

by Gerhard Damm

# Documentary: Custodians of Wilderness - Ethiopia



A 35-minute documentary video *Custodians of Wilderness: Ethiopia* by The Conservation Imperative and produced by Zig Macintosh of the Osprey Filming Company. The documentary features Jason Roussos of Ethiopian Rift Valley Safaris and Dr. Paul Evangelista from the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory (NREL). Forest managers Genene Haille and Kemal Oumar as well as hunting safari operator Sisay Shewamene of Shield and Spear International Safaris give further insights into one of the little-known African conservation success stories. The video focuses on the relationship between the safari hunting of the endemic mountain nyala and the conservation of the Ethiopian Afro-montane forests and traces the history of that relationship. In more southern African wildlife areas wildlife mainly exists on marginal lands. In contrast the Ethiopian highlands - to which mountain nyala is endemic - boast of high quality and highly desirable arable land. The video highlights the problems caused by agriculture caused deforestation and land degradation and offers a glimpse at the solutions like participatory forest management and community empowerment at remote conservations frontlines.

Kemal Oumar and Sisay Shewamene vividly describe the community-owned Adaba-Dodola concession bordering the western part of Bale Mountains National Park. Basis for the conservation activities in Adaba-Dodola is a combination of hunting and photo tourism. Whilst around 1 100 photo tourists generate about \$4 500 for the community, the three mountain nyala hunters generate \$22 500 for the local people every year.

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The film also reports on the NREL spatial modeling of remote and rugged mountain nyala habitat and sheds new light on Afro-montane forest cover and forest regeneration in hunting areas through engagement of a dedicated group of volunteers and local communities.

Another example of Zig Macintosh's expertise to explain complex issues. Well worth watching!