

# From Vocation to Avocation . . . Corinne Waldenmayer Strives to Promote Conservation Goals in Africa



Kafue National Park, Ntemwa & Kapinga Tented Camp



Lake Tanganyika, Kasaba Bay Lodge



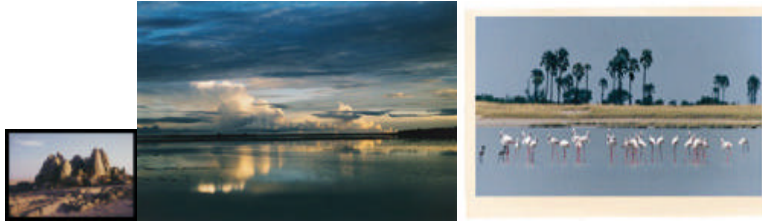
South Luangwa National Park, Mfuwe Lodge



Victoria Falls, Tongabezi



Makgadikgadi, Jack's Camp



*By Marilyn Miller*  
*Editor/Publisher*

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The progress made by dynamo Corinne Waldenmayer, co-founder of the African Conservancy along with her husband Norbert Waldenmayer, is nothing short of amazing. The African Conservancy is only two years old but its ambitious program could rightfully be the envy of much more established nonprofit organizations. Its web site is fascinating and appealing, its programs diversified and original and, best of all, it appears to be fulfilling its mission.

Perusing the web site or reading of the work of the Conservancy in one of many well-prepared press releases one would never suspect that this phenomenon is the work of an entirely volunteer staff. Neither Corinne nor her husband receive a salary for their work nor does Vicky Mardall, director of marketing. Yet, the African Conservancy offers educational safaris to well-heeled Americans, an on-line art gallery and marketplace, and, engages in a raft of partnership activities including the formation of economic development opportunities for African communities. It is an emerging force in international nonprofit activities.

### **Founder Wants Her Life to be About More Than Corporate Profits**

Born in Algiers, raised in Madagascar and educated in Paris, Corinne speaks five languages and first pursued a career as a social director on a cruise ship. After four years she decided to enter the University of Miami to pursue a degree in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering. She worked for a Los Angeles defense firm for 14 years and then entered the commercial software world via a high-powered job with a Boston company. During her four years with the Boston company she commuted from San Diego and spent lots of time visiting her multi-national clients. As so many others in the fast-moving world of 90's technology she literally lived in airports, rental cars and hotels and considered a 70-hour week the norm.

"After 18 years working in the high-technology industry, I wanted my work, and my life, to be about more than corporate profits," said Corinne. So, in 1999, she took some time to go home to Africa to decide how she could best utilize her abilities. It took very little time for her to

realize that she wanted to do something for her native land.

In 2000 Waldenmayer co-founded the African Conservancy with her husband, Norbert Waldenmayer. He is an expatriate who left his native Germany at the age of five and grew up in California's San Fernando Valley. His advanced degree in development and city planning and management led to a career as a visionary who dedicated himself to the re-development of blighted city areas and the development of rural and suburban areas in an eco-friendly manner.

The co-founders bring their unique skills and abilities to meet the challenge of the African Conservancy's mission of protecting Africa's wildlife and traditional cultures. As Executive Director she applies her problem-solving and analytical skills to identifying the methods the African Conservancy will use to further its mission and he is committed to contributing his expertise to preservation and enhancement efforts. They, together with a cadre of environmentally conscious friends, are the nucleus of this ambitious effort.

### **The Challenge is Both African and Western**

Corinne Waldenmayer sees "both an African and a Western problem". The African problem includes internal factors that contribute to environmental destruction and disintegration in Africa. The Conservancy works to deliver to geographically manageable areas integrated programs of environmental education, wildlife protection species re-introduction, food subsidies and environmentally compatible economic development.

The Western problem is a reflection of a society that has very little knowledge about Africa. Through education the Conservancy seeks to open Western minds to the treasures of Africa and to the devastating consequences that will occur if the destruction of Africa is allowed to go unchecked.

Lusaka, Zambia is home to the African Conservancy's African Headquarters and Corinne divides her time between Lusaka and Vista, California, where she and her husband make their home. Unlike the administrative offices in the U.S., the African field staff is paid.

### **On-line Art Gallery and Marketplace**

The African Conservancy does not impose projects upon the communities. "Everything is grass roots. The decisions must be theirs," Corinne told the 501 (c) (3) Monthly Letter editor. "People on the ground know a lot." She said that there was no shortage of interesting products in Africa but there were few market outlets. This is why the African Conservancy has opened an on-line art gallery and marketplace on its web site [www.africanconservancy.org](http://www.africanconservancy.org).

It is easy to become absolutely entranced with this fascinating site. Even

if one can't afford the educational safaris offered or the unique, collectible native artwork, it presents a first-rate educational opportunity.

### **Decimation of Wildlife Poses Particular Problems**

One of the focuses of the African Conservancy is preservation of wildlife. She said that hunger is a great motivator for poaching. Without access to commercial domestic meat, the black market is often the only source of meat. A growing population and the migration of many young people to the cities thus creating an even greater demand for black market meat compounds this problem. And in the villages the lack of younger people limits the ability of the villagers to raise crops and livestock.

Corinne also partners with nonprofits in the United States such as the California Wolf Center to find solutions to similar challenges and makes public presentations to a variety of groups.

### **Summary**

In short, this young nonprofit is facing a huge, multi-faceted challenge with innovation and enthusiasm. While the task may seem overwhelming, if enough people support their cause, great strides will be made. The point is that what happens to culture and environment in Africa has worldwide impact.