



FRIENDS of Conservation

We have included Friends of Conservation (FOC) in our Charity Portfolio since 2005, and last year we began to actively support their CO2 reduction programmes. FOC was founded in 1982 to help prevent wildlife and habitat degradation in the Masai Mara, one of the most ecologically important regions of the world. Since then, the organisation has expanded its activities to cover projects around the world. Amanda Bleasby, Operations Director for FOC, tells us about some of their current work in Africa.

The Selous Game Reserve in southeast Tanzania is the largest protected area in Africa, covering around 50,000 square kilometres of pristine wilderness. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982, it is considered to be the second largest wildlife reserve in the world. Visitors to it can expect to see some of the world's largest populations of elephants, buffalos, hippos, crocodiles and wild dogs. Previously, the reserve was home to over 3,000 black rhino, but due to severe poaching the majority were thought to be extinct, until recently.

Thanks to the efforts of the Selous Rhino Trust, the rhinos are fighting back. FOC is supporting the Trust's Black Rhino Protection project which was set up six years ago to secure the last few fragmented populations. As well as protecting the existing rhino, a long term regeneration strategy has also been developed.

In conjunction with this project, much needed scientific data is being collated on these elusive rhinos, to help understand more about their behaviour. Although rhino sightings are

infrequent due to the shyness of the species, the rough terrain and the vastness of the region, the team has spotted a number of rhino including a calf – a very good sign that a viable black rhino population exists once more in parts of the Selous Game Reserve.

FOC is an international non-governmental organisation which has been actively working to protect wildlife and habitats for over twenty five years. We are committed to protecting biodiversity and the environment by working with local communities to develop and promote a balance between their needs and those of the wildlife with which they share their natural habitat.

At our own community and conservation projects in Kenya's Masai Mara, we encourage the use of alternative fuels and operate a wide ranging planting programme distributing thousands of seedlings annually, many free of charge. By doing so, precious forests and other wildlife habitats are protected and the levels of CO2 are reduced, helping to combat global warming.

Another key focus for FOC in Kenya is our Community Scout programme. Community Scouts are elected by the Maasai elders and are vital to wildlife and habitat protection, fulfilling a crucial role by monitoring animal migration movements and relaying information to the community. New monitoring techniques have resulted in scouts being able to report the return to the region of rhinos, wild dogs and a rare species of kudu deer, all absent from the area just a few years ago. Scouts also carry out anti-poaching activities, finding and removing snares, confiscating ivory and skins, and monitoring other illegal activities, including unauthorised charcoal-burning.

FOC undertake a variety of projects worldwide with a focus not only upon wildlife, but also the local communities whose lives are inextricably entwined with the wildlife and habitats they are working to protect. If you would like to learn more, please visit www.audleytravel.com/charityportfolio.



Wild dog in the Mara

Coral conservation in Southeast Asia



Many of our clients are keen divers but are acutely aware that the coral reefs that they love to visit are in desperate need of protection. Without protection, two-thirds of the natural coral reefs in Southeast Asia will have disappeared within twenty years. One charity that is very proactive in this area is Coral Cay Conservation. A non-profit, non-governmental organisation, it trains volunteers to collect scientific data to aid conservation of the reefs. They also provide the technical and financial support that developing countries need in order to produce conservation management plans for threatened reefs. For further information please visit www.coralcay.org.