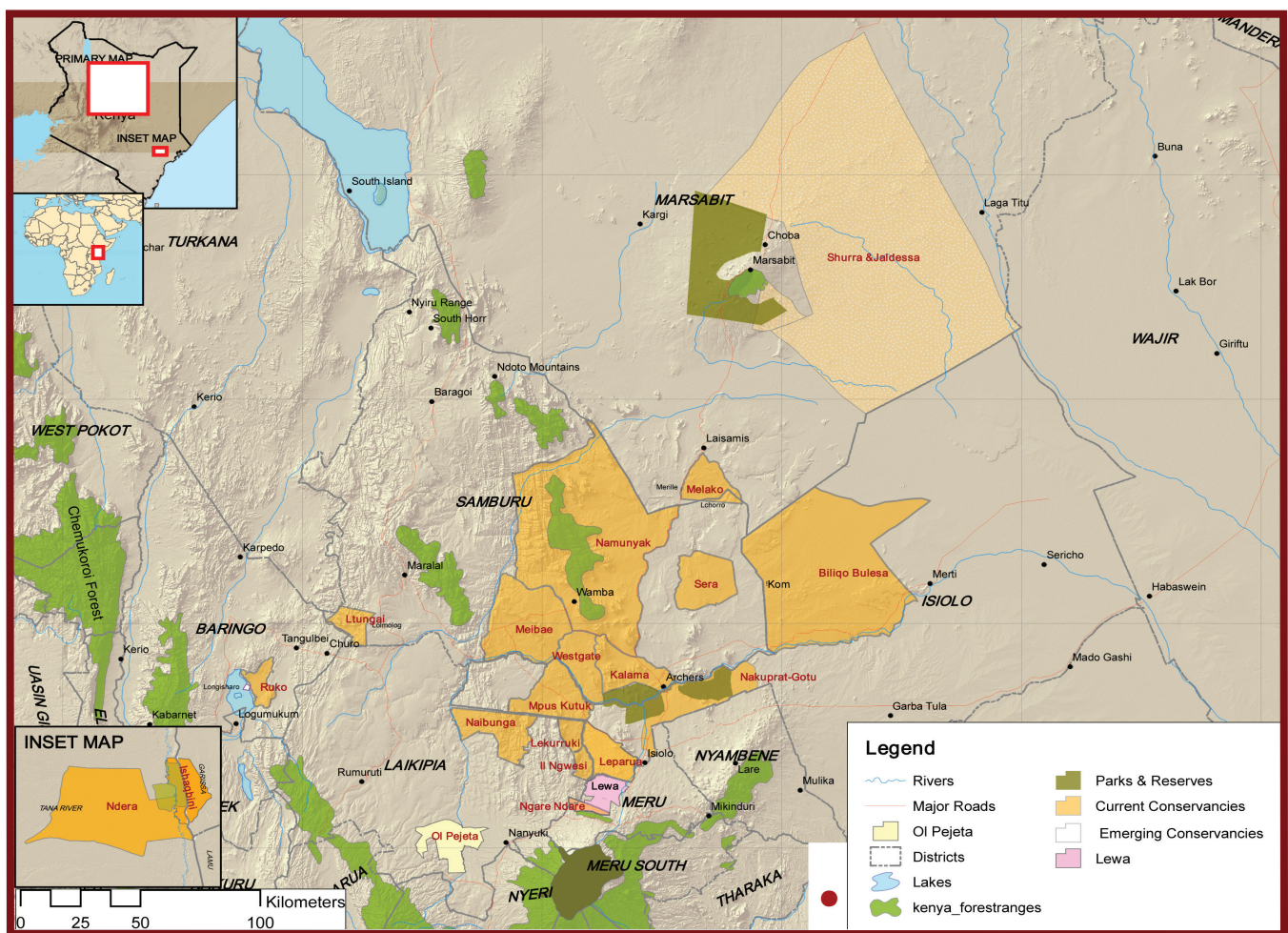


NORTHERN RANGELANDS TRUST (NRT)

Community Conservation in Northern Kenya

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The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) is a community-led initiative, registered in 2004, whose members represent politically and socially marginalized pastoralist communities of northern Kenya, who are predominantly dependent on a purely livestock-based livelihood system. NRT was established by communities and other stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation in northern Kenya, recognising a need for an umbrella organisation that would assist communities to use biodiversity conservation and improved environmental management as a means of improving and diversifying livelihoods. Realizing that many of these issues are best managed by local communities living with wildlife and at one with Nature. The community conservancies of northern Kenya are at the forefront of this new approach in Africa and the World working with global conservation groups like **The Nature Conservancy, Fauna and Flora International and Tusk Trust.**



NRT acts as a catalyst for development of community-based conservation initiatives and is currently working with 18 community conservancies in Laikipia, Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, Baringo, East Pokot, Tana River and Ijara districts, covering an area of more than 12,000km². The role of NRT is to develop the capacity and self-sufficiency of its constituent community organizations in biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and natural resource based enterprises.



CONSERVATION & LIVELIHOOD NEEDS

The majority of Kenya's wildlife exists outside the network of national parks and reserves, predominantly in private and community conservancies and community land. The future of wildlife in northern Kenya will require support and engagement from local communities in order to retain an ecosystem approach to conservation, allowing continued migration of wildlife through their natural range. This is particularly important for species such as Grevy's zebra, African wild dog and elephant that have large home ranges and require access to large tracts of land. Most of Kenya's northern rangelands are community owned and still host abundant wildlife, although most local people accrue no benefit from the wildlife with which they share their land. Many communities with land suitable for conservation have no access to expertise, resources or donor agencies that are required to develop community-based conservation initiatives. In addition the pastoralist communities in Kenya's northern rangelands are politically and economically marginalized, and opportunities for economic growth have been hindered by insecurity and a history of ethnic rivalry in the region.



Furthermore one of the biggest challenges facing wildlife conservation in semi-arid and arid parts of East Africa is pressure from livestock on protected areas; problems of high stocking densities resulting in degraded land and competition with wildlife, and poor economic returns from livestock continue to persist in pastoralist areas. NRT recognises that mechanisms to reduce livestock densities and diversify the income base of these pastoralist communities need to be developed. By doing so, this will enable recovery of degraded land and wild herbivore populations, by reducing grazing pressure and competition between wildlife and livestock. The dual use of wildlife and livestock by communities in these areas aims to spread the economic and financial risk, reduce vulnerability to stochastic events such as droughts, and increase food-security through supplementary income generation.

NRT STRUCTURE & ACTIVITIES

NRT is a registered Kenyan Trust with a Board of Trustees and with constituent communities as members¹. Central to the NRT structure is the Council of Elders made up of individuals nominated by each member organisation, which is representative of the diversity of ethnic groups and stakeholders that exist in the area and provides a platform for exchanging ideas, experiences and addressing common issues affecting pastoralists. Within the Council is a selected Conflict Resolution Team, which has been instrumental in dealing with historical ethnic rivalries that predominantly surround issues of access to natural resources. This is done through establishment and support of a collective, community-led conflict resolution mechanism that builds upon traditional systems and includes members from representative ethnic groups to mediate potential natural resource conflicts.



Finally, there is the executive team with its current headquarters at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, a sister organization that provides NRT with critical logistical and security support. In addition to its administrative and finance sections, NRT operates through four technical departments: Community Development; Research & Monitoring; Livestock; and Enterprise & Product Development.

1. Current NRT community conservancy membership includes Biliqo-Bulesa Conservancy, Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy, Kalama Community Wildlife Conservancy, Lekurruki Conservation Trust, Leparua Community Conservancy, Ltungai Community Conservancy Trust, Meibae Conservancy, Melako Conservancy, Mpus Kutuk Community Conservancy, Naibunga Conservancy Trust, Nakuprat-Gotu Community Conservancy, Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust, Ndera Community Conservancy, Ngare Ndare Forest Trust, Ruko Community Wildlife Conservancy, Sera Conservancy Trust and West Gate Community Conservancy. Other NRT members are Borana Ranch, relevant County Councils, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kibodo Trust, Laikipia Wildlife Forum, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Samburu Wildlife Forum.

Through this structure, NRT is able to:

- Provide training and capacity development to conservancy institutions and management;
- Facilitate community liaison between conservancies and their constituent communities for regular communication, planning and decision-making;
- Facilitate conflict resolution through the Conflict Resolution Team;
- Facilitate the development of community grazing committees to address issues of livestock management; and promote the implementation of rangeland rehabilitation and livestock marketing schemes;
- Address issues over land tenure security for conservancies and their constituent communities, and promote co-management arrangements where necessary;
- Provide anti-poaching training, support and back-up (with the assistance of Lewa), and ensure conservancy scouts are equipped for frequent anti-poaching and monitoring patrols;
- Develop a standardized system for wildlife and ecological monitoring and data analysis with a particular focus on endangered and vulnerable species – this system is to be used by conservancy institutions for planning and adaptive management;
- Support the development and procurement of infrastructure and equipment, such as construction of conservancy headquarters, installation of radio communications equipment, and conservancy vehicles;
- Support the development of other strategic infrastructure, particularly water, for integrated wildlife and livestock management;
- Provide conservancies with administrative and financial management support and training, particularly to conservancy managers and accountants;
- Facilitate and broker tourism investment between conservancies and tourism operators ensuring equitable returns to communities from tourism;
- Facilitate the establishment of conservancy and household enterprises through NRT Trading and micro-credit facilities;
- Facilitate overall conservancy planning and coordination amongst conservancies and other stakeholders, such as the Kenya Wildlife Service and County Councils, especially through the NRT Council of Elders; and
- Assist and secure the financial resources necessary to implement conservancy plans and activities through ongoing fundraising amongst the donor community.



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