

Editorial

Tweets of Ngorongoro

It is difficult for the uninitiated human mind to full grasp events on a timescale of millions of years. Yet we and our environments are products of billions of years of cosmic and biological evolution. Ecological evolution on the other hand seems transient, and social evolution is the most volatile. Social events such as the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt that gripped the world in the past months seem to start spontaneously in response to events measured on the scale of decades only. *That revolution* was “tweetered” – to use the colloquialism of the present day generation of youth.

Two and a half million years ago, the events that led to the creation of the most extraordinary wildlife enclave in the world, began with a spectacular eruption of the Ngorongoro crater in present day Tanzania. Now, in an area of nearly 100 square kilometers, anyone with sufficient funds and desire can still witness the co-existence of humans, animals, birds, and plants – the way the Garden of Eden was supposed to be.

Ngorongoro crater the largest continuous caldera in the world, and it is a UNESCO world heritage site¹. I had the privilege of visiting this glorious social-ecological habitat a few years ago. The visit was *my revolution* for perception of life on Earth, as it could be everywhere. No intensity of modern “social network” can compare with the intricacies of exchanges and various forms of communication taking place at the crater. The preservation of human-environment dynamics in the crater and surrounding areas is particularly laudable. But the stability of the interactions that have sustained the environment over many human generations is increasingly vulnerable to anthropogenic threats at the global level.

The Ngorongoro crater area is often described as the eighth wonder of the world. In my view, that would refer to the “old world.” The crater could easily be the first wonder of the modern world, and should be protected at all costs. There are “rumors” recently that the Tanzanian government is working to implement a proposal to build a road for commercial traffic that could seriously destabilize the balance of nature in the region. This ecological atrocity should be tweetered for the world to take preventive action. It is as serious, if not more so, as the tweetered political revolutions currently taking place in Northern Africa.

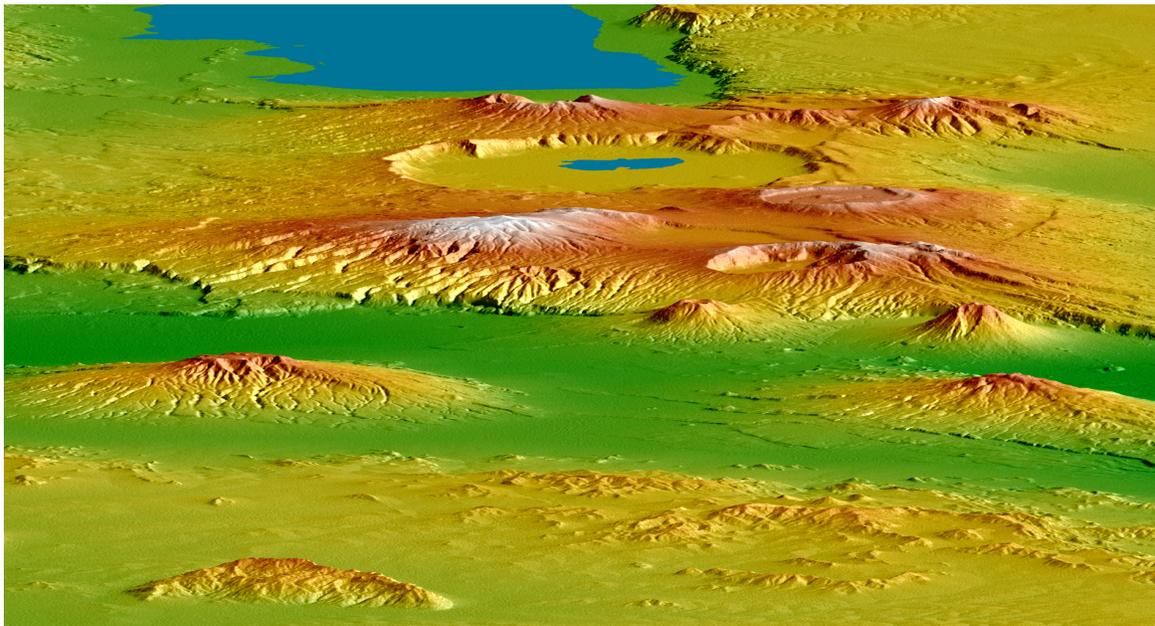


Figure 1. Fertile Ngorongoro crater in Tanzania, in the middle of crater highlands created by volcanic activities dating back millions of years. By courtesy of NASA Earth Observatory (<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=6316>).

¹ World Heritage Convention – Ngorongoro Conservation Area. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/39>.



Figure 2. The Ngorongoro crater is home to tweeting birds of all types, more or less in harmony with their environment. Lesser Flamingos in the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania. Image by courtesy of Charles J. Sharp (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lesser-flamingos-flying.jpg>).

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