

# ETHIOPIA

## The wild, wild west

*A major new conservation initiative seeks to preserve Gambella National Park for the local communities and endangered species that depend on it*

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The Nile lechwe forages in water for swamp grasses

IN SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA, Gambella National Park covers 4,575km<sup>2</sup> between the Baro and Akobo Rivers. In its wetlands, white-eared kob and endangered Nile lechwe spring through the reeds, above water teeming with 113 fish species and beneath 230 types of native bird.

It's part of a larger ecosystem within Gambella State, inhabited by indigenous communities including the Nuer, Anuak, Majang and Omotic peoples, bordering neighbouring South Sudan. Here is home to Ethiopia's largest remaining population of elephant and endangered Nubian giraffe, plus the largest land mammal migration on Earth, with six million antelope thundering through the national park annually.

In December, efforts to protect this valuable ecosystem stepped up thanks to a partnership with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), Gambella State and African Parks (a non-profit conservation organisation that manages protected areas in Africa). The agreement maps out a community-led future for the park, encouraging investment into the region, creating climate change resilience and promoting the sustainable use of resources.

"This partnership marks the beginning of a new chapter in Gambella's story," says Alemitu Umod, President of Gambella Peoples' National Regional State. "By working together with African Parks and EWCA, we'll not only conserve our wilderness but also create economic opportunities for local communities."