

UCSD adjunct Biology Professor David Western named new head of the Kenya Wildlife Service

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Media Contact: Warren R. Froelich, (619) 534-8564

UCSD ADJUNCT BIOLOGY PROFESSOR DAVID WESTERN NAMED NEW HEAD OF THE KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE

David "Jonah" Western, a conservation biologist and adjunct professor in biology at the University of California, San Diego, has been named director of the Kenya Wildlife Service--a government agency charged with overseeing Kenya's wildlife, natural parks and game preserves.

Western, who replaces anthropologist Richard Leakey, said he would initiate policies designed to increase participation in wildlife conservation matters with the surrounding communities.

"My policy would be to directly involve the landowners, both in containing wildlife degradation and, more particularly, promoting the benefits of the wildlife through both tourism and utilization of one form or another," Western said.

A native of Kenya, Western was director of strategic planning for the Wildlife Conservation Society in Nairobi before assuming his new responsibilities. Since 1987, he has served as an adjunct professor in biology at UCSD, where he has given several lectures a year in "Conservation and the Human Predicament."

Internationally recognized as one of the leading conservation biologists in the world, Western is perhaps best known for his efforts in orchestrating an elephant ivory trade ban on the east coast of Africa.

In 1985, he established the forest elephant program for Wildlife Conservation International, and conducted a survey of forest elephants in Zaire, Gabon and the Central African Republic. From 1988-89, Western created and directed the Ivory Trade Review Group, a panel of 35 specialists who evaluated trade in ivory and recommended actions to be taken by local governments.

"It was the result of the deliberations of that group that persuaded members of the Bush Administration to impose domestic bans (on ivory), which were then followed by similar bans a few days later in Europe, Japan and Hong Kong," Western recalled.

"Those domestic bans almost went around the world and preceded the international ban six months later. It really set the trend," he said.

Western's primary interest focuses around the conservation of African savannas, with a goal of making conservation acceptable and effective by involving a wide range of participants--especially local land owners. Among other things, he is credited for initiating in Kenya "local participation" policies or community-based conservation.

"The big departure for the wildlife service is going to be an emphasis on land owners and wildlife outside national parks," Western said. "Three-quarters of our wildlife is outside, and the parks can't stand in isolation."

Western, who is married to UCSD anthropologist Shirley Strum, has received numerous honors for his conservation efforts. His awards include the Order of the Golden Ark, the Third Distinguished Achievement Award from the Society for Conservation Biology, the Carter Chair of Conservation Biology from the New York Zoological Society, and the Citation of Merit from the Explorers Club.

Western was named a Leverhulme Scholar from 1967-69, and received a Ford Foundation Travel and Study Award in 1969, and a Ford Foundation Research Award in 1971. His professional organizations include the American Ecological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society of Zoologists and the British Ecological Society.

Western has been appointed to the board of governors for the Society for Conservation Biologists, the editorial board of the African Journal of Ecology, the founding editorial board of Swara Wildlife Magazine, the scientific advisory committee of the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation, the IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, chairman of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, ecological advisor of the African Wildlife Foundation and honorary warden of the Kenya Wildlife Conservation and Management Department.

Western attended primary and secondary school in Tanzania. In 1967, he received a bachelor of science degree with honors from Leicester University in the United Kingdom; in 1973, he was awarded a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

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