Niassa is a massive landscape of woodlands and wide, flowing rivers, home to species like wildebeest, impala, and elephants.







PHOTO: FRANK AF PETERSEN

There are currently about 3,600 elephants in Niassa. This region was badly affected by the elephant poaching crisis from 2009-2014. In fact, it was this crisis that spurred WCS to work with the government of Mozambique to create a stronger, more long-term plan for park management.







PHOTO: FRANK AF PETERSEN

There are also around 25,000 people who live in Niassa. It's important that our work not only supports the animals and the landscape, but also serves the local communities. One way we are exploring livelihood support is via new, sustainable tourism opportunities in Niassa.







Next, let's head north to Tanzania. WCS has been working in the grasslands and forests of Tanzania since 1956. In 1993, our first long-term project in Tanzania was the creation of Tarangire National Park. Tarangire boasts some of the most ecologically important grasslands in Africa.







South of Tarangire you'll find Ruaha-Katavi, another beautiful landscape of rivers and wetlands, where WCS has worked for 20 years. Ruaha-Katavi is home to 10-15% of all of Africa's lions, as well as a critical population of 5,000 giraffe.







PHOTO: AARON NICHOLAS

It also supports one of the only three remaining large groups of African wild dogs anywhere on the continent, a pack of about 500 who roam the Ruaha-Katavi landscape. The next time you visit the Bronx Zoo, you can see African wild dogs there too, as part of a Species Survival Plan.







PHOTO: TIM DAVENPORT

Additionally in Tanzania, you'll find the Southern Highlands landscape, a bit further south from Ruaha-Katavi. It was here that WCS reintroduced a population of plains zebra in 2018.







PHOTO: TIM DAVENPORT

Previously, this species had been pushed out of the landscape by unsustainable agriculture.





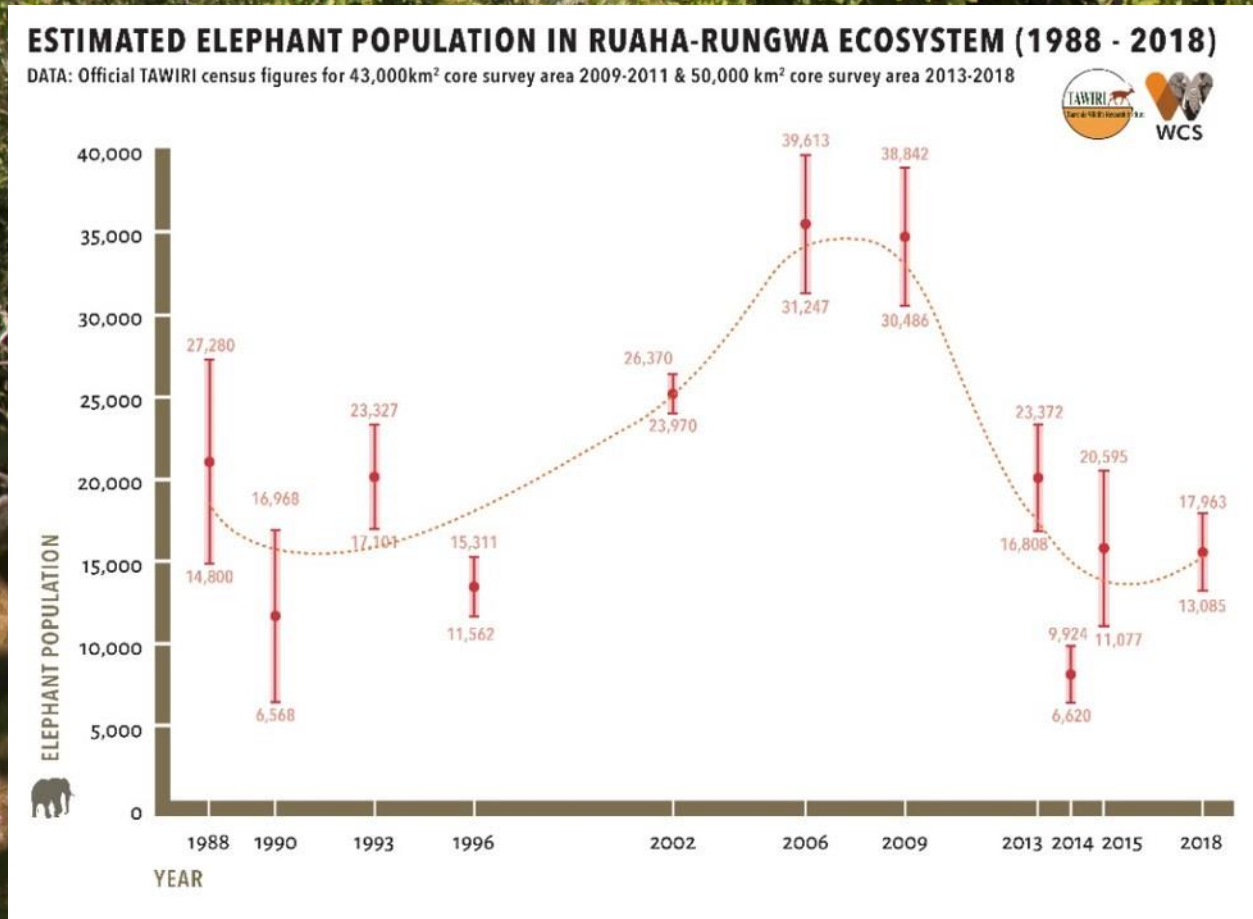


PHOTO: FRANK AF PETERSEN

What do we do in these regions? Well, we collaborate with community partners to identify threats to biodiversity and work to stop and prevent them. For example, from 2009-2014, we saw that three-quarters of elephants in Ruaha-Katavi were lost. We stepped in to save this important species.







PHOTO: AARON NICHOLAS

We trained ranger teams who could understand the landscape and protect it from poachers and other criminals. We created infrastructure, including buildings and surveillance tools like planes, to monitor the region. We used technology to track animals and capture signs of poaching.







PHOTO: FRANK AF PETERSEN

When we are able to step in, our strategies work. Elephant numbers continue to rise in the Ruaha-Katavi region, where we work closely with the Tanzanian government. We are happy to see similar success in Niassa as well, working with the government of Mozambique.







Having strong relationships with local communities and governments is especially important now, as we face the COVID-19 crisis. There is no uniform response across Africa to COVID-19, and there is risk of damage to important industries like tourism, which often goes hand-in-hand with conservation. For example, gorilla tourism is an important aspect of the economy in Rwanda.







Still, there are reasons to hope. The infrastructure we have built in these areas is here to stay. In the face of crisis, WCS does not abandon its mission. We are in East Africa for the long haul, and we will continue to protect its incredible wildlife with your help and support. Thank you.

