

# CONSERVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION ON TANZANIA'S MAASAI STEPPE

Collaboration and innovation are bringing promise to pastoralists and wildlife that live in one of Tanzania's most threatened places



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**W**ildlife can be hard to see in Makame Wildlife Management Area (WMA), but that doesn't mean it's not there. Makame is a vast wilderness area made up of community lands belonging to five Maasai villages southeast of Tarangire National Park in northern Tanzania.

Much of the area is covered by impenetrable thickets of *Sanseveria* and *Acacia-Commiphora* brush, that deters poachers because the landscape is hard to navigate.

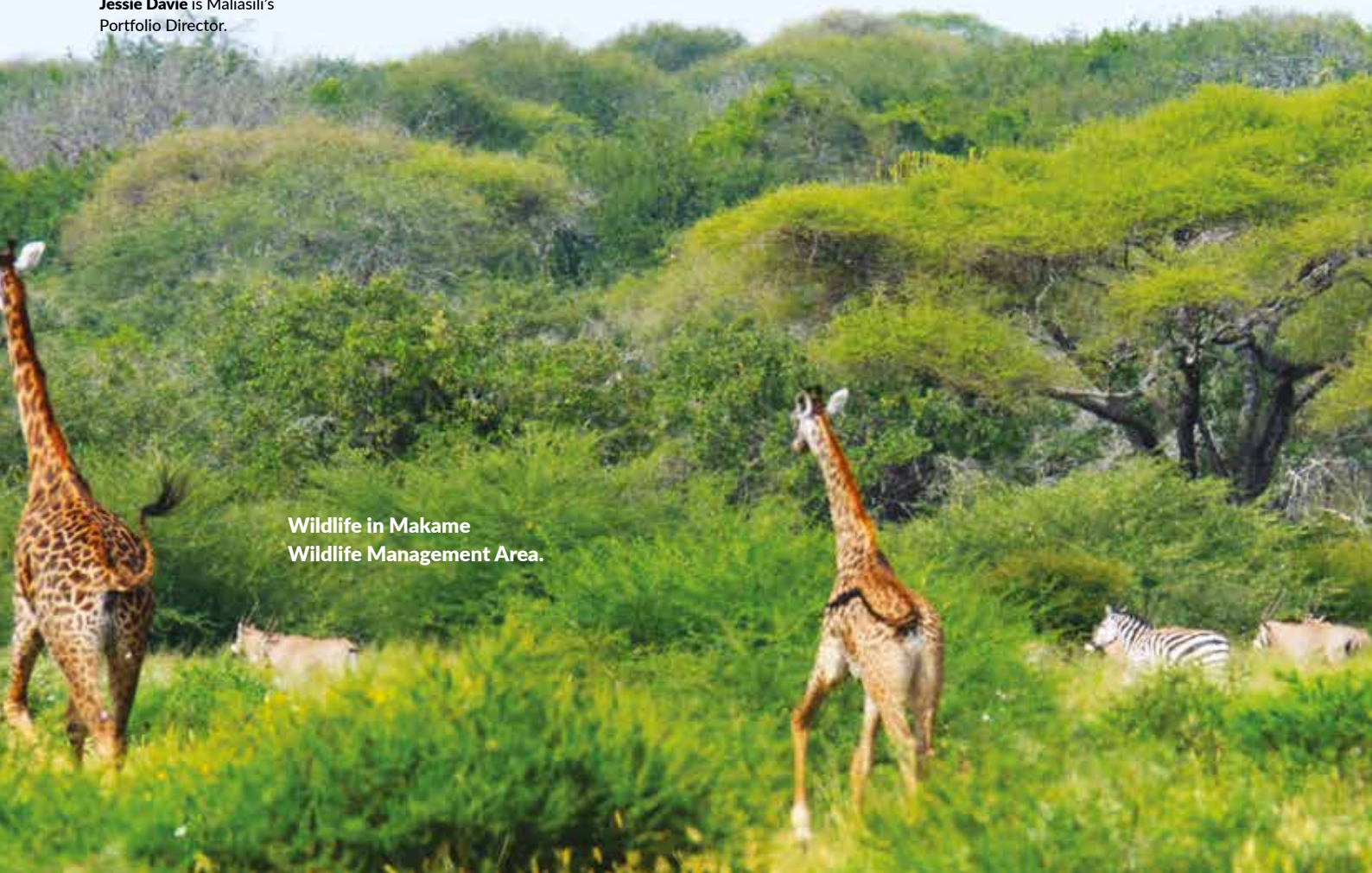
For a long time, little was known about wildlife activity in the area. However, recent camera-trapping surveys done by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) recorded elephant, lion, wild dog, leopard, oryx, aardwolf and an overall wildlife density and diversity as high as many of Tanzania's national parks.

These surveys, along with new inventories carried out in Makame by Carbon Tanzania, the country's leading developer of forest carbon offset projects ('REDD+'), highlight just how much is at stake in this impressive expanse of natural habitat on community lands.

Makame is a key part of a wider mosaic of savannah and community lands that covers around one million hectares. This area stretches from Tarangire in the west to the Pangani River in the east and forms the southern border region of the Maasai Steppe, which runs north all the way to the Kenya border.

The Maasai Steppe is surrounded by lands that are heavily degraded due to poor farming practices and deforestation, particularly to the south towards Dodoma and central Tanzania. Landsat analysis has found that over the past 20

PHOTO BY: DAUDI PETERSON



Wildlife in Makame  
Wildlife Management Area.



PHOTO BY: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS)

years across this wider region of northern and central Tanzania, more than 100,000 hectares of woodland savanna mosaic is being lost, which means a lot of lost wildlife habitat.

But in Makame, an area that has received almost no formal conservation management in decades, wildlife persists. “The Maasai living in Makame have helped maintain natural vegetation, which provides grazing lands for their livestock and for wildlife,” explained Marc Baker, founding Director of Carbon Tanzania. Today, several hundred elephants still reside in Makame WMA, and range-restricted antelopes, such as lesser and greater kudu, gerenuk, and oryx remain widespread.

**Makame's thickets and woodlands provide key habitat for endangered wild dogs, as demonstrated by recent camera trap surveys carried out by Wildlife Conservation Society.**

Recently, threats to this landscape have increased dramatically, primarily driven by agriculture and on occasion leading to violent clashes over land use. The Tanzanian government stepped in, investing more resources to help communities enforce their land use plans to prevent these clashes. But ultimately the future of this area, and perhaps the entire Maasai Steppe and Tarangire ecosystem, will be determined by the ability of local communities to effectively manage their resources.

“If Maasai communities in Makame can protect their grazing land, then their will be safe, and so will the wildlife that depend on the savannas and forests,” said Baker.

**BUT IN MAKAME, AN AREA THAT HAS RECEIVED ALMOST NO FORMAL CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT IN DECADES, WILDLIFE PERSISTS.**

### **MAKING COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION DELIVER IN TANZANIA**

Wildlife Management Areas, such as Makame, have been around in Tanzania for about two decades. They were first called for in the landmark 1998 wildlife policy that promoted

community-based conservation as a key to the future of the nation's wildlife. But getting them to actually perform effectively -- to benefit local communities or wildlife -- has been a protracted challenge.

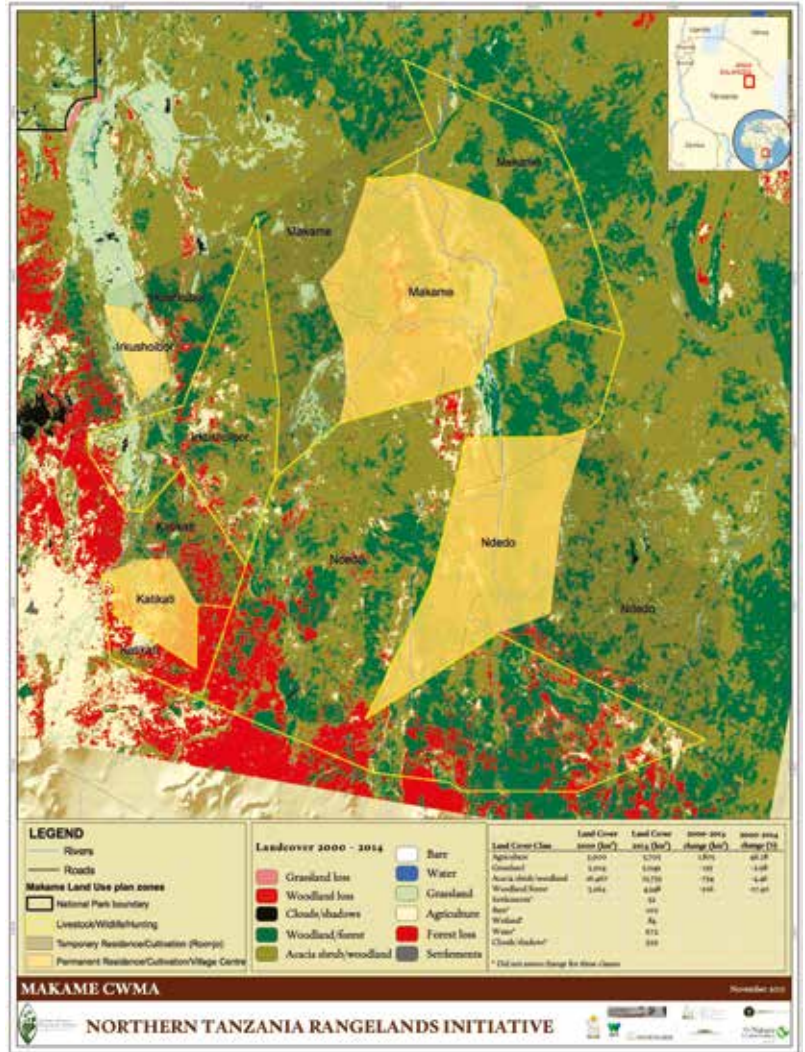
One recent study by a group of Tanzanian, British, and Danish researchers found that WMAs are not achieving what they set out to, especially in providing benefits for people: "A re-balancing of priorities could help resolve many of these issues," the study concludes.

Often WMAs get established to fulfill external government or NGO agendas, rather than genuine local interests. It then takes time for local communities to build the capacity to manage these institutions, something that often gets undervalued but is critical for success.

Most significantly, WMA's have yet to become financially viable. They are heavily taxed, with gross revenue earned from tourism or hunting operations going to national and district government, but receive very limited institutional or infrastructural support or investment in return.

But Makame, and a few other WMAs in northern Tanzania, are starting to show the potential of WMAs to deliver. "What we're seeing is that with out-of-box thinking, collaboration, and a business approach, WMAs can actually become viable, community-led conservation areas," explained Damian Bell, Executive Director of Honeyguide, a leading NGO with a mission to make the WMA model work, and which supported some anti-poaching and wildlife law enforcement work in Makame.

Beyond Makame, Honeyguide also works in Randilen WMA, which borders Tarangire to the north. There, they have helped the WMA



MAP BY: THE NORTHERN TANZANIA RANGELANDS INITIATIVE (NTRI)

**TOP: Map of Makame WMA showing land conversion (in red) of savannah to farmland encroaching from the southwest. Makame provides a critical land use buffer on the southern portion of the Maasai Steppe, by maintaining integrated livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.**

professionalize its management systems, improve its tourism marketing, and protect its wildlife.

Recent research findings published in the *Journal of Mammalogy* by Derek Lee and Monica Bond indicate that giraffe populations in Randilen have increased by over 40 per cent during the past five years, while income from tourism jumped by over 20 per cent last year. With the right approach and support, WMAs are finally showing real potential to deliver for people and wildlife.

**CONSERVATION NEEDS COLLABORATION**

A key to progress has been deepened collaboration amongst local and international conservation groups. The Northern Tanzania Rangelands Initiative (NTRI) provides a unique collaborative platform for 10 organisations to come together around a shared vision of community-based conservation and rangeland management, including organisations like



PHOTO BY: DAUDI PETERSON

## CONSERVATION

Carbon Tanzania and Honeyguide, as well as international groups like ours, The Nature Conservancy and Maliasili.

Through funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and others, NTRI has channeled resources towards key local organisations, which in landscapes such as Makame, are the ones delivering vital outcomes on the ground.

A key member of NTRI working in Makame is the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT). UCRT is acknowledged as the leading grassroots organisation in northern Tanzania helping to secure community land rights for pastoralists and hunter-gatherer communities. In Makame, UCRT plays an important role supporting the development of the WMA's governance institutions, including a UCRT staff member from the area actually sitting on the WMA's board, and providing it with legal support.

“We want to see transparency and accountability at all levels,” said Edward Lekaita, land rights lawyer for UCRT and board member of Makame. UCRT has helped the WMA negotiate contracts with investors, advocate for greater rights and autonomy with government bodies,

## IN MAKAME, UCRT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WMA'S GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS.

**\$200,000**

Revenue earned by the Hadzabe community from carbon offsets over the past four years.

and ensure transparent local decision making processes are followed.

UCRT and Carbon Tanzania are working to develop a carbon offset project in Makame, building upon their successful previous collaboration with the Hadza hunter-gatherers in the Yaeda Valley, west of Makame. In Yaeda, UCRT and Carbon Tanzania, together with the Hadza community, pooled their skills and resources to secure land rights, develop land use plans, build local capacity, design the carbon project, and market and sell offsets to international buyers.

In turn, the Hadza communities have earned over \$200,000 in revenues over the past several years, which they have invested in development priorities, as well as paying for local scouts to enforce their land use plans. Some of the revenue is also shared with district and village

**A Carmine bee-eater, one of the bird species find in Makame Wildlife Management Area.**





PHOTO BY: DAUDI PETERSON

governments, which also support the project and help enforce the land use plans.

UCRT and Carbon Tanzania are now adapting this model in Makame WMA. Thanks to USAID funding, Carbon Tanzania completed the carbon measurements and projections required to obtain third-party verification and it expects to start selling offsets from Makame by early 2019, bringing in a new revenue stream to support the WMA.

Partnerships are essential to Carbon Tanzania's approach and success, explained Baker: "In Makame, the governance work by UCRT provides the foundation for us to build a long-term relationship with the WMA and participating villages; the biodiversity monitoring by WCS provides critical information needed for the carbon certification process; and Honeyguide's capacity support helps ensure the WMA follows and enforces its Resource Plan."

In addition, The Nature Conservancy works with all these parties through technical support on areas such as remote sensing analysis, which helps understand rates and patterns of land use change, and management planning for the WMA.

NTRI provides a novel platform for these kinds of collaborations. It is an example of what's possible when organisations work together across a landscape based on a common vision, contributing complementary skillsets and putting

**Carbon Tanzania is a social enterprise that has spent the last 10 years developing a model of conservation that protects Tanzania's existing forests while benefiting the communities and wildlife that depend on them, as well as contributing to the fight against global climate change.**

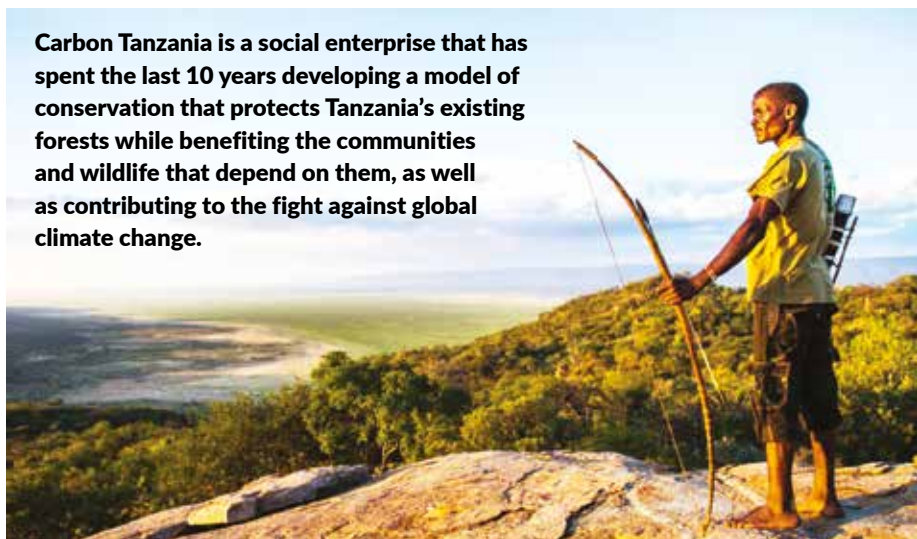


PHOTO BY: CARBON TANZANIA

**TOP: Makame's semi-arid savannahs provide important habitat for fringe-eared oryx at the southern extent of their range.**

people at the center of conservation. NTRI is finding ways to prove large-scale conservation can and must work. Makame is one of its testing grounds, and the stakes are high but the prospects for lasting conservation on a large scale in northern Tanzania are improving as a result of these innovative approaches and new partnerships. ●

**+ FIND OUT MORE**

For more about the Northern Tanzania Rangelands Initiative: visit: <https://www.ntri.co.tz/>