



***Our first
12 years***



WILDLIFE ACT
FOCUSED CONSERVATION

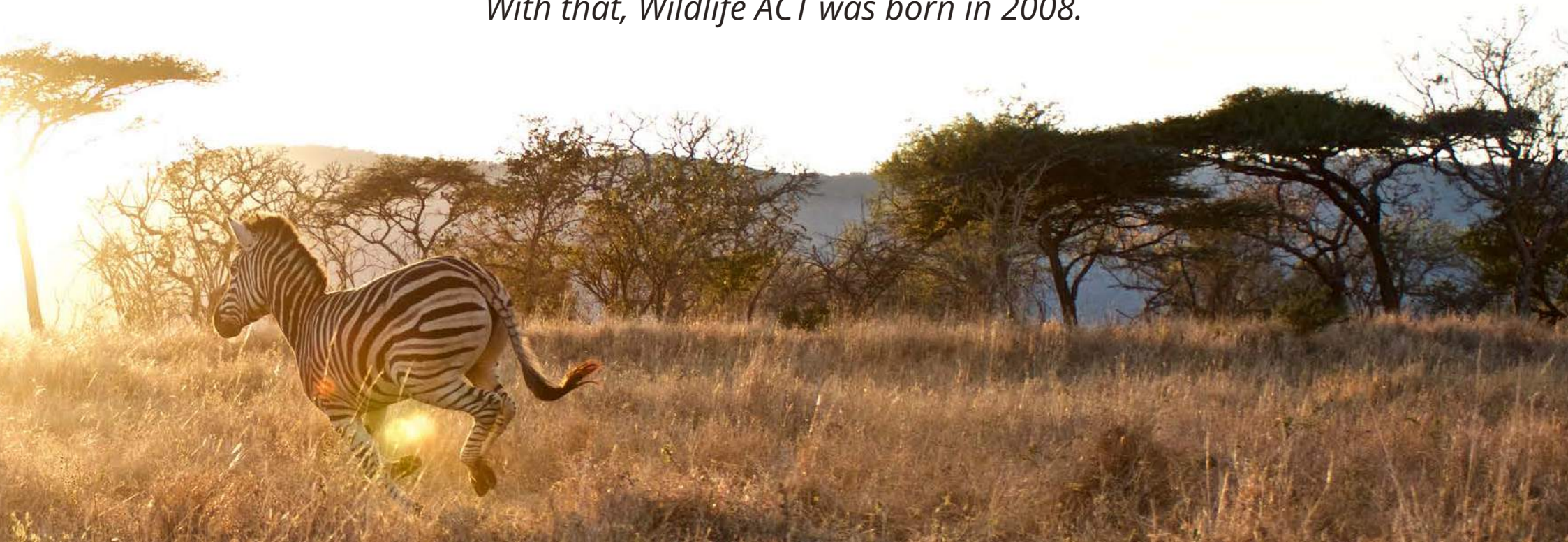
Impact Report

In the beginning...



*We realised that we shared a common vision:
We wanted to roll up our sleeves and work at a very practical level in the field to
help save Africa's endangered wildlife, recognising that these charismatic fauna
are umbrella species contributing to the conservation of ecosystems, habitats,
and other associated species.*

*At the same time we wanted to understand the needs of communities
surrounding protected areas and work to develop practical and sustainable
solutions to improve their livelihoods.
With that, Wildlife ACT was born in 2008.*



The background of the slide features a photograph of three antelopes, likely reedbuck, in a natural savanna environment. One antelope is standing on the left, another is standing in the center-right, and a third is lying down in the foreground. The image is darkened to serve as a backdrop for the text.

Our story

Wildlife ACT began with a chance meeting of three individuals in June 2008: Simon and Chris, who were actively involved in conservation work in northern KwaZulu-Natal at the time, and Jo, who worked in advertising in Cape Town.

The conversation shifted to the subject of biodiversity conservation efforts and the increased challenges being faced in Africa including diminishing conservation budgets, impoverished rural communities side-lined by historic conservation initiatives, increases in poaching and shrinking protected areas.



*Photo: Simon Morgan, Chris Kelly & Johan Maree
Founders of Wildlife ACT.
Taken in uMkhuze Game Reserve, March 2009.*

12 years have flown by, and although globally the conservation of biodiversity continues to face a barrage of obstacles, our successes inspire us to remain optimistic about how much more we can accomplish, especially when working openly with stakeholders and partners towards common goals.

With this report, we celebrate our achievements over the years, reflect on our mistakes and the lessons learned, and contemplate the future challenges we foresee in the coming decade and how we intend to tackle them. We share personal memories and highlights, and shift focus to doing more of what we've come to know works.

2008...

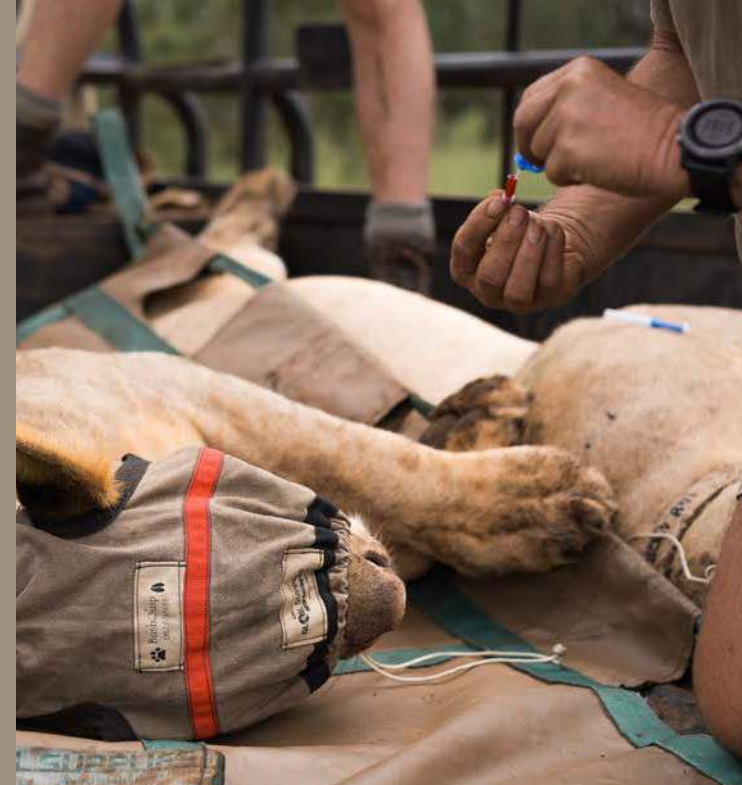


An account of Wildlife ACT's achievements would be incomplete without acknowledging the efforts of the exceptional human capital that has been part of our life-defining journey so far. Our organisation has benefitted from the talent, dedication and passion of many young African conservationists, and we feel privileged to have known them all. We would like to make particular mention Taryn Gilroy, Michelle Randlehoff, Bronwen Kelly, Marumo Nene, Cathy Hue, Pippa Orpen, Thandiwe Knutson and Lesley Foster. You have been the driving force behind the success of our organisation and we can never thank you enough.

To our fellow trustees on the Wildlife ACT Fund Trust - David Ryan, Di Botha, Nicole Copley and Scott Christensen, our sincere gratitude and appreciation for taking this journey with us. Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for offering your unique abilities and experience to shape and steer the Trust as we tackle the next decade. We are fortunate to have a good friend and long-time supporter, Mark Gerrard, take the helm as Wildlife ACT Fund's new MD. We are excited to have Mark lead us as we forge forward!

Chris Kelly, Johan Maree and Simon Morgan

...2020



A leopard is lying down in a sandy, natural habitat. The leopard's body is covered in distinctive rosette patterns, and its head is turned slightly to the right. The background is a soft-focus view of the same environment, showing more of the leopard's body and the surrounding terrain.

Our mission

Through strategic partnerships, sustainable funding models and developing technology:

1.

Implement strategic monitoring and research to inform and enable effective conservation management of wildlife

2.

Understand the needs of surrounding communities, and develop innovative programs to facilitate socio-economic advancement

3.

Use Africa-centric, people orientated models to drive wild area expansion

Photos opposite from top left clockwise: Learners from the Community Conservation Programme; Sedated Black Rhino, Diceros bicornis, being maneuvered onto its side after a dehorning; Sedated lioness, Panthera leo, during a relocation operation; Community Conservation Manager, Zama Ncube; Emergency response Manager, PJ Roberts, changing the batteries on a camera trap; Wildlife ACT founder and trustee, Dr Simon Morgan at a rhino capture operation.



Our focus

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Photos opposite from top left clockwise: Tracking collar being fitted to an African Wild Dog; A black Rhino being led out of a crate during a relocation operation; Pippa Orpen and Thandi Knutson assisting during an Elephant collaring; Zama Ncube with the Somkhanda Game Reserve Rhino Monitoring team; Michelle Randelhoff assisting with a African Wild Dog relocation; A tracking collar being fitted to a Lion.

African Wild Dog



African Wild Dog facts

Scientific name: *Lycaon pictus*.

Common name: African Wild Dog or African Painted Dog.

Occurs: Originally in Sub-Saharan Africa. Today occurs in only six African countries.

Status: Endangered.

Number: 3000 – 5000 individuals; 550 individuals in South Africa.

Population trend: Increasing in South Africa. Decreasing across the species' total range.

Background

African Wild Dog - or African Painted Dog – were once found in great numbers throughout most of Sub-Saharan Africa. This species occurs in packs of between 6 and 30 individuals dominated by an Alpha pair – usually the only pair to reproduce. The pack is tightly associated, hunting cooperatively, supporting the Alpha pair in rearing pups, and demonstrating behaviours consistent with bonding and affection. Wild Dogs are renowned for their tenacity and adaptability.

Today a mere 3,000 to 5,000 individuals are found on the continent and they have become Southern Africa's most endangered carnivore. In the late 1900's, the largest and only viable population of Wild Dogs in South Africa resided in the Kruger National Park. Only a handful of small isolated packs existed throughout the rest of South Africa but these had little to no conservation value.

Following a workshop in 1997 attended by provincial authorities, scientists, conservationists and African Wild Dog experts, the South African “Managed Metapopulation and Range Expansion Project of Wild Dogs” was established, and a strategy devised to create a second viable population of Wild Dogs outside of Kruger National Park by increasing the population size, distribution range and connectivity of these previously fragmented populations.

Threats to the species

Space

To increase numbers, we need to continue to identify and secure suitable habitat for Wild Dogs. This also means incentivising landowners to accept and commit to the conservation of this species.

Disease

Wild Dog biology dictates that when youngsters reach maturity, single-sexed groups disperse and roam vast areas outside of protected areas in search of mates, which can result in contact with domestic dogs that carry diseases like Rabies and Distemper - both lethal to Painted Dogs unless detected and treated early. Wild Dogs are also vulnerable to infection from contact with poachers' dogs within protected areas.

Persecution

Wild Dogs roaming outside of protected areas are vulnerable to direct persecution from landowners who perceive them as a threat to livestock.

Poaching

The hunting strategy of Wild Dogs sees them pursuing prey along well-traversed game paths – the same paths used by poachers to set wire snares targeting bush meat. Wild Dogs are often unintended bycatch in these snares, and it is not uncommon for more than one member of a pack to be ensnared. One snaring event can have devastating consequences for an entire pack.

What we do

To help achieve the goals of South Africa's Wild Dog and Cheetah Biodiversity Management Plan and the Wild Dog Managed Metapopulation Strategy and Action Plan and Range Expansion Project, a specialist Wild Dog Advisory Group of South Africa (WAG-SA) was formed to monitor, implement and advise on the management of African Wild Dogs in South Africa. Shortly after, to further support this, the KwaZulu-Natal Wild Dog Advisory Group (KZN-WAG) was formed.

Working closely with partners such as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), Wildlife ACT is a key member of both WAG-SA and KZN-WAG.

On the ground, we work tirelessly to provide high-quality daily monitoring of African Wild Dogs across KwaZulu-Natal, emergency response, capture and relocation assistance and community education and awareness.

"It's immensely rewarding and a great source of pride knowing that the countless hours and invaluable support we have provided through relocations, emergency response, education and the efficient monitoring has allowed Wildlife ACT to be a key contributor to African Wild Dog conservation. We have an incredibly dedicated team who are often the unsung heroes; we thank them for their passion, commitment, thousands of early mornings and very long days in the field. They are the backbone of our success story." Chris Kelly

Photo: Chris Kelly and team loading African Wild Dogs, destination Tswalu Game Reserve.



Our plan of action

Monitoring is key

Management of African Wild Dogs can only be effective when informed by consistent, optimal monitoring, supported by comprehensive data collection and analysis. We aim to provide funded monitoring of every pack in KZN, resulting in detailed data to inform appropriate management of the species. Real-time monitoring within protected areas also allows for rapid reaction when African Wild Dogs are in threatening situations, such as in snaring events.

Why are collaring and monitoring important?

Wildlife monitoring is the foundation for proactive and adaptive management of animal populations and their habitats, providing important insights for sustaining wildlife parks. Any protected area ecosystem has a fluctuating capacity for different types of animals.

Data on animal numbers, behaviour, and health inform an analysis of the conditions in an ecosystem and of the opportunities and threats faced by any one species and its habitat so that conservation managers can act accordingly. Wildlife ACT's work starts deep in the bush where animals and nature can at once define, dictate, frustrate and reward the efforts of conservationists.

Develop and deploy field-tested technology

Key to highly effective real-time monitoring is the use of tracking collars.

To effectively monitor and manage African Wild Dogs, every pack needs to be fitted with at least 2 tracking collars.

We apply our monitoring experience to the development and manufacture of GPS and VHF collars and, where necessary, anti-snare collars. With advanced technology supporting boundaries in protected areas and more proficient capture techniques, we will sustain our successes in adaptive management.

Support for adaptive management

We, along with our partners, make available the relevant data collected through our monitoring efforts to be used for research projects to increase our understanding and knowledge of African Wild Dogs and inform the existing adaptive management approach. Wildlife ACT will continue to provide expertise on the ground for safe relocations, collaring operations, emergency response procedures, and the implementation of population management tools.

"Through the collaborative efforts of conservation authorities, NGO's, researchers and private landowners in South Africa, African Wild Dog numbers have increased in the past twenty years. We are now a source population for our neighbouring countries".

PJ Roberts, Wildlife ACT Emergency Response Manager

Emergency response

As first responders to dogs in emergency situations outside of protected areas, we will increase the capability of our Wild Dog Response Team through additional funding and resources to support the specialised skills required, as well as the mobilisation of the teams.

Spread information and enhance awareness

Innovating channels to share knowledge with all stakeholders, including farmers and communities who live alongside protected areas, the conflicts of conservation and human progress could be beneficially resolved. Dissemination of knowledge to the wider public will enhance empathy and increase support for the conservation of African Wild Dogs.

Challenges and opportunities

Securing land

As the human population grows, and with it, the demand for resources, conservation areas are placed under increasing pressure and the availability of new land for conservation declines. Safe corridors for dispersing African Wild Dogs become more scarce. Wildlife ACT is committed to working with landowners and communities to negotiate safe passage for dispersers and securing new ranges.

Altering perceptions

African Wild Dogs are largely misunderstood, perceived as indiscriminate hunters, vermin favouring livestock, difficult to contain within protected areas, and of low conservation or tourism value. We welcome the opportunity to alter the dialect around this keystone species.

Management intensive species

African Wild Dogs require intensive management, which must be adequately resourced. Wildlife ACT recognises the value of this apex predator in healthy functioning ecosystems and is rising to the challenge of securing the necessary resources to support the conservation of the species.

Photo: Dr Simon Morgan, helping with the relocation of African Wild Dogs at Thanda Private Game Reserve.



How We are Succeeding

KwaZulu-Natal has been the primary contributor to the growth of the wider South African Wild Dog population. The number of packs within KwaZulu-Natal has increased from 5 packs in 2006 to over 12 packs today. Collaboration remains the key. As a result of our work with partners Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and the Endangered Wildlife Trust in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa, the Range Expansion Project has increased African Wild Dog numbers substantially, and over 1 million hectares of wild space now actively supports African Wild Dog populations. Over the last decade, Wildlife ACT has provided inestimable support to our partners through our expertise and commitment during captures and relocations. Range expansion of this species requires highly specialised relocation operations that call for the collective skills of a diversity of professionals, from pilots to veterinarians. Although each operation is costly and time-consuming, past investments have paid off, making KwaZulu-Natal a stronghold for African Wild Dogs within the Metapopulation. Together with the continued support of our partners and donors, Wildlife ACT intends sustaining the success of our strategy for African Wild Dogs.



Photo: Megan Hudson, scanning for African Wild Dogs, uMkhuze Section, iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Our impact

Over the last 10 years, Wildlife ACT has monitored up to 70% of the metapopulation. Over this period we have helped relocate over 385 individuals, treat over 144 Wild Dogs from snaring and other injuries, and collar over 289 individuals.

Population estimates

Because of the susceptibility of Wild Dog numbers to fluctuate seasonally due to threats like snaring, disease and persecution, as well as due to natural causes, the best functional measure of population success is the number of packs rather than number of individuals.

South Africa's population

All priority and endangered species require management strategies and interventions to ensure protection and population growth.

Wild Dogs are no different and the South African population outside of Kruger NP, also known as the managed-metapopulation, is managed as one unit where natural processes are simulated to ensure numbers and genetics are managed. WAG-SA and the Wild Dog range Expansion Project helps the Wild Dog management strategy by monitoring, implementing and advising on the management of wild dogs in South Africa.

Wild Dog Fact

Well-maintained predator fencing has proven effective in successfully keeping resident Wild Dog packs within our small protected areas. However, it is fairly common for sub-adult Wild Dogs to instinctively disperse from their natal pack to form new packs; this is nature's way of preventing inbreeding. These individuals are usually the ones responsible for breakouts and are known to travel large distances to find new mates. Identifying these specific individuals early, through effective monitoring, is important to allow for proactive management which prevents breakouts and issues surrounding them.

Measuring our impact



63 253
Field hours



289
Monitoring
devices fitted



1 220 414
km driven



385
Relocated



106
Snares removed



27 600
Observations



7 508
Camera trap
sightings

Rhino

A black rhinoceros is shown in profile, facing right, in a savanna landscape. The background features a warm sunset sky with orange and yellow hues, and silhouettes of trees and hills. The rhino is dark and textured, with a prominent horn and smaller bumps on its head.

White rhino facts

Scientific name: *Ceratotherium simum*.

Common name: White Rhinoceros (Southern White Rhino).

Occurs: The Northern White Rhino occurs only in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Southern White Rhino occurs in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Kenya.

Status: Near Threatened - The species is at risk, but is not yet considered vulnerable to extinction in the wild.

Number: 17 000 – 18 000.

Population trend: Increasing (conservation dependent).

Black rhino facts

Scientific name: *Diceros bicornis*.

Common name: Black Rhinoceros.

Occurs: Throughout southern and south-eastern Africa.

Status: Critically Endangered - The species is considered to be at an extremely high risk of becoming extinct in the wild.

Number: 5 500.

Population trend: Increasing.

Background

*The White Rhinoceros **Ceratotherium simum** was brought back from the brink of extinction in the 1960s by the renowned Dr Ian Player and his “Operation Rhino”, which saw game reserves throughout southern Africa repopulated with the species from their remaining stronghold, the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. Today, thanks to these efforts, White Rhinos number approximately 17 000 – 18 000 globally, with more than 90% of the global population occurring in South Africa. The White Rhino is currently classified as near threatened or vulnerable to extinction in the wild.*

Black Rhinoceros populations in Africa declined by approximately 97% from 1960 to 1995 due to poaching. Since 1995 populations have been steadily increasing and Black Rhinos in Africa now number in the region of 5 500; however, the species remains critically endangered, or at extremely high risk of becoming extinct in the wild.

Unfortunately, the past decade has seen a dramatic increase in the poaching of both White and Black Rhinoceros in South Africa, with a high demand for Rhino horn driven by usage in the Eastern hemisphere. Historically usage was based on traditional beliefs in the medicinal properties of Rhino horn to treat numerous ailments, but today the possession and usage of Rhino horn is seen as a status symbol amongst Asia’s elite and demand is growing.

Threats to the species

Poaching

In South Africa poaching remains the single biggest threat to Black and White Rhino, with more than 1000 individuals per year lost between 2013 and 2017. A reduction to below 1000 poaching incidents was recorded between 2017 and 2018, thanks to massive anti-poaching efforts and significant financial investment. Unfortunately, the number of incursions (poaching attempts) has not decreased. KwaZulu-Natal consistently records the highest number of poaching incidents outside of the Kruger National Park.

Habitat availability

White Rhino are bulk grazers and as such, are able to thrive across widespread habitats; however finding new range for the species remains an important consideration. Black Rhino, conversely, are browsers and have very specific habitat requirements. Availability of suitable habitat and expansion of range for Black Rhinos are critical factors in the conservation of this species.

What we do

In Wildlife ACT's early days, our Rhino work was focused on supporting range expansion and monitoring Rhino of key source populations, like those found in uMkhuze Game Reserve and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. With the dramatic surge in poaching in the region, a strategic decision was taken to increase our scope to address the threats to the populations we were working with through education and awareness campaigns, development and deployment of monitoring and anti-poaching technology, supporting security interventions such as dehorning Rhino populations in a number of protected areas, provision of funding for additional veterinary capacity, and practical support of rhino calves orphaned by poaching.

Collaboration is central to our philosophy, and we work in close partnership with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, and Project Rhino - an association of like-minded organisations facilitating Rhino conservation interventions aimed at eliminating Rhino poaching and securing the White and Black Rhino populations of KwaZulu-Natal.

"Being involved in BRREP is always a highlight of my year. It is a true example of a successful partnership between different organisations, and it is a privilege to work alongside such a professional and committed team." Chris Kelly

Photo: Chris Kelly and team prepping a rhino horn for monitoring device.

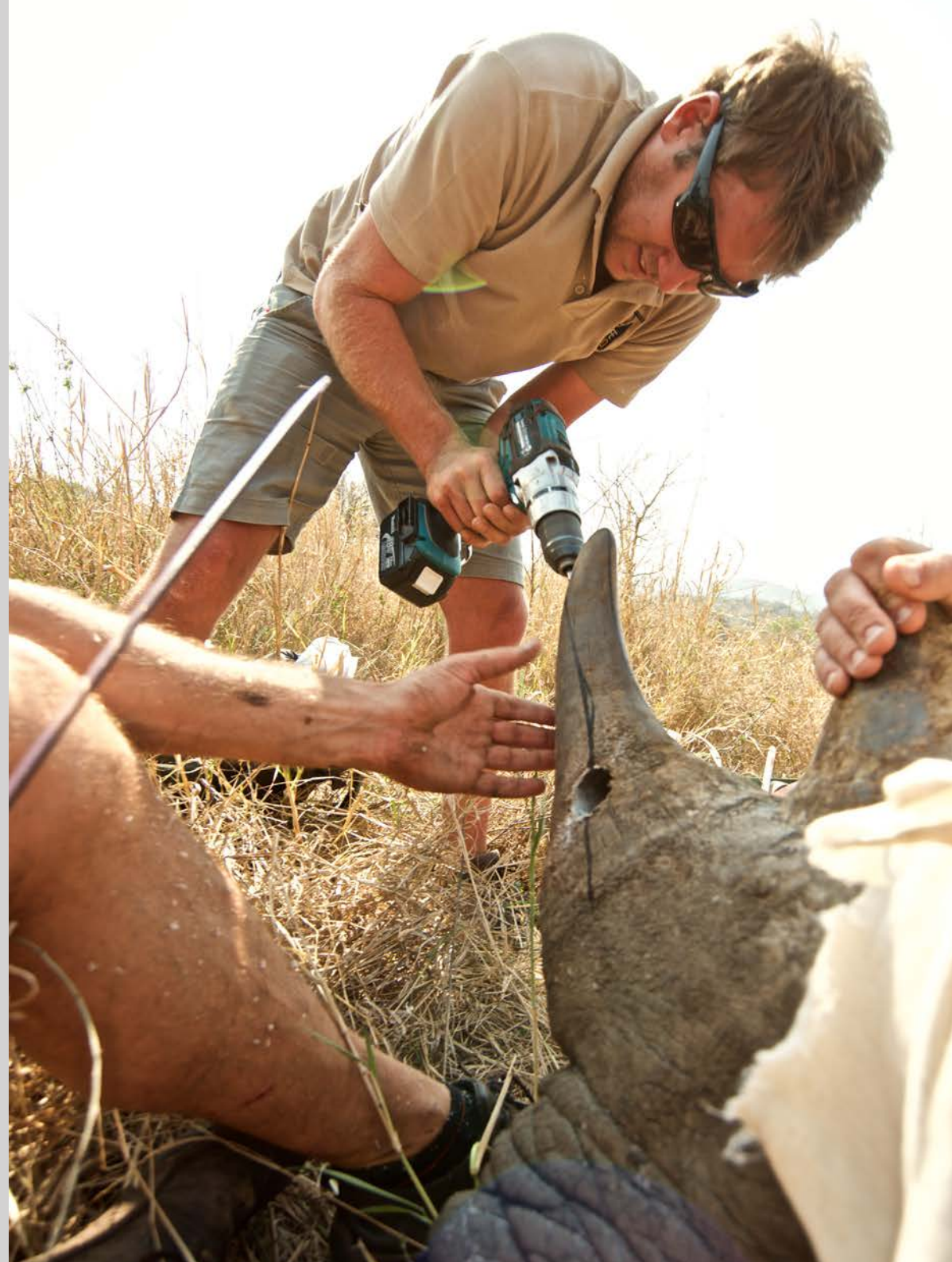




Photo background: Dr Mike Toft and Simon Morgan working on a White Rhino on Somkhanda Game Reserve.

Photo inset: Bronwen Kelly, rhino relocation, uMkhuze section, iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

“Working with Jacques Flamand since the inception of BRREP in 2004, has definitely been a highlight, and being involved in each of the BRREP relocations to date has been incredibly rewarding. We remain committed to working with BRREP as new homes are sought for Black Rhinos, even across the South African borders. We are also proud founding members of Project Rhino KZN, which has allowed for roundtable cooperation between state, private and civil society to jointly tackle macro-level issues that affect all Rhino stakeholders in the province, and initiates anti-poaching strategies that benefit all Rhino, and effectively counter the criminal syndicates driving the poaching of Rhinos.” Simon Morgan

Our plan of action

Develop and deploy appropriate tracking technology

In the past, neck collars were used for tracking and monitoring Rhino but due to the unique physiology of both species these were unsuccessful. Horn-implanted radio-tracking transmitters were then trialled, but the variable and limited size of horns restricted us to only VHF transmitters. Since 2012 we have worked closely with specialist engineers to design, test and successfully deploy Rhino ankle collars that can be adjusted to fit individuals of any size.

The advantages of the ankle collar are the capacity to carry both VHF radio-tracking transmitters as well as GSM or satellite GPS tracking units. A greater battery capacity results in a longer lifespan, reducing the overall costs of the technology. While technological advancements are rapid, these collars are providing invaluable movement and habitat-use data. In some areas, collars are providing real-time data, dramatically improving law enforcement responses to poaching threats. We aim to remain on the cutting edge of technological advancement relating to rhino monitoring and security.

Support of range expansion

Since the inception of the WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) in 2004, Chris and Simon have worked closely in the field with Dr Jacques Flamand as technical advisers supporting this incredibly successful endeavour, which aims to increase the number of populations and range of the Black Rhino. We will continue closely with WWF's Black Rhino Range Expansion Project annually, helping to identify source populations, assisting with capture and relocation operations, and providing post-release monitoring and training at new release sites, ensuring a successful release and safe integration. By monitoring these populations, we can help to not only ensure their safety, but also increase the success of future reintroductions.

Photo: Simon Morgan with 1 year old orphaned rhino.



Saving orphaned Rhino

Many Rhino poaching incidents result in young calves being orphaned and left to fend for themselves. Local authorities are committed to saving and rehabilitating these orphans in a remarkable effort to minimise the collateral damage of the poaching crisis. Wildlife ACT has funded security equipment for a rhino orphanage in KwaZulu-Natal and will continue to provide support in the form of much-needed specialised feed for these young Rhino.

Veterinary support

In collaboration with BRREP and the WILDTRUST, we help to cover the salary of a full-time veterinarian for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to address the dramatic increase in veterinary workload brought about by Rhino poaching. We will endeavour to sustain our support for veterinary expertise to deal with the poaching burden.

Awareness and education campaigns

We will continue to drive and actively participate in campaigns that educate, fundraise and influence behaviour. From our Wildlife ACTIVE Kids Camps, which aim to expose children from local communities adjacent to protected areas to conservation issues, and nurture empathy and understanding; to supporting Scott Irving's incredible effort around Ride for Rhinos which creates much-needed awareness around the plight of rhino, while bringing in much-needed funds through teams of bike riders competing in events in South Africa; participating in Trustee David Ryan's development of Challenge4ACause through his company Rhino Africa, a challenging multi-day mountain biking adventure race that harnesses the power of global support; and sponsoring community sports days around protected areas in Zululand - driving a strong Rhino conservation message. We will continue to seek out new audiences and strategies to highlight the plight of Rhinos and garner wider support.

Share our expertise and resources

We will continue to work actively within Project Rhino to provide support to all members where we can. This support is always guided by the conservation strategy adopted by the members, and includes supporting the Zululand Antipoaching Wing (ZAP-Wing), the highly successful K9 Unit, equipping field ranger teams on the ground, as well as allocating resources to smaller parks to dehorn and secure their Rhino populations.

Photo above: A child completes their work book as part of the Wildlife ACTIVE kids camp on Somkhanda Game Reserve.

Photo below: A sedated White Rhino at Manyoni Private Game Reserve.



Challenges and Opportunities

Demand for Rhino horn

Fuelled by a growing demand for Rhino horn in primarily China and Vietnam and driven by international criminal syndicates, Rhinos around the world are under threat of extinction. During 2012, both the Western Black Rhino and the Vietnamese population of Javan Rhino were declared extinct, and the last remaining male Northern White Rhino recently died. As a refuge for significant wild populations of Black and White Rhino, South Africa is bearing the brunt of one of the worst global wildlife conservation crises of the past 100 years. Ultimately, the demand for Rhino horn will need to be expunged to ensure survival of the species. We remain optimistic that with a global collective effort demand will be reduced. Until then, we will continue to drive further support for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to assist them with their efforts to curb the poaching in their parks - specifically Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park which is the epicenter of Rhino poaching in the region.

Poverty

In Africa, complex social issues like poverty and unemployment create opportunities for criminal syndicates to exploit local people and entice them to become involved in Rhino poaching. For many poor communities, the financial remuneration offered by poaching kingpins is worth the extreme risk presented by entering a heavily protected game reserve to kill a Rhino. We recognise the need to address poverty and are committed to working with protected areas to create viable conservation-based economies that pay communities to protect South Africa's natural heritage.

Disinvestment

More than half of South Africa's White Rhino and up to 35% of the region's Black Rhino are owned and protected by private landowners. The heavy risk and costs associated with Rhino poaching are proving a deterrent to private landowners, and many are choosing to disinvest and move away from owning Rhinos.

Photo: Michelle Randlehoff (née Swemmer) documenting a tranquilised Black Rhino.





Photo: Taryn Gilroy at a rhino dehorning in the Somkhanda Game Reserve.

How We are Succeeding

The range for Black Rhino has increased by 22,000 hectares in South Africa, with a 49% increase in their range in KwaZulu-Natal alone. In 2019, WWF's Black Rhino Range Expansion Project established its 12th population, a successful relocation that saw 38 critically endangered Black Rhino moved to a new home, made possible through a collaboration with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and support from Wildlife ACT. This incredibly successful endeavour has seen the translocation of over 161 critically endangered Black Rhino since the project's inception.

Wildlife ACT in partnership with Pitch Black, WWF and Woolworths carried out a resoundingly successful fundraising and awareness campaign through the sale of reusable shopping bags carrying pertinent messaging. Nearly R2 million was raised for Rhino conservation through the sale of more than 200,000 of these bags over their 4 year release period.

In 2017, Wildlife ACT co-founder Chris Kelly was recognised by a panel of his peers at the Rhino Conservation Awards with a Special Award for Endangered Species Conservation for his contributions to Rhino conservation.

A "Smart" Park fence!

As part of the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife 'Smart Park' strategy to use technology as a force multiplier against Rhino poachers, Wildlife ACT is working with Park management, international donors and fence detection technology specialists to pilot a Smart Fence in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. The pilot phase of this project has been erected on two different stretches of the boundary of the Park, which is home to an incredibly important population of both White and Black Rhino. The goal is to construct a fence that appears impossible to penetrate, climb over or tunnel under and, should an attempt occur, the fence is capable of immediately transmitting the location of the attempted incursion to a control centre. A rapid response team can then mobilise without delay, responding to poaching groups before a Rhino is killed. This places Ezemvelo anti-poaching staff one step ahead of Rhino poachers, while helping to protect the human capital at the frontlines of the battle against Rhino poaching. Wildlife ACT is committed to the continued support of this proactive approach. Special thanks to Jon Mellberg who has been behind this vision from the start. Thanks to the support of our partners, Global Conservation and the Wildlife Conservation Network, our programme team are already working with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to scale the length of the pilot phase to 30km.

Measuring our impact



18 352
Field hours



258
Monitoring devices fitted



141 045
km driven



161
Relocated



120
Dehorned



6 527
Observations



25 351
Camera trap sightings

Vultures

Vulture facts

Scientific name: *Gypaetus barbatus*

Common name: Bearded Vulture

Status: Critically endangered

Population trend: Decreasing

Scientific name: *Gyps africanus*

Common name: White-backed Vulture

Status: Critically endangered

Population trend: Decreasing

Scientific name: *Trigonoceps occipitalis*

Common name: White-headed Vulture

Status: Critically endangered

Population trend: Decreasing

Scientific name: *Gyps coprotheres*

Common name: Cape Vulture

Status: Endangered

Population trend: Decreasing

Scientific name: *Torgos tracheliotos*

Common name: Lappet-faced Vulture

Status: Endangered

Population trend: Decreasing

Scientific name: *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Common name: Hooded Vulture

Status: Critically endangered

Population trend: Decreasing



Background

Vulture numbers across Africa are in rapid decline due to loss of breeding habitat, persecution, accidental poisoning, and deliberate poisoning for use in traditional medicine. In most of their range numbers have decreased by up to 70%. Of the 6 true Vulture species that are resident in South Africa, all are classified as either critically endangered or endangered.

Threats to the species

Pesticide poisoning

In KwaZulu-Natal, both accidental and deliberate poisoning are major threats to Vultures, with poachers often the culprits. Poachers use deliberate poisoning of carcasses to target Vultures specifically, selling dead birds for traditional belief-based use. The pesticides used are extremely toxic and usually result in death within hours, sometimes even minutes. However some birds fly away after feeding or drinking and die later some distance from the poisoning source. Recent mass poisoning events across Africa have seen dozens and up to 500 birds killed in a single incident.

Habitat transformation

As is the case with all threatened and endangered species, suitable habitats for vultures with adequate food supply and appropriate breeding conditions are becoming more scarce due to fragmentation of natural areas and transformation of land from natural to agricultural or urban landscapes.

Lead and pharmaceutical poisoning

All animals, particularly scavengers such as Vultures, are at risk of accidental poisoning from the ingestion of fragments of lead-based ammunition when they feed on domestic or wild animals killed with lead bullets. When ingested, lead affects the nervous and reproductive systems, causing loss of balance, gasping, tremors and impaired flight. Emaciation follows and death can occur within 2 to 3 weeks. The use of the drug diclofenac in domestic livestock has been another significant cause of accidental death in Vultures, when well-meaning farmers set out the carcasses of livestock recently treated with the drug for Vulture consumption. The drug is fatal to Vultures at low doses, causing kidney failure within hours.

Belief-based use of vulture parts

Deliberate killing of Vultures for illegal trade and belief-based use (traditional medicinal use) is one the main drivers of intentional poisoning incidents.

Electrocution

Owing to their large size, Vultures along with other raptors are vulnerable to electrocution when they collide with electrical infrastructure, or perch on unmodified electrical pylons. Collaboration between conservation agencies and South Africa's electricity suppliers has seen the majority of infrastructure made "Vulture-safe" with deterrents or insulating structures. However, incidents do still occur and impact negatively on already severely reduced populations.

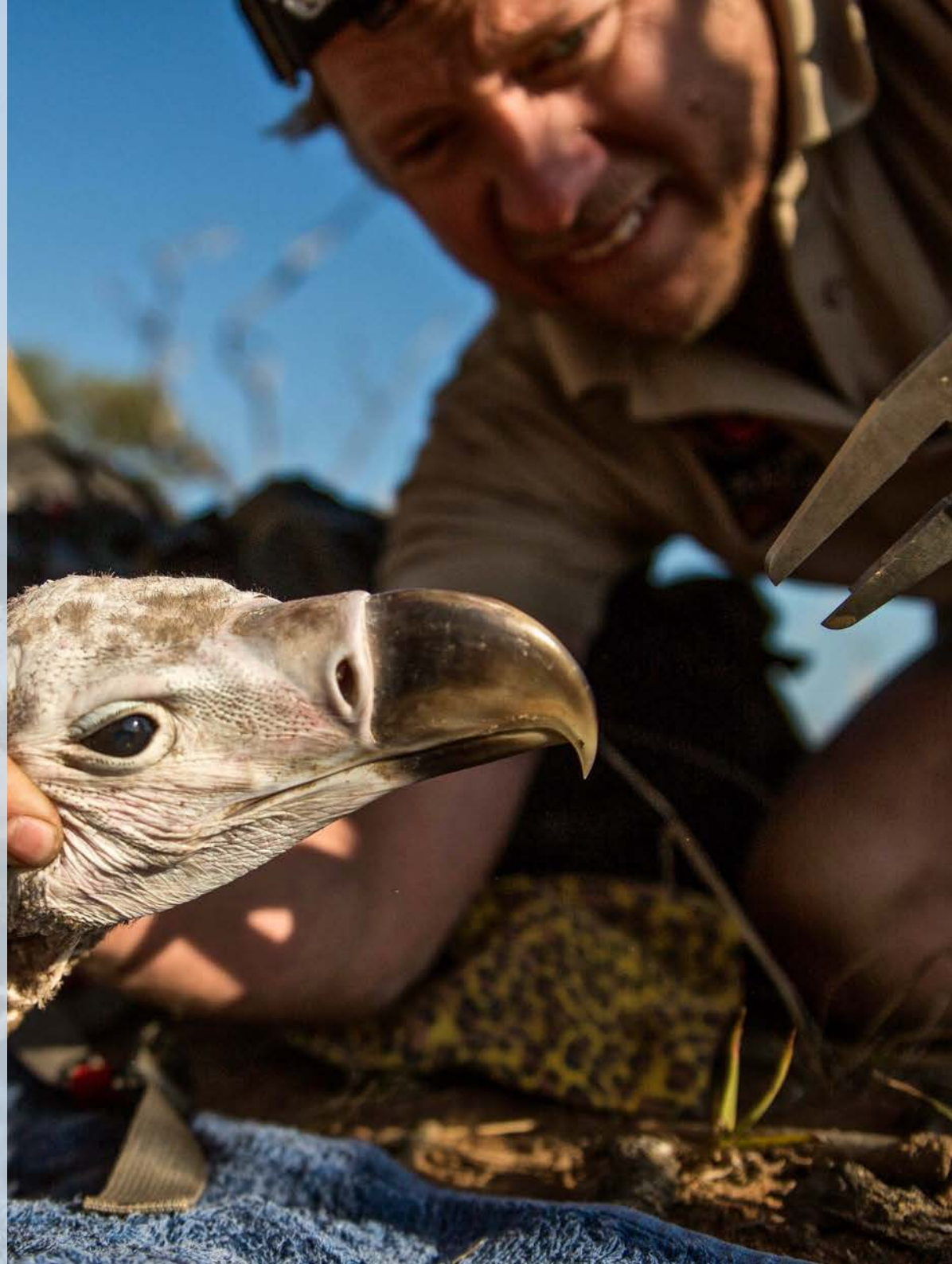
What we do

Wildlife ACT works closely with the provincial conservation authority, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, to help protect Vultures across KwaZulu-Natal. We are committed and active members of collaborations including Project Vulture KZN, the Zululand Vulture Project and the Bearded Vulture Task Force.

We are guided by the Multi-Species Action Plan to conserve African-Eurasian Vultures (Vulture MsAP) and our efforts contribute toward the National Vulture Conservation Strategy. Wildlife ACT's Vulture Conservation Programme strategy is to first stabilise and then increase the breeding population of Vultures in KZN, and South Africa.

Our work is centered around better understanding these birds' fine-scale habits through the development and implementation of tracking technologies; identifying and swiftly responding to poisoning events with qualified personnel; reducing the persecution of Vultures and the demand for vulture parts in the traditional medicine sector; and capacitating more personnel to help support Vulture conservation in the region.

Photo: Chris Kelly obtaining various measurements from a vulture during capture. Taking measurements of each individual is valuable for evaluating inter and intraspecies variation in vultures.



Our plan of action

First responders

Wildlife ACT's Emergency Response team will continue to respond immediately to poisoning incidents, neutralising the scene and, in some cases, saving individuals found still alive. Immediate treatment is administered in the field before victims are quickly transported to our Vulture rehabilitation partner, Raptor Rescue.

Monitoring on the fly

In order to help us better understand Vulture survival rates, movement patterns, and other trends and habits, uniquely numbered wing tags are used to mark individual Vultures, and satellite tracking backpacks are fitted to fledglings before they leave the nest. We also monitor poisoning survivors, which helps us to determine survival success of these compromised individuals. By further developing and utilising technology in the field, we will continue to encourage research and help inform effective adaptive conservation management.

Combatting poisoning

We will continue to help identify and respond swiftly to Vulture poisoning events with qualified personnel, and provide support to poisoning training programmes. This, together with further engagement with protected area management teams, will capacitate more personnel to help support Vulture conservation both in the province and nationally.

Breeding populations determine success

Breeding success is the measure by which we gauge the health of Vulture populations. Conservation of individuals only becomes meaningful if they are able to contribute to the future growth and survival of their species. We will continue to monitor Vulture nesting sites and record breeding success, and work closely with protected area managers to further secure breeding populations of Vultures.

Converting data into knowledge

Through our monitoring of Vulture movements and behaviour, we will continue to identify trends and fine-scale habits which are otherwise difficult to determine in an aerial, free-ranging species, to help inform the allocation of conservation management resources. We will continue to ensure valuable research objectives are met to ensure implementation of informed adaptive conservation management.

Reducing demand for Vulture parts

We will continue to work actively within local communities to raise awareness, educate and empower, encourage empathy and reduce the persecution of Vultures for belief-based purposes.



"I still vividly recall the first Vulture tagging session during the conception of the Zululand Vulture Project in 2004. It was a hot and humid Zululand morning, and a fledgling African White-Backed Vulture regurgitated on Project Coordinator James Wakelin's neck and shoulder as he lifted it out of its nest.

We soon realised why this response was an effective defense mechanism to deter potential predators! We all found ourselves retching for hours thereafter. Later that day James ended up in hospital receiving treatment for a serious bacterial infection, having inadvertently ingested a mere drop of the vulture's vomit.

This was to us a very real reminder of the immensely valuable capabilities of these birds, who dispose of harmful bacteria and diseases that would otherwise spread rampantly across our landscape via rotting flesh. It is unfortunate that most people underestimate the role Vultures play and how devastating it would be to us if they were to be permanently removed from the environment." Chris Kelly

Photo: Mark Gerrard with White-backed Vulture ready for tagging and the fitment of a satellite GPS backpack. Manyoni Game Reserve.



Photo left: Fitting a patagial wing tag.



Photo center: Attaching a satellite GPS backpack.



Photo right: Chris Kelly releasing a Vulture after tagging and attaching a satellite GPS backpack.

Challenges and Opportunities

The sky is no limit!

Vultures have enormous ranges and spend only limited periods on the ground, and therefore cannot be contained or managed by conventional protected area management approaches. This presents a somewhat unique challenge for monitoring and protecting them. Conservation of Vultures requires cooperation between state, private and communal entities, working across provincial, national and continental borders. Wildlife ACT welcomes large-scale collaboration and is proud of the success we have had with the novel tracking technologies used to monitor these remarkable birds.

Specific breeding requirements

Vultures choose to breed only within well-established protected areas in KwaZulu-Natal and demonstrate strong preferences when selecting trees for nesting. As a result, the breeding populations of the region's Vultures are restricted to small, fragmented parcels of land. Another unique dynamic of Vulture conservation is the relationship between the presence and number of suitable nesting trees and the number of Elephants in a protected area, since Elephants may push over nesting trees. We actively encourage the expansion of protected areas and the establishment of corridors between protected areas, and we work closely with protected areas that exhibit sound conservation principles.

Growing demand

As the human population grows, there is a corresponding growth in demand for Vulture parts in local markets. The consumption of these parts, believed to carry and impart an array of magical properties to the consumer, is driven by traditional belief-based systems. There has been a corresponding increase in the incidence of mass Vulture poisoning events. Wildlife ACT works closely with local communities and end-users to share information and raise awareness about the potential effects of a loss of Vultures from our ecosystems.

Photo: Chris Kelly monitoring the status of a vulture nest.

Villainisation of Vultures

Today Vultures are much-maligned in popular culture, depicted as dirty, threatening, sinister, and unworthy of sympathy and support. Wildlife ACT recognises the need to raise awareness about vultures, their sophisticated behavioural ecology, their plight, and the need to conserve these remarkable birds.



How We are Succeeding

During the early phases of the Zululand Vulture Project, we set out to determine the detailed movement patterns and habits of the Vulture species and populations breeding in the province. To do this, 71 GPS backpacks were deployed, over 164 patagial tags or rings were fitted, and we carried out 36 nest surveys to date. This monitoring and information-gathering resulted in extremely valuable findings and has already answered several research questions – though there is still much for us to learn.

Identifying poisoning events and responding quickly to these to mitigate mass mortalities is key, and until now we have carried out over 80 emergency responses, rescued 24 Vultures, and saved hundreds more through the decontamination of poisoning sites.

Vulture Fact

Unlike many other species, Vultures perform a direct service to mankind. Scavenging across vast distances, Vultures play a vital role in maintaining functional ecosystems by disposing of carcasses and organic waste from the environment, and in this way help to limit disease outbreaks which would otherwise negatively impact humans and wildlife across the landscape.

Measuring our impact



19 742
Field hours



71
GPS backpacks fitted



164
Vultures tagged



36
Nest surveys



24 Rescued
& treated



218 915
km driven



3 666
Observations



9 049
Camera trap sightings

Cheetah

Cheetah facts

Scientific name: Acinonyx jubatus

Common name: Cheetah

Occurs: Throughout Africa

Status: Vulnerable

Number: 7 000

Population trend: Decreasing

Background

Cheetah are classified as Vulnerable in South Africa, with only an estimated seven thousand adults remaining in the wild, and fewer than 1 000 left in South Africa. Over the past 20 years, the global Cheetah population has decreased by 30% and Cheetah have disappeared from more than 75% of their historic range in Africa. The threats influencing their decline include habitat loss, direct persecution by humans, competition with other predators and poor genetic diversity.

Threats to the species

Habitat loss

Habitat conversion from wild or natural spaces to farmland or communal villages and the replacement of natural prey species with livestock are major threats to Cheetah, creating a secondary effect of conflict with landowners.

Persecution

Cheetah are often killed or persecuted outside of protected areas because they are a perceived threat to livestock, despite the fact that they generally cause relatively little damage. Cheetah are also vulnerable to being caught in poachers' snares set for other species.

Competition

Inter-specific competition with other large predators in protected areas, especially Lions, is a determinant of Cheetah population success. Lions and Cheetah are known to compete for key resources like habitat and prey, and high Cheetah mortality rates are associated with high Lion numbers and restricted availability of resources (such as in fenced protected areas). For this reason, monitoring of both Cheetah and other large predators is critical to effective Cheetah conservation.

Low cub survival rates

Depending on the type of habitat and vegetation cover, cub mortality can be as high as 95%, usually as a result of other large predators and birds of prey. In South Africa, only between half to a third of cubs born reach independence.

What we do

The primary aim of Wildlife ACT's Cheetah conservation project is to increase and maintain Cheetah numbers in South Africa through sound management informed by monitoring and research, and through safe relocations and field interventions. Over the past decade, Wildlife ACT has helped to grow and protect the South African Cheetah population through our long-term monitoring projects, development and provision of effective and reliable tracking collars, and support of reintroductions of the species to augment existing populations. We are guided by the National Cheetah and Wild Dog Biodiversity Management Plan.

"I'm proud of Wildlife ACT's contribution to Cheetah conservation in the last 10 years, especially through our valuable commitment to the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife parks including the historic Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. A special thank you must be extended to Andrew Bone and the Forever Wild Foundation for their continued support of our Cheetah work over the last decade." Jo Maree

Photo above: Collared cheetah being relocated





Cheetah Fact

Although cheetah currently face risk of extinction, this is not the first time they have been on the brink of extinction. They have undergone two "genetic bottleneck" events in their history as a species. What this means is that their numbers were reduced to such a point that inbreeding took place. As a consequence, their genetic diversity is low. This puts the species at even further risk, as they are less able to adapt to the changing environment. Because of this lack of genetic diversity, managing the cheetah population in South Africa proactively through relocations and intensive monitoring is pivotal.

Our plan of action

Adaptive management based on data

To further support the national and provincial strategies, Wildlife ACT plans to sustain and improve ongoing monitoring of Cheetah across KwaZulu-Natal, ensuring robust data collection in the field to allow for accurate reporting to protected area managers. We further support relevant research projects that contribute to adaptive Cheetah conservation management and help increase our understanding of the species as a whole.

Fostering partnerships

We continue to bring together partners who support Cheetah conservation to ensure the ongoing sustainability of efforts in KwaZulu-Natal. These partners are key to our ability to carry out safe relocations, collaring operations and emergency response procedures, as well as our education and awareness campaigns.

Technology to save species

As is the case with other species, Wildlife ACT is constantly working to develop, improve and implement technologies that will enhance our core monitoring work and enable our responsiveness to threats and emergency situations. We help ensure that individual Cheetah are fitted with GPS, VHF and when necessary, anti-snare collars.

Challenges and Opportunities

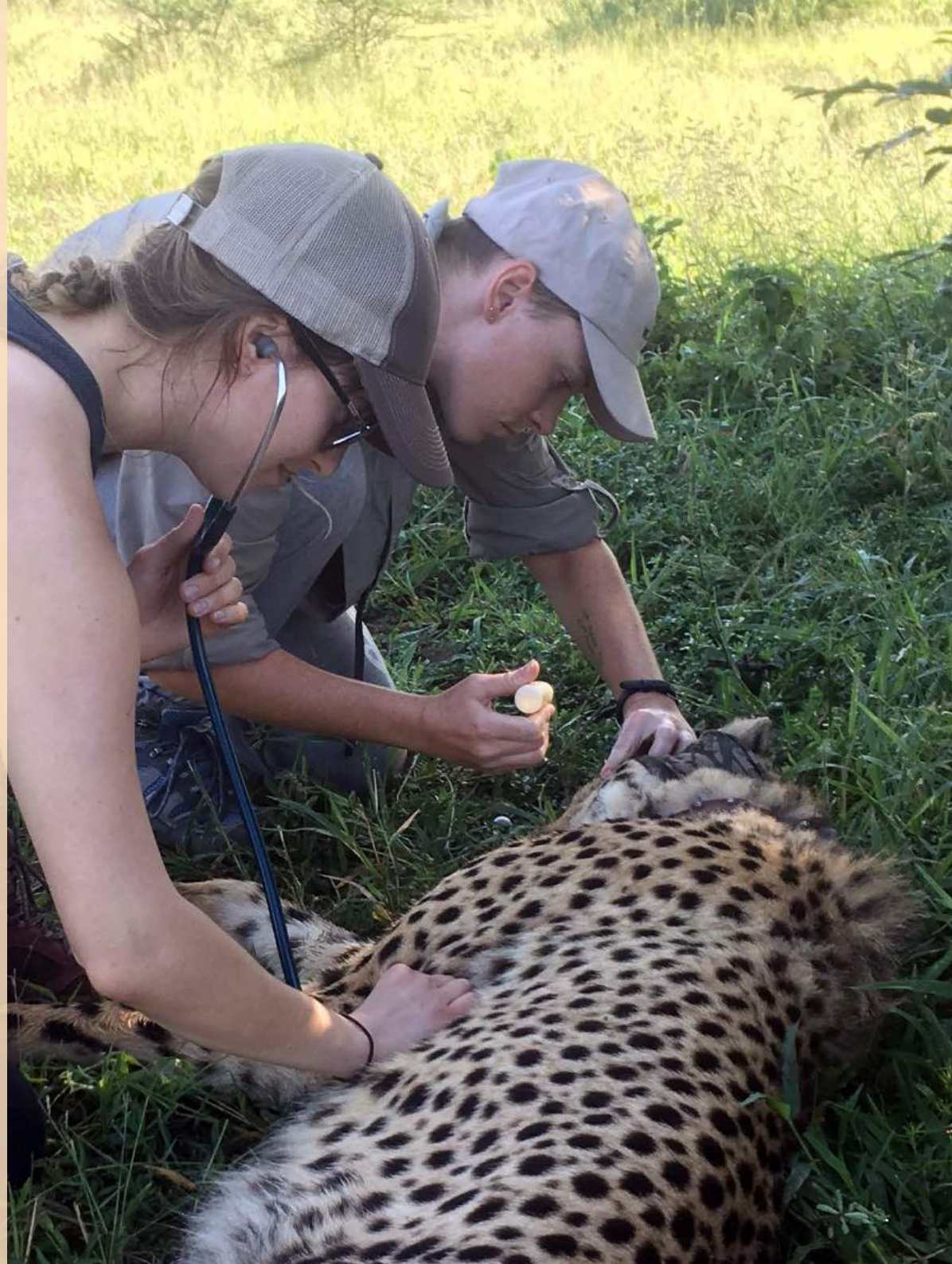
Lack of genetic diversity

Historically, Cheetah experienced such a profound decline in numbers in southern Africa that the population experienced what is referred to as a genetic “bottleneck”: the number of individuals was reduced to just a few individuals, dramatically limiting the genetic diversity of the species. Today all living Cheetah are related to some degree. A lack of genetic diversity limits a population’s ability to adapt to environmental changes and negatively impacts on resilience to threats such as disease. For this reason, Cheetah are particularly vulnerable to the effects of global climate change and habitat fragmentation. With such high stakes, Wildlife ACT is committed to sustaining and growing its Cheetah conservation project.

Increasing Cheetah Range

There is an ongoing need to promote range expansion for Cheetah with the aim of growing numbers and securing the survival of the species. Because of the Cheetah’s limited ability to adapt it is imperative that the species is distributed as widely as possible across a range of habitat types as an insurance policy against threats such as disease outbreaks and drought. We work closely with partners, particularly the Endangered Wildlife Trust and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, to support the Cheetah Metapopulation Project. We help facilitate safe and successful translocations of Cheetah to new spaces, engage in active education and awareness programs to promote Cheetah conservation and range expansion, and reduce conflict with humans.

Photo: A Wildlife ACT volunteer checks the heart rate of a sedated Cheetah under the supervision of a wildlife vet on Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.



How We are Succeeding

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park is home to one of the largest populations of Cheetah in a protected area in South Africa. Historically the Park supported the largest Cheetah population in KwaZulu-Natal, making it an extremely important stronghold for this species; however recent studies revealed that numbers were sharply declining, the population was no longer sustainable, and urgent intervention was required.

During the period June 2017 to June 2018, Wildlife ACT worked closely with partners to ensure the successful relocation of 11 new Cheetah to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, boosting Cheetah numbers, introducing new genetic material to the Park, and restoring the viability of this important population.

Cheetah Fact

Cheetah use scent-marking trees or latrine sites as communal “signposts” and for territorial marking. Our monitoring teams locate and place camera traps at these sites to collect valuable data without any disturbance to our target species.

Measuring our impact



25 902
Field hours



71
Monitoring
devices fitted



292 209
km driven



42
Relocated



8 875
Observations



2 470
Camera trap
sightings



18
Snares removed

Leopard

A leopard with a distinctive spotted coat is perched on a thick, weathered tree branch. The leopard is facing right, looking off into the distance. The background is a soft-focus savanna landscape with dry, golden-brown trees and foliage under a warm, hazy sky.

Leopard facts

Scientific name: Panthera pardus

Common name: Leopard

Occurs: Throughout Africa

Status: Vulnerable

Number: Unknown

Population trend: Decreasing

Background

Despite its adaptability and impressive size, the Leopard is amongst the most persecuted large cats in the world. Leopard have disappeared from at least 49 percent of their historic range in Africa and have been classified as extinct in six countries.

Major threats to Leopard are habitat fragmentation, loss of natural prey, and persecution by humans, resulting in an overall decreasing population trend.

Threats to the species

Human-Leopard Conflict

Throughout Africa, the major threats to Leopard are habitat conversion and intense persecution, most often as a result of real and perceived livestock losses. Leopard come into conflict with people across their range. A rapidly increasing threat to Leopards is the poisoning of carcasses targeting carnivores, either as a means of predator control or incidentally.

Indiscriminate hunting

South Africa allows the sustainable trophy hunting of Leopards under very particular conditions, however this has been poorly regulated over the years with young or female animals often targeted rather than the requisite mature males. Hunting can disrupt the social structure and spatial dynamics of Leopards and contribute to cub mortalities due to infanticide well beyond the boundaries of hunting areas.

Sought-after skins

In many African cultures and religions, the skins of Leopards and other spotted cats are highly sought after as attire to be worn during ceremonies and rituals. Leopard skins are particularly prized amongst senior officials and royalty, making them a valuable commodity for trade. This demand for skins has resulted in an escalation in Leopard poaching.

What we do

The KwaZulu-Natal Leopard Monitoring Project - a partnership between Wildlife ACT, international big cat conservation organization Panthera, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority - was initiated in 2013 with the aim of accurately tracking Leopard population trends throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal, using camera trapping technology. This provides conservation authorities with essential information to inform and evaluate leopard conservation practices. The Leopard Monitoring Project's report on estimated Leopard population density and trends fulfils both a provincial and national mandate for species protection. Wildlife ACT is a proud partner and contributor in this collaborative, effective, and ongoing project.

Camera traps

An effective tool for monitoring endangered species is to use remotely activated camera traps: portable cameras that are triggered by motion and record high quality images or video footage. Wildlife ACT makes extensive use of this technology to augment our other monitoring techniques for all of the species we monitor, but it is particularly useful for shy, nocturnal or cryptic species that may not otherwise be closely observed, such as Leopard and Black Rhino.



Photos: Images of Leopards captured by camera traps.

Our plan of action

Sustainable surveys

At specifically chosen reserves, the Survey team sets up a minimum of 30 camera-trap stations, each of which has two camera-traps (to capture both the left- and right-hand side spot patterns for positive individual identification). The stations are spaced 2-3 km apart along roads, animal paths, river beds and drainage lines within a 30 km² area – the theoretical home range size for female Leopard in KwaZulu-Natal. Cameras remain active for 45 consecutive days before the survey moves to a different reserve, and our team is able to complete six survey sites per year. Estimates of Leopard population density in any given area are determined using spatial capture-recapture models. Wildlife ACT uses its innovative conservation tourism model to ensure the sustainability of this annual survey, through both funding and the availability of eager participants to lend a hand.

Influencing policy

Wildlife ACT recognises that legislated changes to policy are a key cornerstone to the conservation of Leopard, particularly with reference to the regulation of trophy hunting. By providing scientifically rigorous data to our partners, we will continue to contribute meaningfully to conservation management at the highest levels.

Leopard fact

Leopards are predominantly solitary and territorial, socialising only when mating or amicably interacting with related or known individuals.

Photo: Thandiwe Knutson - Southern Drakensberg, Leopard Survey.



Challenges and Opportunities

Scaling fences

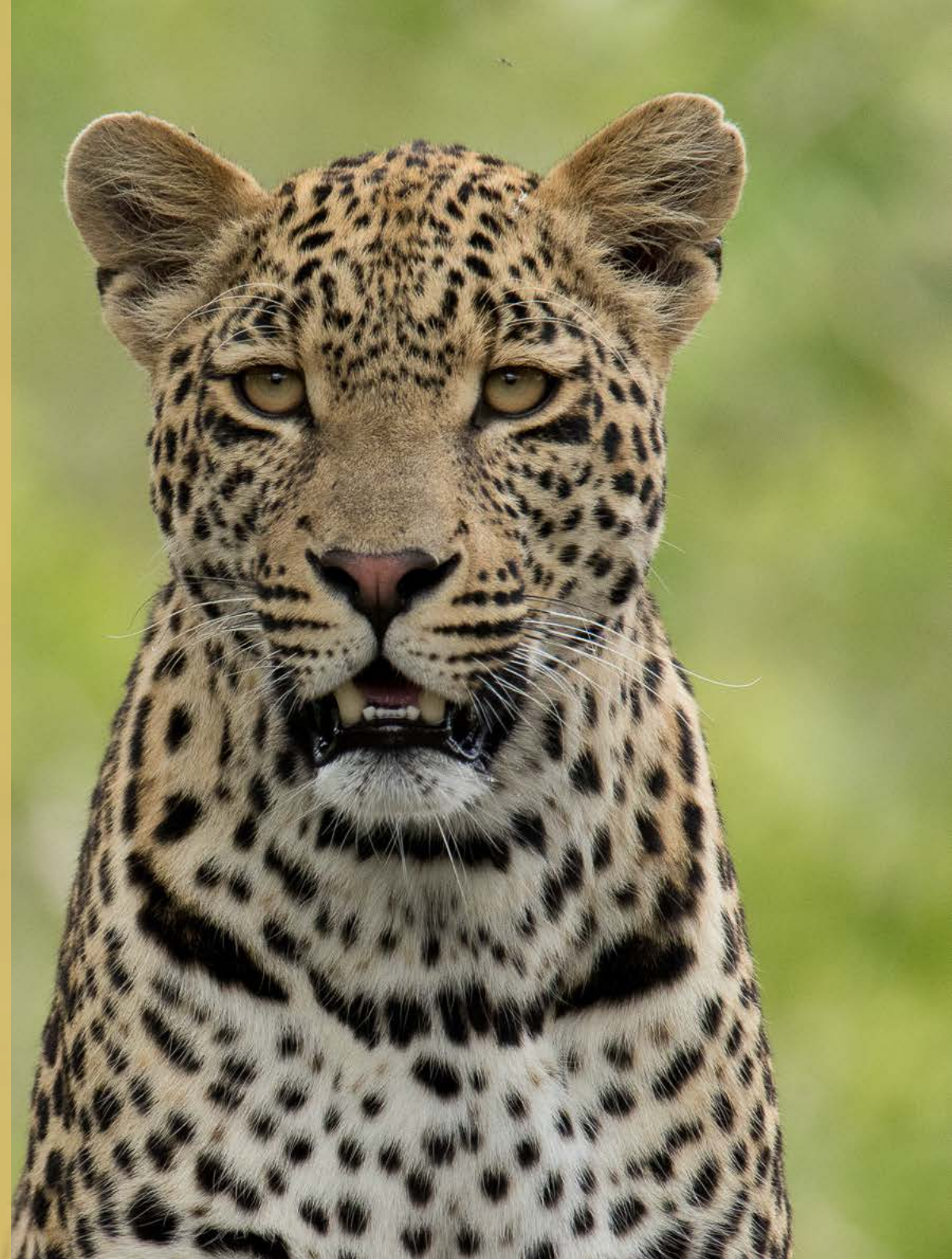
The Leopard is essentially a free-ranging species not contained by fences, which presents a challenge for the protection of the species. Individuals who move onto private or communal land may be poached or hunted, and the loss of a productive breeding animal can be devastating to the population as a whole. Wildlife ACT works closely with communities to develop sensitivity around conservation issues, and actively campaigns for range expansion and the development of safe conservation corridors.

Cryptic and elusive

Leopards are notoriously difficult to study and monitor because of their elusive habits, and as a result little is known about the species' abundance and density across its full range. Population estimates for southern Africa and Africa on the whole vary widely. The KZN Leopard survey presents an exemplary case of a large-scale, collaborative study making use of remote sensing technology and robust scientific methods to address profound knowledge gaps – an initiative of which Wildlife ACT is extremely proud.

Leopard skins

Leopard skins have distinct and unique rosette patterns that distinguish one individual from another and allows Leopard identification. This allows the Leopard Survey team to generate Leopard identification kits that are used by Panthera to calculate population density estimates for each respective reserve/study site surveyed. The Wildlife ACT Leopard Survey Team has identified over 650 Leopards since the start of the survey (this is not a total count of the population but rather a cumulative count over the lifespan of the survey).



How We are Succeeding

The sustainable use of Leopards cannot be accurately assessed if there are not clear data on Leopard densities and population trends. Currently, trophy hunting is the only legal use of Leopards within South Africa. The impact of trophy hunting on populations is unclear, although there are likely to be effects at the demographic and population level, especially if females are shot. In 2016 the South African national Department of Environmental Affairs, under the advisement of its Scientific Authority, concluded that the population trend of Leopards in the country was largely unknown, and that legal trophy hunting posed a high risk to the survival of the species when assessed in conjunction with other illegal activities such as snaring for traditional use, retaliatory killings and the illegal destruction of 'problem animals'. This resulted in a moratorium on all trophy hunting permits across South Africa for the 2016 and 2017 hunting seasons. This moratorium resulted in a concerted effort to understand leopard population dynamics, to which the KwaZulu-Natal Leopard Survey camera trap data contributed. The majority of monitored sites within KwaZulu-Natal indicate a declining population density, however, there are instances where populations are stable or indicating an upward trajectory.

"I started with Wildlife ACT as the Leopard Survey Priority Species Monitor and carried out the camera trap surveys for two years. One of my most memorable highlights was when a series of camera trap images captured a successful Leopard hunt and kill. The first camera captured the burst of a chase and the second camera, the young female Leopard successfully dragging its impala kill right past the camera. It may seem gruesome to some, but it is very rare to capture this scene as Leopard hunts end in a successful kill only 30- 33% of the time. Now in my role as one of Wildlife ACT's Operations Managers I am responsible for overseeing each survey setup and advise the current Leopard Survey Monitors throughout the survey period. The ongoing efforts of the Wildlife ACT Team in contributing to the provincial and national Leopard Monitoring Project, fulfils my responsibility as a Conservation Biologist in protecting one of Africa's most iconic species."

Thandiwe Knutson

Measuring our impact



31 531
Field and
processing data
hours for the
surveys



49
Specialised
surveys



149 275
km driven



4 896
Cameras
deployed for
the surveys.

Each survey has roughly 100 cameras deployed at a time, often these are replaced during the survey.



159 675
PrioritySpecies*
camera trap
sightings during
the survey.

***These are species that are considered a priority by the reserves on which the surveys are performed (eg. Leopard, lions, spotted hyaena, honey badgers, elephant, cheetah, etc.).**

Lions

A male lion with a large, light brown mane stands in a savanna environment. He is looking slightly to the left with a focused expression. The background is filled with lush green foliage and tall grass, creating a natural habitat setting.

Lion facts

Scientific name: Panthera leo

Common name: Lion

Occurs: Sub-Saharan Africa

Status: Vulnerable

Number: 23 000 – 39 000

Population trend: Decreasing

Background

Lions were once found across most of Africa. They now occur only in the south Sahara Desert and in parts of southern and eastern Africa. Historically Lions were also found from Greece through the Middle East to northern India. Lions have vanished from over 90% of their historic range, with the most dramatic decline occurring in the past 2 decades, and they are now extinct in 26 African countries.

Canned hunting explained

The term “canned hunting” refers to the unethical practice of releasing a captive-bred Lion into a small fenced area with the express intention of hunting it shortly thereafter for financial gain. Generally the origin of the Lion is not disclosed to the trophy hunter, who may have been sold a “wild lion hunt” at great cost. The canned hunting industry drives the monetisation of the Lion captive breeding industry and all associated unethical tourism activities, such as cub petting.

Threats to the species

Human impacts

The captive breeding of Lions, habitat loss and fragmentation, unsustainable trophy hunting, illegal trade in bush meat, and conflict with local people due to the real or perceived threat that Lions pose to livestock, are some of the major threats that remaining Lion populations face.

Blood lions

Blood Lions is an award winning feature film documentary and global campaign to end canned hunting, cub petting and predator breeding industries in South Africa. While conservation of Lions in South Africa has largely been successful, the captive breeding of Lions for commercial purposes including interactive tourism experiences such as cub petting, walking with lions and ultimately “canned hunting”, is one of the most significant emerging threats facing South African wild Lion populations. It is estimated that there are currently between 8,000 and 10,000 predators living in captivity – mostly living in appalling conditions. The bones harvested from these lions are sent to Asia to feed a growing market.

What we do

Wildlife ACT works closely with conservation authorities throughout KwaZulu-Natal, providing sustainable long-term monitoring to inform adaptive management of Lion populations, supporting the development and implementation of appropriate tracking technologies, and providing expertise for relocations and emergency response. We are contributing members of the Lion Management Forum, established in 2010 to develop guidelines for the management of Lions in small protected areas.

Wildlife ACT was instrumental in helping to conceive the 'Born to Live Wild' campaign, born from the Blood Lions exposé documentary. The campaign has resulted in over 130 tourism operators signing a pledge to continue promoting and encouraging responsible tourism worldwide. It also endorses Africa as an authentic, wild and rewarding tourism destination; and encourages tourism operators to support and promote the formal conservation community in their endeavours to secure the survival of Africa's predators in the wild. Trustee Dr Simon Morgan now acts as a Conservation Advisor for Blood Lions as they continue their campaign to put an end to the captive breeding and canned hunting industries.

Photo: Pippa Orpen with EKZNW Vet, Dr Sarah Wilkinson, collaring a lionesses on Somkhanda Community Game Reserve.



Our plan of action

Monitoring and Conservation Support

Wildlife ACT specialises in monitoring existing Lion populations in KZN, which is essential for effectively managing and protecting a species. We will continue to use our technological expertise to augment our monitoring with tracking collars fitted to certain individuals within important Lion populations and prides, and constantly seek to improve the performance and affordability of these tracking devices. We will support Lion relocations, reintroductions and daily management in the protected areas where our teams are based.

Active Global Campaigns

We are campaigning alongside organisations like Blood Lions, WILDTRUST and Fair Trade Tourism to put a stop to canned Lion hunting through initiatives such as Born to Live Wild. We will use our position as a conservation tourism operator to educate and inform our extensive supporter base about ethical conservation practices to influence the industry and stamp out illicit practices.



Photo top: Marumo Nene testing the electrics on the predator "boma" (temporary holding facility), Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.

Photo right: Subadult Lions, Panthera leo.



Challenges and Opportunities

Pressure from captive breeding industries

In South Africa there is a sector of industry motivating to be able to continue exploiting Lions for economic gain. A proposed amendment to legislation has been passed by government re-classifying Lions and other specially protected species as “domestic livestock” to relax regulations and enable activities such as captive breeding, canned hunting and trade in Lion parts. Wildlife ACT is opposed to the passing of any legislation which would present a significant threat to Africa’s heritage, and we will continue to engage with stakeholders at all levels to influence policy that secures the status of Lions and other iconic species.

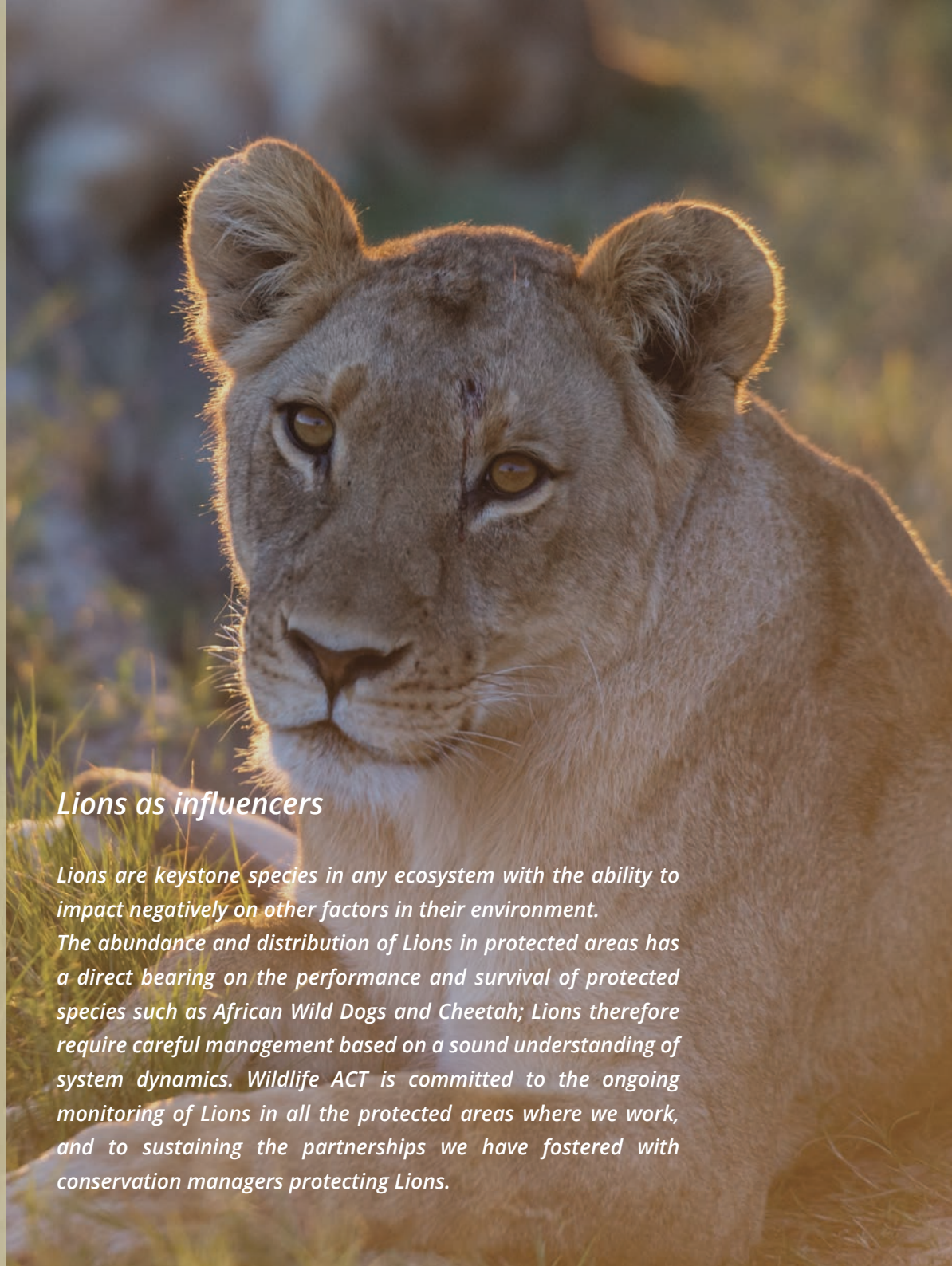
Lion bones in Asia

Chinese medicine has traditionally utilised tiger bone wine as a treatment for a range of ailments, and other tiger body parts have long been prized for transferring characteristics like bravery and strength to the user. Today, as tiger numbers dwindle, Lion bones have become a valuable trade commodity exported from Africa. Suppliers are predominantly private breeders who trade mostly in the parts of captive bred females who are no longer breeding. Currently the impacts of this growing demand for Lion bones on our wild Lion populations are largely unknown. Through our work with Blood Lions and Born to Live Wild, our membership of organisation such as the Lion Management Forum and the IUCN, and our close relationships with other conservation bodies in South Africa, Wildlife ACT will continue to raise awareness and vocally oppose any trade that threatens the security of wild Lion populations.

Lions as influencers

Lions are keystone species in any ecosystem with the ability to impact negatively on other factors in their environment.

The abundance and distribution of Lions in protected areas has a direct bearing on the performance and survival of protected species such as African Wild Dogs and Cheetah; Lions therefore require careful management based on a sound understanding of system dynamics. Wildlife ACT is committed to the ongoing monitoring of Lions in all the protected areas where we work, and to sustaining the partnerships we have fostered with conservation managers protecting Lions.



How We are Succeeding

Range expansion is an important indicator of successful conservation management of any species. The reintroduction of Lions to Akagera National Park in Rwanda in 2015 garnered a worldwide following and made news across the globe. Lions were extirpated in Rwanda over 15 years following the 1994 genocide, as cattle herders poisoned the last remaining wild Lions and the Park remained unmanaged during this political and humanitarian crisis.

Through the work of African Parks in partnership with the Rwanda Development Board and local communities, Akagera National Park was restored, and the return of this apex predator is symbolic of the positive changes this magnificent country has undergone.

The relocation of Lions to Rwanda was underpinned by partnerships between the South African government, the Rwandan government, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the private sector represented by &Beyond, and Wildlife ACT. Through Wildlife ACT's work with EKZNW at Tembe Elephant Park monitoring Lions since 2010, the Park was able to contribute to the new founder population of Lions in Rwanda, and we are exceptionally proud of this association.

The return of Lions to a formerly ravaged country shows that healing is possible and where there is political will, wildlife can be safely returned to former habitats.

Measuring our impact



30 850
Field hours



112
Lions
collared



370 242
km driven



70
Relocated



11 717
Observations



8 549
Camera trap
sightings

Elephant

Elephant facts

Scientific name: *Loxodonta africana*

Common name: African Elephant

Occurs: Throughout Africa

Status: Vulnerable

Number: 400 000

Population trend: Increasing



Background

Elephants are natural agents of change, maintaining the biodiversity of the ecosystems in which they live. They play an important facilitative role in habitats for species like Black Rhino, White Rhino and Buffalo by pulling down trees and making high browse available, opening up pathways for other species to travel, and allowing sunlight in for grass growth to create and maintain grasslands.

Some predictions indicate that elephants in Africa may disappear in the next 10 years due to the burgeoning human population. In 1930, there were about 10 million Elephants on the African continent; however current estimates put Elephant numbers at just 400 000. Elephants are threatened primarily by poaching to supply the illegal ivory trade and habitat loss. In South Africa, safe space for Elephants is restricted to our larger protected areas.

Threats to the species

Poaching for illegal trade in ivory

Elephant poaching has been a longstanding issue across Africa with ivory prized as the most valuable trade commodity from the continent since ancient times. The poaching of Elephants in South Africa declined in recent history thanks to the establishment of conservation laws and fenced protected areas, but with organised crime networks now very active in the Rhino poaching sphere, Elephant poaching has increased dramatically since 2016. Elephant ivory is shipped mainly to Asia, specifically China and Thailand. There is growing global awareness about the impact this illegal trade has had on the Elephant populations of Africa. Poachers killed 100,000 African Elephants for their ivory between 2010 and 2012, with current conservative estimates in the region of 10,000 - 15,000 poached per year.

Habitat Loss

Because of their size, social systems, behavior and dietary needs, Elephants need space and interconnectivity between habitats. The current conservation model in South Africa comprises small, fenced, geographically isolated protected areas, which quickly reach their full capacity of Elephants. Transformation of habitats by agriculture, industry and urbanisation leaves very little opportunity for the expansion of protected areas, and therefore Elephant range and numbers are unable to grow.

Photo opposite: A herd of African Elephants, *Loxodonta africana*.

What we do

Wildlife ACT works with conservation partners to provide sound data for the management of Elephants through our monitoring, research and technological development activities, and to facilitate Elephant reintroductions and encourage the expansion of wildlife habitats. Our successful community education programmes address the issue of human-wildlife conflict so prevalent in the African Elephant management context.

"To be an endangered species monitor is incredibly rewarding. At times it can be tough: the human-wildlife conflict element weighs on the psyche; but each morning we get up and actively make a difference in the natural world. To follow a pack of African Painted Dogs across a plain, to watch a Lion greeting his brother after a night's territorial patrol, or a Rhino calf vocalising with its mother is awe-inspiring and a privilege that some of us get to experience daily. We are the lucky few who get to call this our job."

Pippa Orpen





Our plan of action

Providing accurate data for sound management

Wildlife ACT assists with and implements high quality Elephant monitoring of various KwaZulu-Natal populations. This monitoring focuses on recording population demographics through the development and maintenance of Identification Kits. Data from our ongoing monitoring contributes to various research projects examining habitat use, Elephants' impacts on their habitats and associated species, and growth and survival rates of populations – information used to guide management decisions about species introductions, relocations and birth control. Wildlife ACT remains committed to the growth and development of its Elephant Conservation Programme. Wildlife ACT also supports Elephant conservation in South Africa by sponsoring radio and satellite tracking collars which are a fundamental tool for elephant monitoring and research.

Protecting and expanding elephant ranges through engagement

Human engagement is a key driver of successful Elephant conservation. Wildlife ACT's community education programmes target the areas surrounding game reserves in order to nurture a deeper understanding of conservation issues and engage otherwise excluded or detached people in the conservation of all species. Education and awareness programmes also focus on the issue of conflict caused by competition between people and animals for resources, something that arises often between humans and Elephants, providing communities with resources to prevent incidents or seek support in reducing conflict. This type of active engagement helps to drive range expansion and the establishment of corridors for the safe passage of Elephants.

Photo: Chris Kelly and team working together to collar an elephant on Bonamanzi Game Reserve.

Challenges and opportunities

Human-Wildlife Conflict

Elephant conservation is notoriously fraught with the challenge of human-wildlife conflict. Elephants are particularly prone to behaviours like crop-raiding, brought about by their large ranges and enormous appetites, and fences are often not sufficient to contain them resulting in animosity between Elephants and their very often impoverished neighbours which impacts negatively on conservation and range expansion initiatives. Wildlife ACT is sensitive to these dynamics and works closely with communities to develop a closer understanding and provide tools to empower vulnerable people while protecting wildlife.

Demand for ivory products

While the use of Elephant ivory is widely condemned in most western nations, it remains a sought-after commodity particularly in the Far East. This ongoing demand for ivory continues to drive the Elephant poaching industry in Africa. Wildlife ACT is committed to working with organisations like TRAFFIC to actively campaign for demand reduction.

The Elephant conservation paradox

While Elephants are under significant threat due to poaching and habitat loss, fenced protected areas can become over-populated with Elephants in a relatively short time. Due to the fact that Elephants consume such vast quantities of vegetation their feeding habits are destructive, and overpopulation can have damaging consequences for entire ecosystems and the other species that share their habitats. Elephants must therefore be intensively managed if conservation efforts are to succeed. A number of Elephant management solutions can be implemented to manage population sizes, from relocations to birth control. Wildlife ACT will continue to offer high-quality monitoring and management support to inform sustainable Elephant population management interventions.



How We are Succeeding

The relocation of Elephant herds from densely populated areas to new habitats is an important tool for Elephant range expansion. This was the case with Nambiti Private Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, which recognised the need to reduce its Elephant population size. Somkhanda Game Reserve is a community-owned protected area co-managed by partners, the WILDTRUST and the Emvokweni Community Trust, who are committed to restoring the property to its natural state and establishing a viable ecotourism product for the benefit of the community landowners.

Through the cooperation of these entities, a breeding herd of 11 Elephants (comprised of 9 cows and 2 bulls) was introduced to Somkhanda from Nambiti in two relocation operations which concluded in February 2017. Soon after the introduction, Somkhanda was able to celebrate the significant milestone of the first Elephant born on the reserve in well over 100 years.

This operation was a special highlight for Wildlife ACT, who assisted with the introduction and post-release monitoring of Somkhanda's first Elephant herd and continues to monitor the movements and population dynamics of this keystone species.

Measuring our impact



19 878
Field hours



14
Elephant
collars fitted



237 975
km driven



17
relocated



17 840
Observations



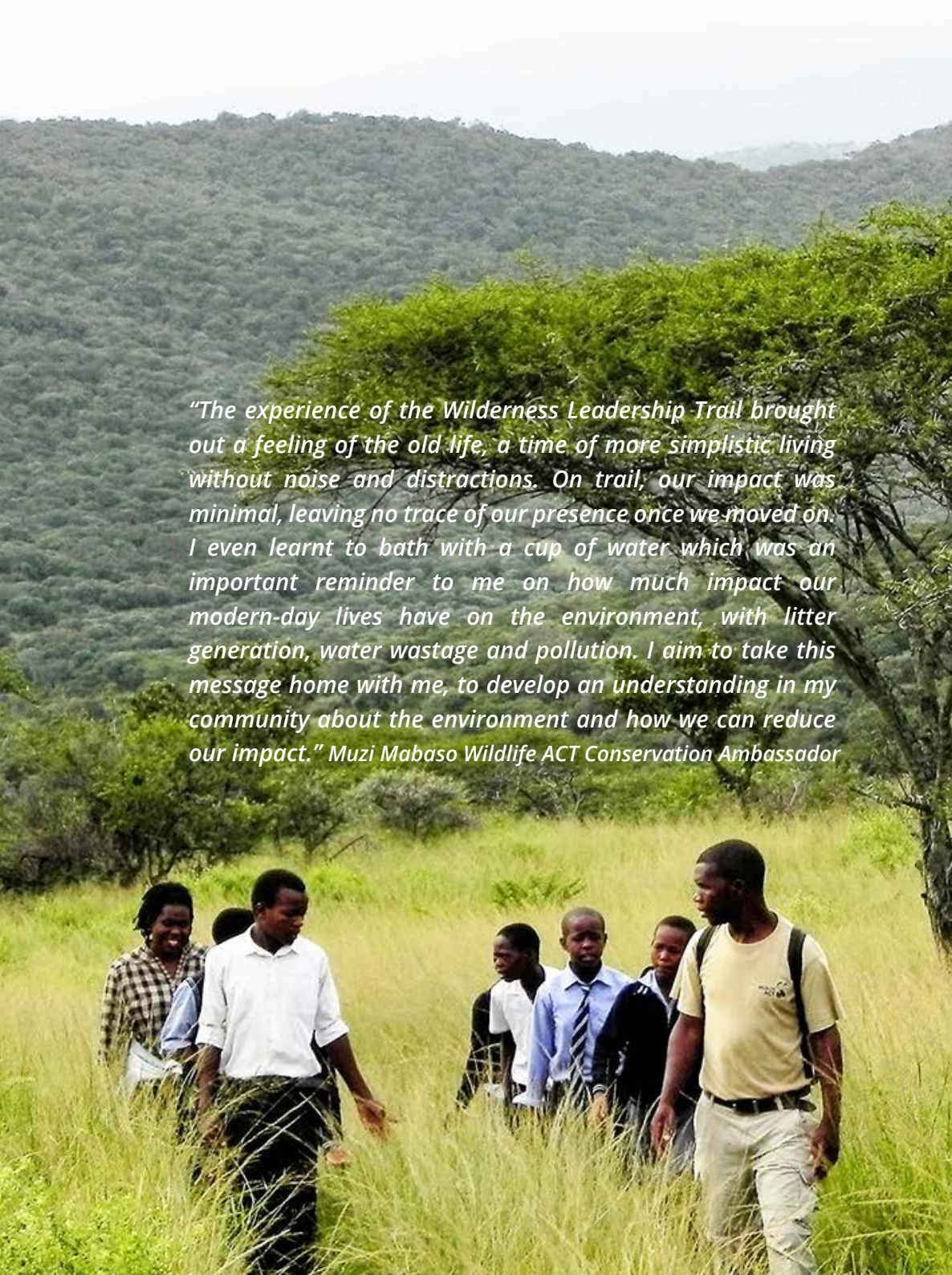
52 264
Camera trap
sightings

Photo opposite: Elephant collaring operation on Somkhanda Game Reserve.



Communities in focus

Photo: Community conservation liaison and educator Thokozani Mlambo with students at the Wildlife ACT Kids Camp.



"The experience of the Wilderness Leadership Trail brought out a feeling of the old life, a time of more simplistic living without noise and distractions. On trail, our impact was minimal, leaving no trace of our presence once we moved on. I even learnt to bath with a cup of water which was an important reminder to me on how much impact our modern-day lives have on the environment, with litter generation, water wastage and pollution. I aim to take this message home with me, to develop an understanding in my community about the environment and how we can reduce our impact." Muzi Mabaso Wildlife ACT Conservation Ambassador

Background

South Africa, like many countries across the continent, has a rapidly growing population characterised by a significant gap between the wealthy and the poor resulting in a great need for social development initiatives and inclusive economic growth. A large proportion of the population lives in rural areas, wholly reliant on nature to provide most basic needs like food and water. This connection with nature comes at a risk. As unsustainable land-use practices and climate change degrade the landscape, the environment's ability to provide natural resources deteriorates. The role of nature reserves and protected ecosystems is therefore crucial for the mitigation of these negative impacts to ensure that people who are entirely reliant on natural resources for survival can continue to thrive. These protected areas also have the ability to provide economic opportunities to the people living alongside them.

It is at this interface between people and protected areas that Wildlife ACT's Community Conservation Programme operates. Many of the people living adjacent to South Africa's protected areas have only a view across the fence, seeing wildlife in a negative light as competition for the same resources, and out of their reach. Wildlife, viewed as a source of food, is legally inaccessible with its harvest often resulting in arrest. It is critical to change these perceptions by providing opportunities for such individuals to engage with wildlife and conservation, building an understanding and a deeper connection between people and nature.

Photo: Community Conservation Liaison and educator, Sboniso Mazolo, taking students at the Wildlife ACTive kids camp on a bush experience through their own Gumbi Tribal game reserve.

What we do

Wildlife ACT works to encourage participation in, and strengthen peoples' understanding of, the conservation sector, showcasing the value of nature and highlighting economic opportunities in the sector. This long-term initiative aims to reduce conflict between protected areas and those people living in adjacent communities through initiatives such as bursary support for conservation training; Ambassador Clubs, internships, leadership development and career guidance for teens and young adults; immersive bush camps, game drives and in-school conservation lessons for school children; and organised visits and game drives in protected areas for adults from local communities.

"Every single Kids' Camp comes with some form of significant highlight, with many relating to the opportunity to be part of showing a child, for the first time, a part of Africa's unique wildlife in its natural environment. It is this point of connection and understanding that we believe can have such a lasting effect on an individual growing up and how they view their environment."

Zama Ncube, Community Conservation Programme Manager

"The CCP is a very mobile and flexible programme which is integrated into the communities in which we work. Through intimate knowledge of these local communities, we have an amazing opportunity to make a difference and create positive stories about wildlife and the environment." Thokozani Mlambo, Community Conservation Liaison.

Photo: Educational Bush Camps expose kids to a wide variety of biodiversity.

'Wildlife ACT aims to implement solutions on the ground, working with communities to empower its members to lead their own progression and development, underpinned by a strong connection to, and understanding of, our interdependence on nature and the environment. By creating opportunities within the conservation sector, we can move to a point where the benefits of wildlife can accrue locally rather than the status quo where local residents experience few benefits and many of the costs.'

Mark Gerrard, Director Community Conservation



Our plan of action

Life-changing immersive Bush Camps

Wildlife ACT hosts primary school children at our uBhejane Bush Camp for fully funded, three-night educational experiences. The camp, part of the Gumbi Community's Somkhanda Game Reserve, provides the ideal location for this structured programme and an opportunity for these enthusiastic children to experience being on a field trip away from home for the first time and to see wildlife of which they are custodians, but which most have never laid eyes on.

Wildlife ACT is exceedingly proud of our education programme, developed by the late Bruce Lombardo, which emphasises total immersion and delivers experiential, hands-on lessons that not only teach conservation concepts, but also attempt to develop and nurture an emotional bond between children and nature, fostering an attitude of stewardship and custodianship. School children are hosted by Wildlife ACT's dedicated and trained local conservation guides, who show a remarkable affinity for and rapport with the children of their communities.

The programme is endorsed by the Department of Education and is a formal component of the school curriculum.

Bringing conservation to the classroom

Wildlife ACT's Community Conservation Liaisons (CCLs) hold lessons during class time in target schools, teaching basic Ecology concepts. This helps to lay a foundation of understanding upon which to build an appreciation for the important role each species (including endangered species) plays in its ecosystem and helps to explain the importance of biodiversity conservation. Wildlife ACT commits to maintaining this important programme and reaching greater numbers of children for a wider impact.

Developing young conservation leaders

Conservation Ambassador Clubs have been established within the local communities adjacent to protected areas. Here, our locally based facilitators provide lessons on various nature-based subjects along with career guidance on conservation. The purpose is to provide a self-learning platform for inspired youth, allowing them to follow a conservation-related career path. By sharing the available options, working to remove barriers and providing guidance on how to pursue opportunities, the conservation sector becomes more accessible with a greater possibility of local people becoming successful employees in the sector, and making ever more meaningful contributions to conservation. Through a partnership with the Wilderness Leadership School, Wildlife ACT are working to develop a cohort of young leaders, sourced from communities adjacent to Protected Areas, whose developmental journey is underpinned by an understanding and connection to nature. Through the partnership thus far, 23 young conservation leaders, selected from Wildlife ACT's Conservation Ambassador Clubs, have participated in a Wilderness Leadership Trail in the world famous iMfolozi Wilderness Area, where they were taken on a journey of thought leadership through connection with other participants and nature. We will continue to seek out partnerships that help us achieve our goals of empowering the youth and creating opportunities to form connections between people and wildlife.

Engaging adults and influencers

For many individuals living adjacent to protected areas, opportunities to visit and experience the park and its wildlife are limited. On the uMkhuze Section of the iSimangaliso Park and Somkhanda Game Reserve, Wildlife ACT assists in organising and hosting guided game drives for adults into the parks. This builds on the links between people and wildlife, strengthening understanding and support. Wildlife ACT's team of CCL's also attend the majority of public community meetings, listening to and understanding the issues that are taking place in these communities. This is crucial for empathising with families from these communities and to be able to help address relevant needs.

Challenges and opportunities

Population growth and poverty

As populations burgeon and demands placed on natural resources escalate, the creation of opportunities to include the youth in the green economy is becoming increasingly essential. Wildlife ACT strongly believes that it is critical for the future of conservation on this continent that young people, living at the interface between rural poverty and wildlife conservation, are exposed to the opportunities within the sector, and more importantly, engage with and build an emotional connection with nature. This will ultimately shape how the youth, as future custodians of Africa's unique wildlife, interact with nature and protected areas.

The threat of traditional medicine

One of the major threats to endangered wildlife in Southern Africa is the illegal trade of their body parts in traditional markets. In order to address the issue and reduce demand for those products, it is critical that we understand the full context of the market – what drives use, where wildlife products are sourced, who the main users are, and how various parts are used.

Wildlife ACT, through its Community Conservation Programme, infiltrates traditional markets with the aim of building an understanding of these various elements and developing programmes to work within the scope of the findings to address the drivers.

Photo: Zama Ncube, Community Conservation Programme Manager, and Kingsley Holgate with the Wildlife ACTIVE kids.



In 2017, Wildlife ACT and Project Rhino partnered with the Kingsley Holgate Foundation and the Rhino Art Campaign to engage with over 9,000 children about conservation issues, encouraging 2,156 children to produce art showing their perceptions of Rhino and wildlife conservation. This project, supported by the Disney Conservation Fund, was a key first step in bridging the communication gaps between protected areas and communities using the universal language of Art. Wildlife ACT continue to be an active partner with Rhino Art and host the annual 'Art Winners' at a dedicated Kids Camp at uBhejane Bush Camp on Somkhanda.

How We are Succeeding

An important element of our Kids' Camps and in-school lessons is a questionnaire to measure participants' comprehension of concepts as they enter the programme and then again on completion. This helps us to evaluate our effectiveness and modify the programme accordingly to improve outcomes. We consistently observe a dramatic increase in the level of understanding of previously foreign concepts in the children with whom we engage. We were also pleased to learn a few years ago that 100% of the children who had participated in our inaugural Kids' Camps had selected Conservation and Tourism as a high school subject, a sure sign of the influence that our programme had had on their futures. A matter of great pride to us is the recognition granted to all three senior members of the Community Conservation Programme - Zama Ncube, Thokozani Mlambo and Síboniso Mazolo – over the past three years. They have each received an internationally recognised Conservation Hero Award from the Disney Conservation Fund for the important work that they do with rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal, to save wildlife, protect habitats and inspire communities to participate in conservation efforts.

Celimpilo Ngema, a former Kids' Camp participant and current young adult Conservation Ambassador, was selected by the Southern African Wildlife College for a scholarship to study conservation after showing remarkable promise and dedication.

"I have been very fortunate to learn and grow under good training and mentorship, learning about conservation and wildlife behavior and I still want to keep exploring more about nature conservation. I think we all have to know that "to get something you never had, you have to do something you never did". I am thankful for the support and trust that has been given to me. I am very proud of who I am now because of Wildlife ACT."
Celimpilo Ngema, scholarship recipient

Kids camps

2094 children from 59 primary schools around the community owned Somkhanda Game Reserve, Ndumo Game Reserve, the uMkhuze Section of iSimangaliso Park, Tembe Elephant Park and Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park participated in 4-day Wildlife ACTIVE kids camps.

Educational game drives

Through the CCP, 2560 children and 875 adults have participated in educational game drives in protected areas in KZN, providing them with an opportunity to experience wildlife and nature through the eyes of a tourist, learning about the magnificence of Africa's unique wildlife.

Measuring our impact



Community game drives

2 560
Children
875
Adults



Conservation awareness presentations

20 694
Children
30 940
Adults



99
Educational bushcamps

59
Participating schools



In-school conservation lessons

27 333
Children
10
Schools

Conservation tourism



Background

Without an in-depth understanding of the species within a protected area, it is very difficult to make effective management decisions and develop sound conservation strategies to protect these species. Back in 2008, we identified the great need for dedicated, professional and more importantly, financially sustainable ecological monitoring programmes in under-resourced protected area across Africa, which catalysed the birth of Wildlife ACT.

"I vividly remember the day our two very first voluntourists arrived in KZN in September 2008. Back then, volunteers joined Chris on the daily monitoring sessions, Simon was writing funding proposals while writing up his PhD thesis, and I was building our marketing network in an effort to enlist more voluntourists to join us. 10 years on we've had more than 3500 people participate in our conservation projects across the continent." Jo Maree

Photo right: Wildlife ACT monitor Fiona Evans administering a reversal on a sedated Cheetah under the supervision of a wildlife vet on Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.

Photo opposite: Volunteers scanning during a monitoring session on the uMkhuze section of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.



What we do

From the outset we established a tour operating company which developed a number of “voluntourism”-based models to allow people to support and contribute to important conservation efforts across the continent through their active participation. Thousands of international voluntourists have visited the monitoring projects we helped establish and/or run in South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Ethiopia and the Seychelles.

Our participants get to experience authentic conservation efforts associated with endangered and priority wildlife species, such as African Wild Dogs, Rhinos, Cheetahs, Vultures and Turtles, while at the same time gaining a deeper understanding of global environmental issues and their own roles in helping to address them. In South Africa, the tour operating company is able to underwrite the full annual operational costs of all the monitoring projects run on the ground by the Wildlife ACT Fund Trust. This is a great example of how a business approach can be utilised to very effectively address conservation needs.

“In Zululand alone (where we started our conservation tourism approach) we have 6 permanent monitoring teams which go out each day monitoring endangered and priority species - all made possible because of our voluntourism business model that has pushed over R30 million directly into monitoring efforts in KZN alone.” Jo Maree

Photo above: PJ Roberts and volunteer recording camera trap data from camera trap data on the uMkhuze section of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Photo below: Volunteers helping to build African Wild Dog transport crates on Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.



Our plan of action

An education in wildlife conservation

Wildlife ACT's voluntourism model allows those interested in meaningful wildlife conservation an opportunity to gain a unique behind-the-scenes understanding of real conservation in action, while actively supporting our mission every day that they are with us – by working long hours out in the field, getting their hands dirty and collecting essential data. Conservation volunteers see first-hand how their participation fee is employed to fund the day-to-day operating costs of our monitoring programmes, and how that translates into safeguarding the endangered species we work to protect. Being such a small yet highly effective organisation, our participants are very much a part of the team.

Conservation Safari – Travel with impact

Our Conservation Safari provides those who traditionally might have joined a safari operator with an alternative, meaningful, hands-on conservation experience, without forgoing the luxuries they might expect from a high-end African safari. Participants join our senior team members in the field on bespoke expeditions, with excursions that can include Rhino dehorning, tracking endangered wildlife using the newest technology, fitting anti-snare collars on African Wild Dogs, and setting up of camera traps for our Leopard census. Our Conservation Safaris have been very rewarding and we feel fortunate to have developed many close relationships with our conservation-minded guests, many of whom have become fervent supporters and important sounding boards. We hope to make many more new friends, and share our conservation initiatives and stories with visitors to Africa.

Photo: Cathy Hue explaining the layout of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park to a volunteer.

Conservation Training Courses

Wildlife ACT's unique 28 day long Endangered and Priority Species Conservation and Habitat Management Course was launched in 2019, designed for those seeking practical, hands-on training, underpinned by course material carefully developed by our expert team. The course provides nature enthusiasts or those considering a career in conservation with a unique understanding of the most up-to-date, in-field wildlife conservation techniques and practices, while exploring and contributing to Wildlife ACT's important wildlife conservation work. The course modules include, Wildlife Monitoring, Camera Trapping, Tracking and Spoor, Conservation and Habitat Management, Game Capture and Relocation, Wildlife Crime and Illegal Trade.

“We want to help develop a new generation of conservationists, equipping them with practical, field-tested conservation skills that will allow them to make an immediate impact on the ground.” Chris Kelly



Challenges and opportunities

Shrinking conservation budgets

It is a global reality that more and more innovative funding solutions are needed to address conservation budget deficits. We will maintain our focus on endangered species conservation and further develop our sustainable tourism-based funding models to contribute to the stability or growth of populations of our focal species. Our hope is for Wildlife ACT to become more globally recognised as an effective organisation that is driving wildlife conservation forward.

Mounting environmental pressures

In the face of growing human populations, the effects of climate change, poverty, environmental degradation and the unethical exploitation of wildlife, we need the support of many more responsible tourists to help fund our work, to help us educate others and spread the conservation message, and to join us in campaigning against unethical practices and rather support those who are working tirelessly to make a genuine difference. We can't hope to do this more effectively without global support. We recognise the opportunity that we have to inspire action and hope in the participants who spend time with us and make our work possible, and we commit to making the most of this opportunity and others that may arise.

Photo above: Volunteers helping with a lion relocation on Manyoni Private Game Reserve.

Photo below: Volunteers repairing a boma fence on the uMkhuze section of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.



How We are Succeeding

Wildlife ACT has been able to provide sustained, free professional monitoring services to more than ten Zululand protected areas for over ten years. We are proud of the fact that our first species monitoring project based on the uMkhuze section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park has been ongoing since the day we started in 2008.

Wildlife ACT has received two prestigious international awards, placing second at the African Responsible Tourism Awards in 2017 in “Best for Habitat & Species Conservation,” and achieving second place in the World Responsible Tourism Awards in the category “Best for Wildlife.”

Wildlife ACT was also the first voluntourism operator of its kind to become Fair Trade Tourism certified in Africa.

A source of significant pride to us is the fact that our conservation volunteers are so inspired by the work that we do that more than 14% of our participants are returning volunteers. In tourism industry terms, this is an exceptional achievement and a tangible endorsement of our impact.

Photo: Leopard Survey monitor Ryan Mitchell with conservation volunteers on Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.



Marine conservation; Turtles

A large Hawksbill turtle is shown swimming in clear, bright blue water. The turtle's head is on the right, facing towards the viewer, with its mouth slightly open. Its front flippers are extended downwards. The carapace (upper shell) is visible, showing a pattern of brown and yellowish-green scutes. The water is very clear, with some light refraction visible at the surface.

Turtle facts

Scientific name: *Eretmochelys imbricata*

Common name: Hawksbill turtle

Occurs: Circumglobal, tropical to subtropical waters

Status: Critically Endangered

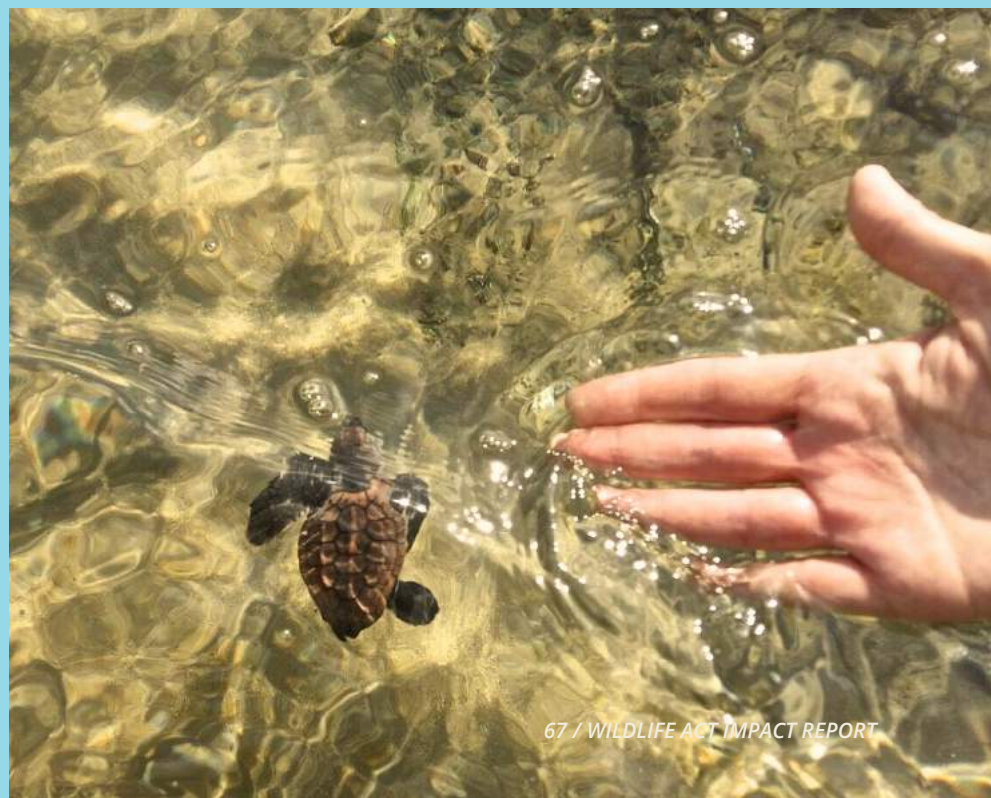
Population trend: Decreasing

Noah's Ark Project, Seychelles

Since 2014, Wildlife ACT has supported North Island in the Seychelles with its Noah's Ark Project, an initiative spanning more than a decade that aims to restore the island, formerly dominated by coconut plantations, and its habitats to their natural states for endemic fauna and flora to recover.

Wildlife ACT has partnered with North Island to provide members of the public an opportunity to assist the team of resident North Island environmentalists as ecotourists, to make a direct contribution as they monitor all aspects of the island's ecology, with a specific focus on the endangered Green Turtle and critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle. Much of this data is contributing to a greater understanding of tropical island ecology, restoration ecology, marine conservation, sea bird migratory patterns, ocean temperatures and the impacts of climate change.

Wildlife ACT ecotourists who visit North Island gain a comprehensive understanding of the Noah's Ark Conservation Project, and experience first-hand how island and marine conservation can be enhanced through tourism. This unique ecotourism model contributed in part to North Island being awarded winning the 2017 National Geographic World Legacy Award for Conserving the Natural World.





Humpback whales

Humpback whale facts

Scientific name: *Megaptera novaeangliae*

Common name: Humpback Whale

Occurs: Circumglobal

Status: Vulnerable

Number: 84,000

Population trend: Increasing

Humpback whale survey, South Africa

To date Wildlife ACT has participated in two annual Humpback Whale Surveys which take place on the Eastern Shores of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, collaborating with the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, the WILDOCEANS programme of the WILDTRUST, the University of Pretoria – Mammal Research Institute, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Every year between May and December Humpback Whales make the epic journey from the cold waters of the Antarctic to breed and calve in the warmer waters off the coast of Mozambique and Madagascar. The Whale Survey tracks this northward migration with the aim of collecting data to inform research about population trends, estimates of whale numbers and group sizes, migration speed, bearing and distance offshore.

This whale monitoring effort is immense, with ten observation hours per day spent in two whale spotting towers for 42 consecutive days. The long-term datasets being generated are providing unique tools for monitoring the effects of potential impacts such as boat-based whale watching, shipping, pollution, climate change, fisheries, and oil and gas exploration. Until 2018, there were no scientific census studies focused on Humpback Whales off the KwaZulu-Natal coastline, with the last shore-based monitoring survey completed 16 years ago.



Our partners

Wildlife ACT has partnered, and is associated, with a number of organisations across the globe. These organisations fully endorse our vision and efforts to protect and sustain the priority and endangered species that we work with. The support and guidance we receive is invaluable and we are extremely grateful. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without the following exceptional organisations:

Rhino Africa

In 2010 Wildlife ACT formed a strategic partnership with Rhino Africa Safaris – Africa's leading inbound tour operator, whose vision is to create impact, uplift communities, and protect wildlife through their business approach. Rhino Africa Safaris is the largest single corporate contributor to Wildlife ACT's endangered species conservation work in Southern Africa. Wildlife ACT's success is, in large part, due to the fantastic financial, logistical and infrastructure support that Rhino Africa has provided since Wildlife ACT's earliest days. Rhino Africa's founder and CEO, David Ryan, is a long-standing and valued Trustee of the Wildlife ACT Fund Trust.



Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

We enjoy a well-established partnership with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) and are committed to supporting their mandate of protecting biodiversity across the KwaZulu-Natal province. We provide them with various priority species support through long-term monitoring and research, management intervention support, community conservation initiatives, and protected area boundary support.



Woolworths

Wildlife ACT partnered with Woolworths and WWF in 2012 to aid conservation work, raise awareness and generate funds for our conservation efforts through cause-related marketing. Woolworths launched a wildlife-themed range of reusable shopping bags as well as the 'Every Paw Print Counts' campaign selling wildlife-themed sweets, which over a 6-year period raised over R3 million for our work. Woolworths customers are currently able to support Wildlife ACT by signing up for a MyPlanet card and choosing Wildlife ACT Fund as their beneficiary.



WWF

We have worked with WWF on many initiatives, with our most significant partnership centered around our work with their Black Rhino Range Expansion Project since its inception. We also collaborated with WWF and Woolworths in a fundraising and awareness campaign in support of our and WWF's work in South Africa.



Manyoni Private Game Reserve

Manyoni Private Game Reserve was founded in 2005 after the release of a population of Black Rhino through the WWF-BRREP. In 2009, the reserve was formally proclaimed a Nature Reserve, and is recognised as a site of biodiversity importance for the conservation of species and habitats. Manyoni's vision is to develop a pristine protected area for the conservation of indigenous and endangered species in northern KwaZulu-Natal, and in particular, actively promote the conservation of Black Rhino. Wildlife ACT has been working closely with Manyoni since its inception and has been providing monitoring services since 2014.



Igula Tours

Sanele Thwala, the founder of Igula, and his professional team of drivers have been our dedicated transport operating partner since 2010. The Igula team has spent countless hours and kilometres on the roads of KwaZulu-Natal, to ensure our staff and conservation volunteers arrive at their final destinations safely. We are tremendously grateful for their dedicated service and for always being willing to accommodate any transport request with friendly efficiency. We look forward to our continued partnership with Igula Tours.



Wildtrust

We have partnered with WILDTRUST (formerly known as Wildlands Conservation Trust) on a number of conservation initiatives, most notably our long-term involvement in the community-owned Somkhanda Game Reserve, where we have supported endangered species reintroductions and provided consistent monitoring to inform their effective management. WILDTRUST are also key supporters of our Community Conservation Programme in Somkhanda.



Panthera

Panthera is the only conservation organisation in the world focused purely on wild cats. Together with Panthera and the provincial authority Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, we carry out the largest long-term Leopard monitoring camera trap survey in the world. These surveys are carried out throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal and are the most effective way to reliably track Leopard population trends.



Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is one of South Africa's oldest conservation NGOs and we are proud to work with them on a number of endangered species projects across both the KwaZulu-Natal province and South Africa, including African Painted Dog, Cheetah and Vultures.



Isimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority is responsible for managing the globally-renowned iSimangaliso World Heritage Site. We have partnered with iSimangaliso since 2008, supporting them with various conservation -orientated projects such as monitoring and research within the uMkhuze and the Eastern Shores sections of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.



The Sindisa Fund

The Sindisa Fund was established in the USA by the late Bruce Lombardo - one of Wildlife ACT's early leaders who was instrumental in establishing our Community Conservation Project. The mission of the Sindisa Fund is to support and conduct activities that contribute to the global conservation of endangered species, and it partners with international organisations to advance that mission. Currently the Sindisa Fund is assisting Wildlife ACT through continued management of our funding support by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund.



Wildlife Conservation Network

The Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) protects endangered wildlife by supporting conservationists who ensure wildlife and people co-exist and thrive. Wildlife ACT is recognised as a collaborator within WCN's extensive network. WCN continues to support our Rhino conservation efforts by accepting donations on our behalf in the US from WCN supporters, and by passing on 100% of these donations to us.

Projects



The Forever Wild Foundation

Andrew Bone, long-term supporter and friend of Wildlife ACT, uses his art as a fundraising tool and through the Forever Wild Foundation donates resources to causes that support the conservation of African wildlife. One hundred percent of the funds raised go directly to real conservation efforts and we are forever grateful for this ongoing support.



Emvokweni Community trust

As owners of Somkhanda Game Reserve, the Emvokweni Community Trust (ECT), as representatives of the Gumbi community, have been pivotal in paving the way to success in community conservation. This community also saw the need to develop young conservationists in the region and it is through this vision that Wildlife ACT established the Somkhanda Community Conservation Programme.



Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust

To facilitate the protection, restoration, improved resilience and sustainable use of South Africa's species and eco-systems, the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust provides grants to conservation bodies engaged in physical biodiversity conservation and working in the cross-cutting environmental governance and advocacy, climate change, research and education arenas. We have been fortunate to receive grant support through these channels and are deeply appreciative of this ongoing partnership.



Running Man Adventures

Spurgeon Flemington and Matt Goode share a passion for sport and the natural environment they work in. Their company, Running Man Adventures, focuses on creating premium events in trail running, mountain biking and road running and through these events, have contributed meaningfully to Wildlife ACT's work over the years.



The Wild Dog Advisory Group

The Wild Dog Advisory Group of South Africa (WAG-SA) is a national advisory group bringing together national and provincial government conservation bodies, private and community-owned reserves, leading conservation NGOs and Painted Dog specialists to provide support for the management of populations in South Africa. Wildlife ACT are important long-standing members of the group. The KwaZulu-Natal Wild Dog Advisory Group (KZNWAG) focuses on guiding and supporting Wild Dog conservation in KZN as a province and feeds into the national WAG-SA.



Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund

Wildlife ACT received its first Conservation Award from the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) in 2012 and has received an award almost annually since. The awards are in the form of grants of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 channelled into our education and awareness programs in the rural communities surrounding the protected areas in which we work. Further to this, each of our community conservation liaisons has been recognised and awarded as a Conservation Hero at some point in the last 8 years by DWCF, receiving a \$1,500 cash prize. We look forward to another 8 years of partnership with DWCF as their Conservation Heroes continue to work their magic in the communities of Zululand.



Project Vulture

Project Vulture was developed as a platform to unite the efforts of various dedicated individuals and organisations to ensure the long-term survival of all KwaZulu-Natal and South African Vulture species. With our partners, we provide support to the following projects that are guided by Project Vulture: The Zululand Vulture Project, the Maloti-Drakensberg Vulture Project and the Bearded Vulture Task Force.

The Bearded Vulture Task Force

Wildlife ACT is an active member of The Bearded Vulture Task Force (BVTF) which was established in 2006 with the purpose of implementing the Conservation Action Plan for the species. The BVTF is made up of representatives from conservation bodies, NGOs and the scientific community from Lesotho and three South African provinces (KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Eastern Cape). Dr Sonja Krüger from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife has spearheaded the BVTF since its inception.



The Zululand Vulture project

The Zululand Vulture Project was initiated to provide guidance on the conservation management of Vultures in KwaZulu-Natal, according to the KwaZulu-Natal Vulture Conservation Strategy. We work with our partners to conserve all the Vulture species found in the northern KZN region, namely the Lappet-faced Vulture, the White-backed Vulture and the White-headed Vulture, ensuring the preservation of these birds for future generations. The project aims to implement effective research, education, protection, conservation and recovery operations to prevent further decline of the species. We have been fortunate to receive grant support through these channels and are grateful for this ongoing partnership.



Project Rhino

Wildlife ACT is a founding member of Project Rhino, an award-winning provincial association which brings together state, private and community-based Rhino conservation entities, including reserves, Rhino owners, leading conservation NGOs and anti-poaching security specialists. Project Rhino aims to enable the efficient use of resources and knowledge to combat Rhino poaching and other wildlife crime.

WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project



Initiated in 2004, WWF and the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) aims to increase numbers of the critically endangered Black Rhino as well as relocate groups to new protected areas. Wildlife ACT has been supporting BRREP since its early relocations by training Black Rhino monitoring staff, helping to find suitable release points for introduced Black Rhino, fitting tracking equipment on individual Rhino to be released, and carrying out post-release monitoring while the Rhino settle into their new homes.

Lion Management Forum

The Lion Management Forum (LiMF) is a registered Trust in South Africa with the aim of providing a platform for the development and sharing of best practice guidelines for managed wild Lions in South Africa, through facilitating relevant research, risk assessments and socio-economic development initiatives. Two of our Trustees, Dr. Simon Morgan and Chris Kelly and our Managing Director Mark Gerrard, are contributing members to the LiMF.



IUCN

Wildlife ACT is a proud member organisation of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Through the IUCN, we aim to advance our vision of broad-scale biodiversity conservation through endangered species and community-based conservation, and contribute towards the IUCN's knowledge and network base, helping to overcome conservation barriers in Africa and globally.



Fair Trade Tourism

Wildlife ACT's Endangered Species Monitoring Programme received Fair Trade Tourism certification in 2017. This is a prestigious accolade acknowledging a serious commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism. The compliance criteria for Fair Trade Tourism certification rigorously assesses the following: Business practice and HR, Community resources, Cultural heritage and Environmental practice.

Thank you for your support

Donate and support our initiatives

If you would like to make a direct deposit, please use the banking details below. If you would like your donation to be put towards something specific, please include this as a reference e.g. "Wild Dogs"

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Account No: 62292413665

Branch / Sort Code: 201511

SWIFT Code / BIC: FIRNZAJJ or FIRNZAJJXXX

*Bank Head Office Address: FNB Bank City,
Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2000*

Tel: +27 (0)87 802 1231

Email: info@wildlifeact.com

Website: wildlifeact.com

"I met Di Botha (one of our valued trustees) at Indaba in 2011, and I liked her immediately. Di is a bundle of energy and ideas, and she just gets things done. We feel really fortunate to have Di on our team, and to be able to call her a friend." Simon Morgan



*"Thank you Chris, Johan and Simon for the incredible selfless
contribution you have made over the past 12 years to
conservation efforts in South Africa"*

Trustees on the Wildlife ACT Fund Trust -

David Ryan, Di Botha, Nicole Copley and Scott Christensen

www.wildlifeact.com

