

Dr. David Western to give fifth annual David Marc Belkin Memorial Lecture

April 29, 1983

Dr. David Western, a noted resource ecologist associated with the New York Zoological Society's Animal Research and Conservation Center in Nairobi, Kenya, will give the fifth annual David Marc Belkin Memorial Lecture Thursday, May 12, at the University of California, San Diego.

The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will begin at 8 p.m. in room 2722 of the Undergraduate Sciences Building on the Revelle campus. The title for Western's talk is "The Origins and Development of Conservation in East Africa."

The Belkin Lectures on environmental issues were established by the parents and friends of David Marc Belkin, an honors graduate of John Muir College at UCSD. Belkin lost his life while backpacking in the High Sierra in July 1978. His love for the wilderness prompted his family to establish the endowed memorial fund in his memory.

Each spring the lectures bring to UCSD a distinguished figure associated with wilderness conservation and environmental studies. Western, who traveled from Nairobi, Kenya, to UCSD, will present a comparison of the wilderness values and emergence of the conservation movement in the United States with that in contemporary Africa, drawing attention to some striking similarities as well as differences and the implications for the future.

Western was born in London, England, in 1944. He was raised in Tanzania where he received his primary and secondary schooling. He received a B.S. degree with honors in zoology from Leicester University in England in 1967 but returned to Kenya to enter a Ph.D. program in wildlife ecology at the University of Nairobi. He was awarded a Ph.D. in 1973.

Western was intrigued by the possibility that the savanna ecosystems in East Africa had been greatly influenced by man for a great length of time and chose to study the Amboseli Basin which he felt epitomized a savanna where wildlife and pastoralists sought a common living.

The Maasai Amboseli Game Reserve covers 1,259 square miles of the Kajiado District in Southern Kenya. It became a national reserve administered by Kenya Natural Parks in 1949 and given to the Maasai Kajiado County Council's administration as a game reserve in 1961.

Over the past 15 years, Western has studied the area in considerable detail looking at how it is shaped by climate, wildlife and man, how stable it is, and how it is changing in response to influences from the outside world.

In 1974, as a direct result of a land-use plan developed by Western and extensive negotiations between the New York Zoological Society and the government of Kenya, the 150-square-mile Amboseli Basin area became a national park. Western has remained at Amboseli to oversee the implementation of plans for the park and to monitor all ecological changes that have resulted from the development of tourism as the local industry.

Much of his research has been concerned with the nature of traditional pastoral societies and the influence they exert on wildlife and their habitat. He has been closely involved in planning savanna ecosystems in such

a way that the traditional human occupants and wildlife could continue to coexist, yet still accommodate the inevitable changes.

Amboseli has become a model of integrated planning and the centerpiece for a national wildlife and tourist development project funded by the World Bank and other agencies.

In 1978, Western established the Wildlife Planning Unit which is responsible for all wildlife planning in Kenya, both within and outside national parks and reserves. He was named to his present position with the Animal Research and Conservation Center of the New York Zoological Society in 1977.

In 1982 he was named chairman of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group which is involved throughout Africa in planning for the conservation of both species and with regulating the international trade of their products, particularly ivory and rhino horns.

Through the New York Zoological Society, Western is active in the conservation needs of other African countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Zaire and Tanzania.

Western served as a Leverhulme Scholar from 1967 to 1969 and as a New York Zoological Society Conservation Fellow from 1973 to 1977. He has received study grants from the East African Wild Life Society and received the Charles Lindbergh Award in 1980. He is the author of some 80 publications and management reports dealing with his research conservation work.

The Belkin Lectures were inaugurated in 1979 by Peter Matthiessen who lectured on "The American Indian and Wilderness." The second lecture was delivered by David Brower who talked on "Contemporary Conservation Issues." Wallace Stegner delivered the third Belkin Lecture in 1981 speaking on "The Gift of Wilderness." Last year, Edward Abbey talked on "A Walk Through the Desert Hills."

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