

September 2025



30ewcp

Thirtieth Anniversary Annual Report



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The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) is a partnership between the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Dinkenesh Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), in collaboration with the Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise (OFWE) and Amhara's Environment, Forest and Wildlife Protection and Development Authority (EFWPDA), and with the support and cooperation of local authorities across Ethiopia.

OUR MISSION

Our vision is to secure Ethiopian wolf populations and habitats across their present distribution, and to extend the species range, stressing its role as a flagship for the conservation of the Afroalpine ecosystem on which present and future generations of Ethiopians also depend.



REFLECTING ON 30 YEARS OF EWCP



and the environment, while providing a home to these magnificent animals.

This 30th anniversary is quite a remarkable achievement, and it also coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, the body responsible for wildlife conservation in the country. I recently met with my good friend Zelealem Tefera to reminisce about the close ties that we have shared between EWCP and EWCA for so long. We remembered and paid homage to a few of our most remarkable colleagues (page 6).

We have formally been in the business of protecting Ethiopian wolves for 30 years. The team may be getting older, but we are still going strong.

Ethiopia's landscapes have changed quite remarkably over these few decades, and the tasks to protect Ethiopia's nature and wildlife are enormous and as urgent as ever. While we can boast that the 10% of Ethiopian land set aside as protected areas is a clear national commitment to the conservation of nature, it is not enough. Many of these special places and the wildlife that live there are struggling - their protection is simply not effective. It's not just that wildlife populations are shrinking, but many of the ecological functions of these landscapes are under threat. As highland swamps and bogs dry out, they lose their ability to soak up and release water downstream. These are not just issues for nature-lovers and conservationists, but for all Ethiopians.

EWCP's chief aim remains the protection of the charismatic endemic Ethiopian wolves. But species conservation can't happen in isolation. We must deliver better habitat protection, not just for wild species but to enable sustainable livelihoods for the people living hand-in-hand with nature. We must continue to work with local people to protect the local ecology and support the health of people, livestock

Built on the shoulders of some long-standing EWCP allies and employees, the establishment of Dinkenesh Ethiopia as a key player in Ethiopian wolf conservation marks a new era, contributing to our resilience and building a more sustainable future for EWCP.

Last year had a special significance for us, with Dinkenesh formally joining in two EWCP projects. In partnership with Oxford's Department of Biology, they are implementing the Biodiversity Friendly Futures project with funding from the Darwin Initiative Biodiversity Challenge Fund, scaling up this important work across the wolf habitats of the Amhara region (page 14). Secondly, the One Health project in Bale – helping to safeguard wolves and people from the threat of disease – is now formally implemented by Dinkenesh.

Thank you for working together all these years, and for your ongoing support. The wolves won't be here without all of you!

Claudio Sillero
Founder and Director

"Dinkenesh in Amharic means 'you are marvellous, one of a kind', vividly reflecting the special nature of Ethiopia's wildlife and wild spaces"

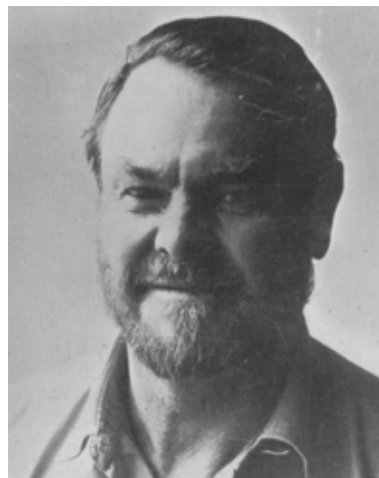
The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme At 30



These past 30 years, EWCP has had so many close friends and supporters all of whom have played integral roles in our journey. The people we have met along the way are so numerous, even before EWCP formally came to be. Here is a collection of photographs to acknowledge and commemorate those who have been involved with Ethiopian wolf conservation and contributed to where we are today.



► Karen Laurenson co-founded EWCP with Claudio and Edriss. She was responsible for bringing the notion of vaccinating domestic dogs to protect the wolves and spearheaded the Frankfurt Zoological Society investment in Bale. With late husband Simon Thirgood, Katie and Pippa.



► James Brown, his report to WWF proposed the establishment of the Bale Mountains National Park in 1979, to protect Ethiopian wolves and mountain nyala.



► Zelealem Tefera, working in Bale as a park expert, 1987.



► James Malcolm, a great naturalist and regular visitor to the Bale Mountains since the 1970s. With Edriss on the balcony of the EWCP HQ in Dinsho.



► Chris & Sheila Hillman established the Bale Mountains Research Project in 1983 with New York Zoological Society funding. Chris, with David Macdonald, Edriss and Claudio (L to R) during the first wolf capture expedition to Web Valley, 1988.



► The early days: Claudio and Dada Gottelli at their Sodota camp, base to the pioneering field work in the Web Valley.



► Claudio and Edriss at a political meeting in Dinsho, Bale, 1991.

► Horse riding is the best means of locomotion in Bale Mountains, both for the resident Oromo and for researchers. Claudio crossing Horgoba swamp in the early 1990s.



► Zegeye Kibret was the charismatic EWCP education and public relations officer, who sadly passed away too young in 2014. A stalwart supporter of the EWCP cause, and the most wonderful spokesperson the wolves could have. Here he is leading wolf day celebrations in Dinsho, 2008.



► Expanding EWCP operations to the North. Jorgelina Marino with Getachew Assefa (L) and Girma Eshete (R) in Simien Mountains.





Building the foundations of wildlife conservation in Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority turns 60!

Ethiopia is home to one of the richest and most unique assemblages of fauna and flora on the African continent. From the beautiful Afroalpine landscapes of the Roof of Africa to the arid Horn of Africa hotspot, the country's remarkable topography has fostered globally important centres of endemism. Many species found here are found nowhere else in the world.

This year, just as EWCP celebrates 30 years, EWCA celebrates its 60th anniversary. As partners, our two organizations have always been closely tied, and we share a vision for the long-term protection of Ethiopia's unique natural heritage.

Following the 1962 UNESCO International Conference in Paris, attention turned Ethiopia's natural heritage - not only to conserve its unique wildlife and ecosystems but also to promote nature-based tourism. The Minister of Agriculture at the time, Ato Akalework Habtewold, asked UNESCO for expert advice on conservation measures that could be taken in Ethiopia. The Following year, a UNESCO mission led by the former Director General, Sir Julian Huxley, came to Ethiopia. They recommended the creation of a wildlife conservation agency and for the Simien Mountains, Awash and Omo Areas to be designated as the first National Parks in Ethiopia's history.

This catalysed the wildlife conservation in Ethiopia, and provided the impetus behind in the six decades that followed. In October 1964, the Emperor Haile Selassie appointed Ato Berhanu Tessema as the first deputy

minister of the new Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation (EWCO). Beginning as a small department under the Ministry of Agriculture, EWCO was subsequently made into a semi-autonomous institution administered by a board chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture under the Forestry & Wildlife Conservation Authority (FWCDA) until 1984.

In 1987, Claudio Sillero and Dada Gotelli, arrived in the BMNP to conduct research into the ecology and behaviour of the Ethiopian wolf. This led to Claudio securing his doctorate at the University of Oxford. At the time, Ato Teshome Ashine was the Director General for EWCO and Ato Mohammed Abdi was the Park Warden for the Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP). Claudio and Dada's work alongside Edriss Ebu into this iconic species uncovered some stark truths. Ethiopian wolves were critically endangered in all their ranges and had even suffered local extinctions across various former areas of Afro-alpine habitat. In response, the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) was founded in 1995 - the first organization dedicated to the conservation of the species.

After the change of regime in 1991 and creation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian (FDRE) – EWCO was brought under the management of a new Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and upgraded to a higher level as the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). Then, in 1995, under the new FDRE constitution, ownership of all natural resources in the country was assigned to the state and the peoples of Ethiopia.

RECOVERING COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN THE HIGHLANDS

By Zelealem Tefera

My work in Menz-Guassa in the North Shewa area of the Amhara region was sparked by a visit from the Zoological Society of London to the Mountains and Society Conference in Ethiopia in 1986. With advice from Claudio on the conservation of Ethiopian wolves, we initiated a project to study the biodiversity of guassa areas, first heading to the field in 1996. This also included analysis of indigenous community conservation, re-visiting historic practices of communal ownership that had been disbanded by the military regime. Then, at the Durrell institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), University of Kent, I wrote my PhD thesis on the community management of afro-alpine areas and the impacts for Ethiopian wolf populations. After graduating in 2021, more than 10 articles and more conference presentations have resulted from this work. More gratifyingly, the Amhara Regional Parliament enacted a proclamation to form a new community-owned and managed Guassa-Menz Community Conservation Area – a new era for the preservation of indigenous land-use and wolf habitat alike.

As partners, EWCA and EWCP have always been closely tied, and we share a vision for the long-term protection of Ethiopia's unique natural heritage.

- ▶ above Right: EWCO staff on a field trip to the Bale Mountains, 1990. In the picture Ato Tesfay Hundessa, Ato Kirubel Tesfay, Ato Workneh, Ato Nigusse.
- ▶ above Left: Ato Teshome Ashine, EWCO Director General, 1971-1990.
- ▶ Zelealem Tefera, working in Bale in 1988, and today.

- ▶ Right: EWCA Director General Ato Kumara Wakjira at the summit of Mt. Tulu Dimtu.
- ▶ The Guassa Darwin project field operation staff (Wolde, Zelealem, and Gebreyessus), June 1997.



MONITORING & RESEARCH

Understanding animal behaviour and what makes populations tick is a cornerstone for the successful conservation of endangered species.



THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT ALL

Monitoring and research are the backbone of EWCP, as they should be for any evidence-based conservation programme. We track not only the wolves, but also the resources they rely on, their interactions with people, and the impact of our interventions.

This work demands extraordinary dedication. The Ethiopian highlands are harsh: in a single day the weather can swing from freezing cold to burning sun and fierce wind. Our monitors spend hours on foot or horseback searching for wolves and recording their behaviour. At the heart of their work is the simplest and most powerful method: patient observation. No instrument can replace the insights gained from living alongside wolves. But technology, used carefully, adds new layers of knowledge. This year we deployed satellite collars on five adult males and camera traps in over 13 dens, to learn more about wolf adaptations to human disturbance.

Our Wolf Monitors are more than data collectors; they are ambassadors – liaising with local people, encouraging vaccination of their dogs, and often the first responders to wolf casualties. Their trusted presence makes our work possible. To them, we owe a special tribute on this anniversary.

EWCP supports many researchers and students who have translated data into meaningful insights and conservation tools, including graduates from Ethiopia and abroad. Through collaborations with the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at the University of Oxford, EWCP is training the next generation of scientists and conservationists. As our scope grows beyond ecology into the human dimension, social scientists and anthropologists are joining the team, and community-led monitoring is being established, beginning in the northern highlands.



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TEAM:

Monitoring Team Leader: Dessiew Gelaw
Simien Team Leader: Getachew Assefa
Monitoring Officer: Abdi Samune
14 Monitors and 9 Wolf Ambassadors
deployed across Ethiopia;
Amhara Manager: Fekadu Lema
Senior Scientist: Dr Sandra Lai
Science Director: Dr Jorgelina Marino

THIS YEAR:

41 wolf packs monitored; over **1,300** man-days observing wolves across **6** wolf populations in **17** sites; more than **8,900** sightings of wolves or groups of wolves; **173** records of threats (fire, new crops, new settlements, harvesting, livestock predation)

LEARNING FROM THE WOLVES: 30 YEARS OF SCIENCE AND ACTION

By Jorgelina Marino

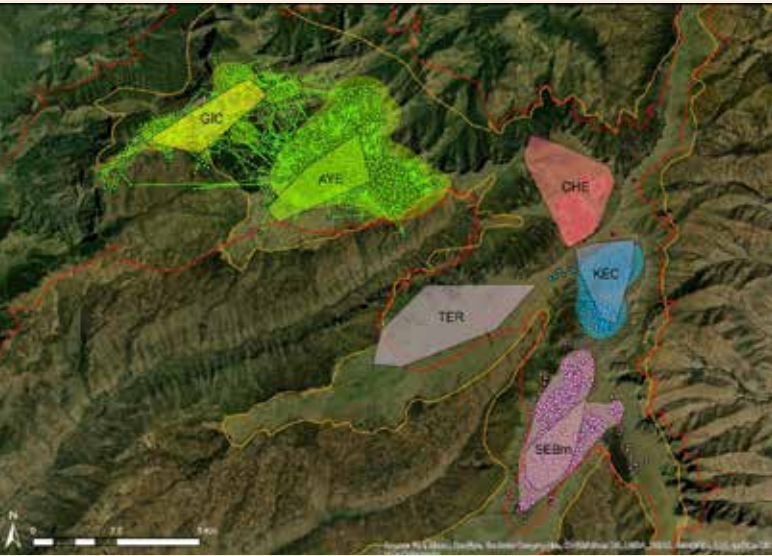
By the time the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme began in 1995, the pioneering studies of Claudio Sillero and Dada Gottelli in the Bale Mountains had revealed that these wolves were fascinating, highly social creatures, perfectly adapted to Ethiopia's Afroalpine habitats. Their work also showed, in a painful way, that rabies outbreaks could drive the species to the brink of extinction.

When I joined EWCP in 1997, our mission was clear: to understand how wolf populations functioned, when they were most vulnerable, and how disease spread. Could we detect outbreaks early and respond quickly? We were a small team - myself, Alo Hussein and only a few others - monitoring the packs first studied by Claudio and Dada in the Bale Mountains. These first efforts laid the foundations of a long-term database

that has since transformed our understanding of the wolves. Throughout, Alo has mentored generations of wolf monitors, sharing his profound knowledge and colossal passion.

By the late 1990s we knew Bale's packs well but little about wolves elsewhere, as political instability had long prevented access. At last, we were able to visit nearly every mountain range in Ethiopia, finding wolves in all but one - the highlight of my professional life. These expeditions showed that each population faced unique challenges, yet habitat loss and the pressures of sharing land with people and livestock were the common threats. We also witnessed remarkable coexistence between wolves and local communities. Around this time, Zelealem Tefera conducted the first study outside Bale, demonstrating positive links between wolves and community-based conservation.

What satellite collars are telling us about the life of wolves in the Simien mountains



In 2023, and for the first time ever, we fitted four collars to wolves in Simien. Our aim to improve monitoring in the remote highlands proved successful: the collars helped us detect two deaths (one from gunshot and another from disease) and revealed unusual behavioural patterns, including greater nocturnal activity than in the better-known Bale population. And evidence of early dispersal, with one male moving beyond his pack’s territory before successfully joining and leading a neighbouring pack. GPS data showed that pack territories (see figure) were larger than previously estimated from observations. Despite one technical failure, the Lotek collars overall performed well and dropped off as programmed. This valuable experience highlights the importance of technology, not only for detecting threats but also for understanding the ecological impacts of wolf adaptations to disturbance, such as shifting activity patterns.

In 2000, inspired by these findings, EWCP expanded nationwide. Fekadu Lema spearheaded work in the Amhara region, where he still leads a dedicated team of monitors and Wolf Ambassadors safeguarding as many wolves and packs as they can. This expansion brought vital insights: genetic diversity is spread across populations, and those populations of fewer than 20 wolves living in Afroalpine patches are bound to vanish. We learnt that every wolf family matters for the species’ survival.

Each year, EWCP collects detailed demographic information from focal packs (see [this year’s monitoring report](#)). Long-term monitoring has revealed the pivotal role of breeding females, how social bonds hold packs together, and what drives the formation of new families. This knowledge underpins everything we do, from reactive vaccinations to targeted oral vaccination campaigns and community-led habitat restoration. Crucially, our understanding of endangerment and extinction, built through decades of monitoring, now shapes the Ethiopian wolf conservation strategy ([Marino et al. 2024](#)). We know wolf populations can rebound quickly if given the chance: a well-protected den with a thriving litter of pups can turn the tide for a wolf population. Protecting dens, reinforcing packs, and even re-establishing wolf populations are essential for their future. Our monitoring and research aims are geared to provide all the evidence needed to guide these next steps. Since Claudio began studying them over 30 years ago, we have learnt that listening to the wolves is the best way to secure their survival.

TRENDS, THREATS AND IMPACTS THIS YEAR

In the long-term, the Bale population – home to more than half of all wolves – persists with oscillations driven by disease outbreaks. This year the population remained relatively stable: there were 70 wolves over one year old in the Web Valley and Sanetti Plateau packs, compared with 92 the previous year. This decline of about 10% is well within the normal range for this population at high density.

It was a good breeding year in Bale, with 52 pups recorded across 14 packs, 37 of which survived their first months. This strong survival rate shows the wolves’ capacity to coexist with Oromo pastoralists and increasing photographic tourism in the Bale Mountains. While overall numbers were steady, there were notable shifts in pack dynamics: two large packs split to form new breeding units and in doing so forced smaller neighbouring packs to disintegrate

Elsewhere, populations are smaller and more fragile. In the Amhara highlands, political instability and conflict restricted monitoring this year, yet the teams confirmed breeding in three of five packs in the Simien Mountains and documented the successful split of a pack in Menz-Guassa.

Detecting and investigating mortality is a key goal of monitoring. This year, the teams found 12 wolf carcasses. Post-mortems were conducted where possible, confirming causes of death including gunshot, road accidents, and disease (possibly canine distemper). These reflect the persistent challenges of coexistence in shared landscapes, yet a hopeful sign emerged: there were few disease cases limited to Bale, without devastating outbreaks. This suggests that our ongoing vaccination efforts are having a real impact.



“Three decades of monitoring and research have taught us one enduring lesson: when we learn from the wolves, we find the knowledge, and the hope, to secure their future.”

ONE HEALTH

Managing diseases, with benefits for people, domestic animals and wildlife



UNDERSTANDING THE DOUBLE DISEASE THREAT TO ETHIOPIAN WOLVES

In a paper published in Emerging Infectious Diseases (CDC), EWCP described for the first time the threat faced by Ethiopian wolves when outbreaks of rabies and canine distemper (CDV) occur simultaneously.

Infectious diseases are an increasing concern for people and wildlife alike, and they remain an enormous conservation challenge for Ethiopian wolves. While the risks of rabies and canine distemper infections in endangered species have been analyzed separately, the study by EWCP Science Director Jorgelina Marino and colleagues considers the potential impact of concurrent infections.

Using unprecedented EWCP data from simultaneous outbreaks of rabies and canine distemper in 2019, we were able to show that concurrent infections can increase death rates, and that sustained and comprehensive disease surveillance is required to detect and react to such events. These results can also be applied to the risk analysis and surveillance of other endangered mammals, stressing that modelling each disease alone might actually “underestimate the risk for extinction” that they pose.

In 2019, this disastrous disease outbreak spread throughout the Bale Mountains – affecting 19 packs across 4 subpopulations. Overall, during these troubling 8 months, populations declined by 60% in the Sanetti Plateau and 53% in Web Valley.

TEAM:

Dinkenesh Ethiopia: Girma Eshete

Vet Team Leader: Muktar Abute

Vet Team Officers: Haji Usman, Usman Aliko

Community Team Leader: Mustafa Dule

Vet Assistants: Kebede Wolde, Kassim Kedir, Nuru Burka, & Burka Kedir

THIS YEAR

13 permanent villages and 21 Bale Mountains National Park settlements were reached with domestic dog vaccination campaigns, where 3,495 dogs were vaccinated.



► The field team after a successful vaccination campaign in Chafadalacha, on the southern slopes of the Sanetti plateau, March 2025.



► Administering a vaccination to an Ethiopian wolf.

Our subsequent sample collection and laboratory analyses from 19 of the wolves found 7 positive tests for rabies, and 13 positive tests for canine distemper, with one animal even testing positive for both. Simultaneous outbreaks like this may have a larger effect than those of just a single disease, even in populations with partial vaccination coverage.

Challenging years like 2019 serve to highlight the continued importance of EWCP’s holistic approach to disease management and response. Year-round intensive monitoring of wolf packs by our monitor teams is vital for early detection and timely interventions. Likewise, the ongoing vaccination of both domestic dogs and the wolves themselves by our vet teams have the potential to reduce the risk of population extinctions.

At the same time, the work of our Living with Wolves team tries to combat the spread of disease by encouraging better dog-ownership practices – trying to reduce their ability to roam freely into wolf habitat. Such awareness campaigns also play an important role in improving human health as part of a One Health framework.

VACCINATING ETHIOPIAN WOLVES

In February this year, EWCP set out on our first vaccination campaign of 2025. Targeting the area of Chafadalacha, on the southern slopes of the Sanetti Plateau, the aim was to capture and vaccinate the packs on the fringes of the core population against the ever-present dual threats of rabies and canine distemper virus. By creating disease immunity in the wolves that live on the margins of the population, and therefore most likely to encounter stray dogs from nearby communities, the hope was that the entire population would be increasingly safeguarded.

After hugely damaging disease outbreaks in the Bale Mountains as recently as 2019, and a few reports of individuals showing signs of disease, along with our EWCA partners, EWCP are promoting a more proactive approach. Capturing and vaccinating the wolves allows us to stay ahead of the threat and protect these packs for many years to come.

Over an intensive 10-day period, during which the 14-person team set up and moved camp 4 times, we successfully captured and vaccinated 13 wolves (and one challenging honey badger) across four areas – Chafadalacha, Agicho, Lakota, and Batu. In addition to the vaccinations, males from five packs were GPS-collared, allowing a closer tracking of wolf movements and activities in these difficult-to-access places.

Our wolf vaccination campaigns will continue throughout this year across the Bale Mountains, as we work towards our goal of protecting the species from one of the most pervasive threats to its existence.

EWCP Senior Scientist Sandra Lai explained: “In wildlife conservation, it often feels like one step forward, two steps back. But with these newly approved wolf preventive vaccination campaigns — kick-started by this expedition — for once, it feels like three or four steps forward.”

BIODIVERSITY FRIENDLY FUTURES

Fostering coexistence of wolves and people, and mechanisms to fairly share the costs and benefits of conservation

TEAM:

Team Leader: Jorgelina Marino
Project Co-ordinator: Girma Eshete
Community Conservation Leader: Fekadu Lema
In-country Social Scientist: Marshet Girmay
Social Scientist: Stephanie Brittain
Livelihoods Leader: Misrak Seyoum

THIS YEAR:

270 households engaged in conservation-compatible and environmental friendly alternative livelihoods; **11** hectares of degraded agriculture land rehabilitated; **170** beehives and full accessories distributed to honey producers; **117** participants in local stakeholder meetings; **180** households trained on guassa cultivation and bee keeping



COMMUNITIES ARE SHAPING AFROALPINE FUTURES, SUPPORTED BY GRASS AND HONEY

The Biodiversity Friendly Futures (BioFF) project began over a decade ago with small pilots inspired by traditional practices that we observed in the Ethiopian highlands. Some families cultivated native guassa grasses around their homes to protect the soil and feed livestock; others tended beehives in Erica forests, producing the rich highland honey valued by many. These practices carried a simple but powerful truth: people could thrive while caring for the land.

From these early pilots, the idea of BioFF was born; a vision of livelihoods that reduce pressure on Afroalpine ecosystems while celebrating and sustaining cultural traditions. The Afroalpine highlands are landscapes of both local and global importance. They store water, regulate climate, and are home to unique wildlife, including the Ethiopian wolf. They also support millions of people whose lives depend on subsistence agriculture in fragile soils, Erica forests for firewood

and building materials, and wild pastures for livestock. But when nature is not given time to recover, poverty and degradation reinforce one another, leaving both communities and ecosystems under strain. We realised that for conservation to succeed, livelihoods and biodiversity must support one another.

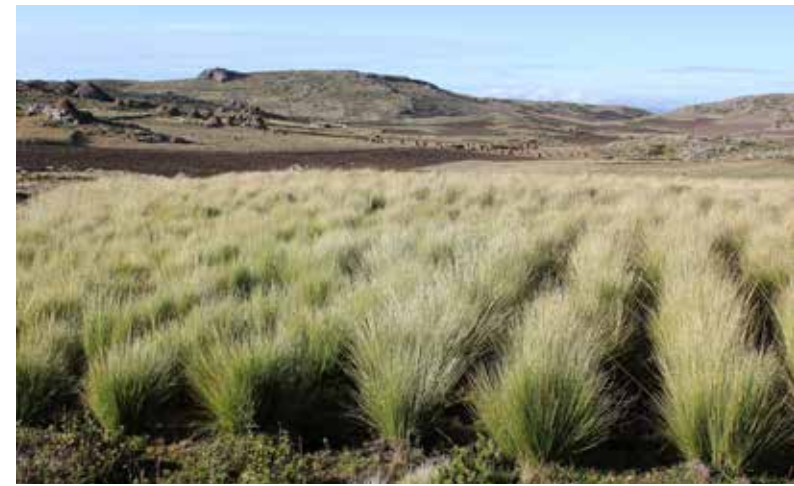
From the start, BioFF has been built on collaboration. Families embraced guassa cultivation because it restored degraded land, provided fodder, and generated cash. Honey production brought new value to Erica forests, encouraging their protection. What made these pilots succeed was not only the products, but the process: local bylaws, cooperatives, and committees set the rules. Families self-organised into small groups (budins) to share labour and benefits.

With support from the Darwin Initiative (UK government, DEFRA), this year we expanded “grass gardens” and “highland honey” livelihoods across the highlands of Amhara, while strengthening the community conservation areas that anchor local governance. Working with our new partner, Dinkenes Ethiopia, we are engaging 15 kebeles (wards) from two protected areas, aiming to support 550 households directly and many more indirectly.

The BioFF goal is clear: restore degraded land, diversify incomes, and revive traditional institutions so that ecosystems and livelihoods become more resilient. In doing so, we are also protecting Afroalpine habitats – a home to the wolves and other endemic species.

Listening better, building inclusive institutions

The hallmark of BioFF is learning and adapting. This year, we trialed scenario-based interviews, a fresh approach to understanding what people are interested in doing, and what barriers stand in their way. By presenting different livelihood options and asking households how they would respond, we gained valuable insights. For example, women told us they needed activities close to home to balance income with childcare. This led us to design guassa cultivation around homesteads - practical, accessible, and empowering. These adaptations are already increasing gender equity and ensuring that conservation-linked livelihoods work for everyone, not just a few. So far, more than 70 women



across North and South Wollo are active guassa and honey producers, with numbers rising.

This year, we also worked to bring women, youth, and religious leaders into local decision-making. Their involvement strengthens the legitimacy of community agreements and ensures that diverse voices are heard. Participant selection has been carried out transparently, with elders and community representatives present, and with our team working closely alongside them. Such participatory processes build trust and reduce the risk of exclusion. As a result, “livelihood committees” are becoming stronger. These bodies now set rules for guassa planting, honey harvests, and natural resource use. More people have a meaningful say in land management decisions that affect their livelihoods. By incorporating traditional decision-making structures BioFF is helping communities regain control of their resources.

The changes are visible. Families harvesting their first guassa crops are seeing degraded plots turn green again. Beekeepers are selling honey in local markets, proud of its quality and value. Elders speak of renewed pride in traditions, now adapted to modern needs.

Even through years of civil unrest, when government services faltered and travel was unsafe, BioFF endured. Communities kept planting guassa, tending hives, and upholding their agreements. That persistence is the best proof of all: this project belongs to them.

Perhaps most moving are the words of one participant in South Wollo:

“We missed people from the cities — it’s only you (EWCP) who visit and support this community in these difficult times. We will never forget it.”

Such voices remind us that conservation is as much about trust and presence as it is about species and habitats.



"When people's priorities and nature's needs come together,
resilience grows - for livelihoods and for wolves."

REFLECTING ON ONE YEAR OF DINKENESH ETHIOPIA

By Girma Eshete

This year, whilst EWCP celebrates its 30th anniversary, its newest partner Dinkenesh Ethiopia is also celebrating its first birthday as an implementing body. Set up by a small group of EWCP allies and employees, Dinkenesh was established as a local NGO run by Ethiopian citizens with the aim of conserving the nation's endemic wildlife for the benefit of current and future generations. After three decades of EWCP success, Dinkenesh Ethiopia aims to maintain and build on that legacy as part of a new chapter of in-country conservation leadership.

This first year has brought both new challenges and opportunities. With the support of the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) and the Darwin Initiative Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF), Dinkenesh is now implementing two of EWCP's major projects – One Health and Biodiversity Friendly Futures. In doing so, we vaccinated more than 3,490 domestic dogs;



and reached over 7,000 community members in our environmental education work – focusing on the wolves, the Afroalpine ecosystem, and disease control.

At the same time, against the backdrop of insecurity and conflict across Amhara, Dinkenesh's first year has also been defined by the resilience and adaptability of our staff working throughout the region. We are excited for what the future holds, as we work to promote the conservation of Ethiopia's unique natural heritage and ecosystem services, concentrating our efforts at the local level, but aspiring to have an impact at national level, and hopefully with experiences and lessons learnt reaching out far beyond.

LIVING WITH WOLVES

Building a future where wolves and people in the Afroalpine highlands coexist

TEAM:

Chief Naturalist: Alo Hussein

Community Team Leader: Mustafa Dule

9 Wolf Ambassadors

Community Conservation Leader: Fekadu Lema

Simien Team Leader: Getachew Assefa

30 YEARS OF LIVING WITH WOLVES

EWCP's Living with Wolves project had an ambitious and highly important aim. For the long-term conservation of Ethiopian wolves, working alongside local communities has always been paramount. The Living with Wolves project, therefore, was set up with the objective of creating awareness, engaging with communities living inside and along the buffer zones of Ethiopian wolf habitat to change their attitudes towards this iconic species of the Afroalpine. Not only would this benefit the wolves but would also promote better disease awareness and uptake of rabies vaccinations for domestic dogs, as well as creating more open communication and collaboration between EWCP, the protected areas, and individual kebeles.

For 27 years, EWCP Community Leader Mustafa Dule has been travelling to villages, schools, and different stakeholders across the Bale Mountains National Park and the neighbouring zone of West Arsi. Across 5 woredas and upwards of 30 different kebeles, both he and other EWCP staff have engaged thousands of community members and school students with talks, meetings, presentations, printed materials, and events. From young children to major stakeholders, this engagement work is one of the backbones of EWCP's long-term success – built upon a foundation of positive relationships between the programme and the communities of the Ethiopia.

► Community Leader Mustafa Dule speaking about EWCP's work at Sodota Mosque.





First Female Wolf Monitors In Ethiopia

Last year, with the support of WCN's internship fund, we piloted an EWCP monitoring internship initiative. We selected 10 young people and, organised in 2 cohorts, they learned essential conservation principles and wildlife monitoring techniques under the guidance of our experienced staff. We are delighted that this year we have hired 4 of these interns as new full-time wolf monitors – 2 of whom become the first ever female wolf monitors in EWCP's history. This training and subsequent job creation posed interesting challenges to EWCP. On the one hand, women are central to the economy of these mountains – their skills rearing livestock and travelling across this harsh landscape so clearly demonstrate the resilience and strength to tackle the challenging job of a wolf monitor. But on the other, this is not a job that would normally be associated with women in Bale, more likely to be offered office-based jobs. Balancing these contrasts there was a clear opportunity to overcome these barriers, and to pave the way for greater representation of women in conservation.

And Kalisa and Foziya have already demonstrated their skills as key members of the monitoring team and have greatly enjoyed their first 6 months of hard toiling at the forefront of wolf conservation:

"We have been on field work this week and we have had an amazing time there. I'm really loving the job."
Kalisa Alaziiz

"I do not have words to express how happy I am to be EWCP staff. I am passionate about the fieldwork and satisfied to be working in nature!"
Foziya Abubeker

► New EWCP Monitors Foziya and Kalisa in Web Valley and Sanetti.

BIODEV2030 Stakeholders Workshop

In February 2025, EWCP attended the BioDev2030 stakeholders workshop in Robe, Bale. Implemented jointly by IUCN and WWF France, this experimental approach to biodiversity preservation and development aims to promote more environmentally sustainable and economically productive activities in target sectors across 15 pilot nations. Prioritising the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the aim is to integrate biodiversity and ecosystems services into economic sectors in sustainable and impactful ways. EWCA's Director General Ato Kumara Wakjira opened the meeting, attended by multiple stakeholders from Bale and the surrounding zones, as well as several EWCP members.

► Director General of EWCA, Ato Kumara Wakjira, opening the workshop.



FIELDWORK SKILLS IN THE EXTREME

Claudio featured in an article in Nature Careers about researchers developing extraordinary skills to undertake fieldwork in challenging environments – discussing the importance of horse-riding in the Bale Mountains:

"When he saw the nomadic Oromo people in Ethiopia riding horses while herding livestock, it struck him that riding would help him to cover the roughly 2,000km² range of mostly rugged terrain, where wolf packs roam. Each trek covering the range takes a week of travel on horseback."

Inclusivity Accelerator Award for MUSTAFA DULE

In October 2024, Mustafa Dule was the recipient of a WildCRU Inclusivity Accelerator Award. Mustafa is the EWCP Community Leader for Bale Mountains and part of the senior staff, serving as Deputy Coordinator when cover is needed. He has dedicated his whole adult life to the conservation of Ethiopian wolves and has become a skilled practitioner with extensive knowledge.

'Musti' is an innate peoples' person, great at communicating with local government officers and kebele chair-people (community leaders). His work is invaluable to the development and maintenance of a community conservation approach, and he is very highly respected by all.

The Inclusivity Accelerator was set up by WildCRU at the University of Oxford to provide vital support - from training and activities to equipment - to contribute to the career development of promising conservationists. It also has a particular focus on recognising and safeguarding local expertise in conservation practice.

This award is a recognition of Musti's dedication to the conservation of Ethiopia's endemic wildlife, and of his importance to EWCP. Previous recipients from EWCP include Alo Hussein, Fekadu Lema, and Abdi Samune.



► Musti at EWCP's headquarters in Dinsho.

Le Dernier Survivant 'THE LAST SURVIVOR'

French-language film from Swiss filmmakers Martin Ureta and Cedrik Strahm, and featuring an interview with Claudio. The project was supported by EWCP.

Trailer online: <https://vimeo.com/1004138460>



NEWS & OUTPUTS



End of an era: SAYING GOODBYE TO TUBNEY HOUSE

For the past 21 years, as part of the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), EWCP has called the magnificent Tubney House its UK home. Made possible by the generosity of the Tubney Trust, this idyllic location has hosted thousands of visiting conservationists and students for over two decades – including EWCP's own Girma Eshete, an alumnus of WildCRU's Post-Graduate Diploma and now Executive Director of Dinkenesh Ethiopia. This chapter is drawing to a close, with WildCRU set to move to the new Life and Mind Building (LaMB), seat to the Biology Department in Oxford's Science Area. We are excited to see what the future holds at EWCP's new home

WOLVES AS POLLINATORS PAPER COVERAGE

Towards the end of 2024, our paper led by Sandra Lai on the nectar-feeding behaviour of Ethiopian wolves received widespread news media coverage across the world. From articles featuring in Science magazine, The New York Times, and The New Scientist, to coverage on major news sites like CNN, CBC, and NPR, this unique Ethiopian wolf behaviour captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands of viewers, listeners, and readers in over seven different languages!



THE SUCCESSFUL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ANAZ CONSERVATION AREA

By Anagaw Atickem

A community-based victory for the Ethiopian wolf: Afromontane Biodiversity Conservation in Ethiopia (ABCE) is a local NGO dedicated to promoting sustainable development by integrating biodiversity conservation with community prosperity. It aims to protect Ethiopia's critical afromontane and afroalpine ecosystems by providing local communities with viable economic alternatives to resource-intensive practices. ABCE has achieved a landmark victory with the official establishment of the Anaz Community Conservation Area (ACCA). This success is rooted in a pioneering community-based model, which secured legal recognition from the Amhara Regional State. An innovative co-management structure successfully reconciled traditional land use with modern conservation needs, ensuring local ownership and long-term sustainability.

The project implemented a comprehensive suite of alternative livelihood programs to reduce the community's dependency on the protected habitat. They include a successful beekeeping program supporting 600 households, the cultivation of 20,000 apple trees, and a poultry farming scheme that has increased incomes for 150 households by 20-30%. Extensive land rehabilitation efforts have restored 4,777 hectares of degraded terrain through terracing

and planting over 30,000 seedlings, as well as harvesting and storing rainwater for the dry season.

The tangible benefits of these programs have fostered powerful local support, transforming former herders into conservation advocates and rangers. Reduced grazing pressure has allowed the highland ecosystem to begin recovery with early ecological successes already visible – from reports of regenerating native vegetation to increased sightings of endemics like the Ethiopian wolf and gelada. By masterfully intertwining legal habitat protection with immediate socio-economic benefits, the project has created a replicable, holistic blueprint for conservation where biodiversity and human communities thrive together.



► Potato production in the Anaz CCA, © ABCE.



ERADICATING RABIES IN ETHIOPIA

Girma Eshete attended the World One Health Day and World Rabies Day workshop in Addis Ababa on behalf of EWCP in November, 2024. An MoU was signed to renew the commitment to One Health in Ethiopia and with the aim of eliminating rabies from the country by 2030.

EWCP ARTICLES PUBLICATIONS CONFERENCES



WEB: The Secret Worlds of the Valley

New photography book about the Ethiopian wolves of Web Valley by EWCP friend and long-time collaborator **Adrien Lesaffre**.

POPULAR ARTICLES & NEWS

Nature Careers, [Fieldwork skills in the extreme](#), Nature. Vol 631, 18 July 2024, pp. 695-697.

WCN blog, April 2024. [One wolf's lasting legacy](#)

WCN blog, July 2025, [Are Ethiopian Wolves Pollinators](#)

[Unveiling the mysteries of the Ethiopian wolf](#)
Sandra Lai on conservation careers

The Conversation: [Wolves with a taste for nectar?](#)

Scientific American: [Nectar-Eating Wolves May Be Pollinating Flowers](#)



► © Adrien Lesaffre.

RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Addis Ababa University – Ecology and conservation of Afroalpine natural resources; Genetics and carnivore interspecific competition; Anaz Community Conservation Area and the ABCE

Animal & Plant Health Agency – GOV.UK - Immune response to CDV vaccine

Ethiopian Public Health Institute - Rabies diagnostics in wolves and dogs

Hawassa University – Ecosystem engineers and carbon sequestration

Mekelle University – Large Carnivore Survey of Ethiopia

Oslo University/Jimma University – African wolf ecology and competition

Phillip University Marburg, Germany – Climate monitoring in the Bale Mountains

Rollins College, USA – Measuring cortisol in claws and hair to assess stress in wolves

Royal Veterinary College, UK – Disease dynamics and vaccine testing

University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic – Giant molerat physiology and ecology

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Lai, S., Asefa, G., Abute, M., Eshete, G., Léandri-Breton, D.-J., Regassa, F., Sillero-Zubiri, C., & Marino, J. (2025). Successful first rehabilitation and release of an endangered Ethiopian wolf. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 7(7), e70075. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.70075>

Lai, S., Léandri-Breton, D.J., Lesaffre, A., Samune, A., Marino, J. and Sillero-Zubiri, C. 2024. Canids as pollinators? Nectar foraging by Ethiopian wolves may contribute to the pollination of *Kniphofia foliosa*. *Ecology* 105(12):e4470. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecy.4470>

Marino, J., Lai, S., Eshete, G. and Sillero-Zubiri, C. 2024. Conservation with hard borders: Ethiopian wolves are threatened by fragmentation and isolation. *Wildlife Biology*, 2024: e01331. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wlb3.01331>

Marino, J., Preston, E.F.R., Abute, M., Hussein, A., Regassa, F., Deressa, A., Bedin, E., Banyard, A.C., Fooks, A.R. and Sillero-Zubiri, C. 2024. Concurrent rabies and canine distemper outbreaks and infection in endangered Ethiopian wolves. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 30(12), 2567–5276. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid3012.240432>

Mekonnen, A., Fashing, P.J., Chapman, C.A., Ejigu, A.W., Fetene, B., Fekadu, M., Guadie, A., Stenseth, N.C., and Venkataraman, V.V., 2024. The Ethiopian wolf can act as a flagship and umbrella species to protect the Afroalpine ecosystem and foster sustainable development. *Environmental Conservation* 51(1) 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0376892923000309>

Asfaw, T., Gebresenbet, F., Sillero-Zubiri, C., Leirs, H., Gizaw, G., Tsegaye, A., Abate, W. and Bauer, H. (2025), Mammalian Community Structure Varies With Distance Between Protected Areas in the Omo Valley, Southwest Ethiopia. *Ecol Evol*, 15: e71248. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71248>

Paul Scholte, Simeneh Admasu, Lakew Berhanu, Mellese Damtie, Gebremeskel Gizaw, Sven Oehm, and Kumara Wakjira. The protected area system of Ethiopia: Development, present state and perspectives



► © Philipp Malli.

tives towards the '30x30' target. *Parks Journal*, May 2025, 31:1, 10.2305/SRUC8758 https://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/31.1_6_Scholte-et-al-1.pdf

CONFERENCES

Managing disease risks to free-ranging African wild dogs – IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group/African Wild Dog Working Groups, Kruger National Park, South Africa. April 2024

National rabies control and elimination strategy revision – Minister of Agriculture, Adama, Ethiopia. July 2024

Wolves across Borders: Conference on Wolf Ecology and Management, Lunteren, The Netherlands, June 2025

World One Health Day and World Rabies Day Workshop, Addis Ababa, November 2024.

REPORTS

EWCP Monitoring Report 2025 (https://www.ethiopianwolf.org/resources/EWCP_Monitoring_Report_2025.pdf)

LIFETIME DONATIONS

THANK YOU

EWCP is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the programme's lifetime. We are thankful for every gift, since each contributes to the future of the Ethiopian wolf.

Here we list our major donors:

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► EWCP Monitor Team cross the Web River. © Abdi Samune.



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The following individuals and organizations contributed financially to the mission of EWCP in the last three years to 31st March 2025:

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Other donors that have given generously in the past include:

Acton Family Giving, African Wildlife Foundation, Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang, Apex Expeditions, Bill Miller, BBC Wildlife Conservation Fund, Bern Thies Foundation, Born Free USA, Bosack & Kruger Foundation, CEPA - Conservation des Espèces et des Populations Animales, Conservation International, The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Darwin Initiative, Environmental Systems Research (ESRI), Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society, Florence and Steven Goldby, Fondation Segré, Giant Steps Foundation, Handsel Foundation, Houston Zoo, IBREAM, IDEA WILD, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Iris Darnton Trust, James Malcolm, J.R.S. Biodiversity Foundation, John Aspinall Foundation, Journeys by Design, Kris and Peter Norvig, Kuoni Travel, Lawrence Bowman Family Foundation, Lee and Rebecca Jackrel, Marjorie Parker & Jim Thurman, Matriarch Films, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Morris Animal Foundation, National Geographic Film & Television, National Geographic Society, NHK Enterprises, The Oppenheims, Richard Scheller and Susan McConnell, Rock & Blues, Shumaker Family Foundation, Sidney Byers Charitable Trust, Spencer Scott Travel, Stiftung Artenschutz, Saint Louis Zoo, Silverback Films, SSB Charitable Corporation, Stephen Gold, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Viking Films, The Wellcome Trust, Wildlife Conservation Society, Whitley Fund for Nature, World Society for the Protection of Animals, The Walt Disney Company, Zoologische Gesellschaft für Arten-und Population, Zoological Society London, Zynga.



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Alo Hussein, Chief Naturalist

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HELP EWCP

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme is a WildCRU (University of Oxford) endeavour to help protect these endangered wolves and the Afroalpine habitats they inhabit. It works under an agreement with Ethiopia's Wildlife Conservation Authority and Regional Governments, with the aegis of the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group and Wildlife Health Working Group. In 2023 the local NGO Dinkenesh Ethiopia joined the EWCP partnership and will be formally implementing components of EWCP's conservation work from April 2024.

Ethiopian wolves are only found in a handful of scattered mountains in Ethiopia and are threatened by loss of highland habitats, disease and persecution. The most threatened carnivore in Africa, and the world's rarest canid, these long-legged charismatic animals need your help.

Informed by sound research, the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme targets the greatest threats to the survival of Ethiopian wolves and their Afroalpine habitat. We promote this charismatic species as a flagship, thereby protecting many of the Ethiopia's highland endemics and natural resources.

If you or your organisation is interested in helping to fund our activities, contact us. You can donate to EWCP specifically through the following organisations:

Contact Us

Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme

PO Box 215, Robe, Bale, Ethiopia

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ewcp@biology.ox.ac.uk

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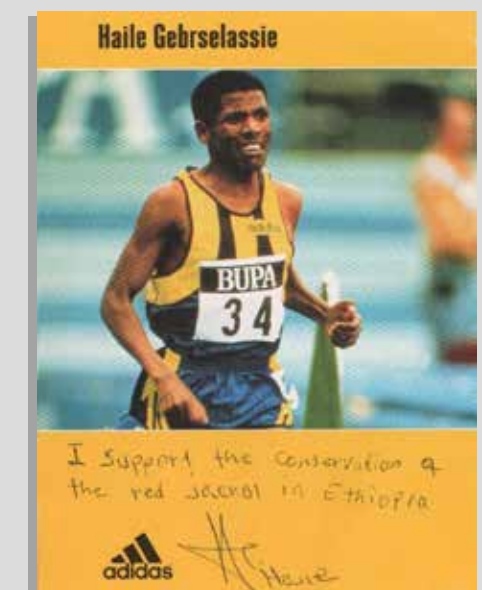
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“For me, conserving Ethiopian wolves is everything - it is like living forever. Thanks to all EWCP members - they are just like a family of wolves!”

Foziya Abubeker, Wolf Monitor, 2024



► © Adrien Lesaffre

Report prepared by Claudio Sillero, Jorgelina Marino, Girma Eshete, Zelealem Tefera, Sandra Lai, Henry Anderson-Elliott and EWCP Team



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