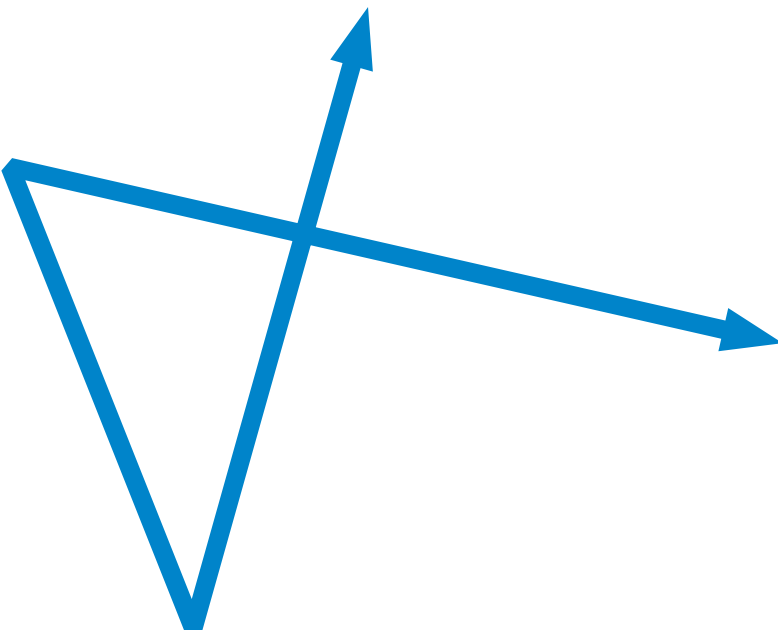


# Thriving together: animals, people, the planet





# How to **protect** elephants and communities in Africa?



**Create room to roam**

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## About IFAW

IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we’re up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, nongovernmental organisations and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish. See how at [ifaw.org](https://ifaw.org).

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Cover photo: Jesse Maree / © IFAW

The Lusaka Elephant Nursery herd bathing in the park as their keepers observe, Lusaka National Park, Zambia.



Photo: © Rudi van Aarde

# Connectivity—the way forward for Africa’s savannah elephants

Jason Bell, EVP - Strategy, Programmes & Field Operations

Over 400,000 elephants live and move within Africa’s increasingly fragmented savanna landscapes that sprawl across half the continent. Only 10% of this vast swathe is protected. Savannah regions are also home to half a billion people, frequently leading to high levels of conflict between humans and wildlife, particularly elephants.

So, can elephants and people coexist and thrive? And can conservation actions mitigate these threats? A simple ‘yes’ answers both of these fundamental questions, thanks to more than 20 years of research by a team of scientists funded by IFAW.

## A conservation success story

Their work shows that conservation measures have successfully stopped declines in the savanna elephant population across southern Africa, where more than 70% of these great grey leviathans live. Today, there are the same number of elephants as there were 25 years ago—a rare conservation win when the

planet’s biodiversity is rapidly declining. But the pattern is not consistent. Some areas, such as southern Tanzania, eastern Zambia, and northern Zimbabwe, have experienced severe declines due to ivory poaching, while populations in other regions, like northern Botswana, are stable.

‘Our recently published study is the most comprehensive analysis of growth rates for any large mammal population in the world,’ said co-author Rob Guldmond, director of the Conservation Ecological Research Unit (CERU) at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

## Well-connected protected areas are critical

Africa’s existing national parks and wildlife reserves, and where they lie, play a significant role in determining how elephant populations grow or decline across southern Africa. The evidence collected over more than two decades indicates that the long-term solution to elephant survival not only requires strictly protected wildlife havens but also that

they are connected to allow elephant populations to move and stabilise naturally.

This cannot be overemphasised, given that core conservation areas contain only 48% of the region’s elephants. The majority move through adjacent buffer areas where, across most of Africa, habitat degradation, human-wildlife conflict, and, in some instances, heavy, chronic poaching for ivory seriously threaten many elephant populations.

While such poaching and other illegal activities are imposed by socioeconomic rather than ecological conditions, they may drive elephant growth patterns in some buffer populations. For example, Kafue, Niassa, Luangwa, and Zambezi in the northern reaches of southern Africa have been hard hit by ivory poaching. Such illegal activities are unlikely to ease any time soon and have caused steep declines in elephant numbers.

▲ Elephants observed by the Conservation Ecological Research Unit (CERU).



Photo: © Rudi van Aarde

## Elephant populations stable or growing

Across two-thirds of the conservation clusters studied, where 60 percent of Africa’s savannah elephants live, the scientists found that elephant populations are stable or increasing.

Considering savannah elephants are globally listed as endangered, southern African elephants show a low but remarkably stable growth pattern, notwithstanding the threats they face and that almost half these elephants live alongside humans in buffer areas.

Without buffer zones, elephant populations in isolated, strictly protected areas may flourish. But such ‘fortress conservation’ has its downsides. ‘Unchecked growth isn’t necessarily a good thing,’ says study co-author Stuart Pimm, the Doris Duke Professor of Conservation at Duke University in North Carolina.

‘Rapidly increasing populations can outgrow and damage their local environment and prove hard to manage—introducing a threat to their long-term stability,’ says Pimm. Also, such undesirable outcomes require unpalatable management interventions—contraception or culling, for example—while the damage to habitats may be severe and long-lasting.

## Healthy herds move freely

Buffer areas alongside core protected areas allow some activities such as sustainable farming, forestry, or trophy hunting and are, therefore, crucial for many apparent reasons. But their conservation value is even greater when they are connected to other buffer and core areas, and herds are allowed to move naturally.

For example, elephants can quickly move into a nearby buffer or core area if they feel threatened. And, when the perceived danger has passed, they can just as quickly move back. Similarly, if population growth in one area places pressure on resources, elephants can move into less pressured areas. This ability to move freely from one area to another is also essential, given seasonal shifts in food and water availability. And so, connectivity allows elephant populations that might otherwise be isolated to interact on some level, forming what is known as a metapopulation. Their freedom to move drives stability in the core conservation areas and variability in buffer zones, largely removing the need for costly, outdated human intervention strategies.

‘What’s crucial is that you need a mix of areas with more stable core populations linked to more variable buffer areas,’ said lead author Ryan Huang, a Duke Ph.D. now doing postdoctoral research at CERU.

‘These buffers absorb immigrants when core populations get too high, but also provide escape routes when elephants face poor environmental conditions or other threats such as poaching,’ said Huang.

Connecting protected areas allows a natural equilibrium to occur without human intervention, sparing conservationists from using their limited resources to maintain balance. The evidence for doing so is both comprehensive and compelling.

‘Calling for connecting parks isn’t something new. Many have done so,’ Huang said. ‘But surprisingly, there has not been a lot of published evidence of its effectiveness so far. This study helps quantify why this works.’

## The key to persistent elephant populations

For more than 20 years, IFAW has worked with the University of Pretoria’s CERU to better understand elephant populations across Africa. This collaboration is embodied in IFAW’s Room to Roam initiative—a visionary approach to elephant conservation based on robust, science-informed principles that are credible and deliver results. The aim is to ensure stable and persistent elephant populations long into the future—with little to no human interference.

Connecting core elephant areas and securing these habitats will create safe passages for elephants and other wildlife to move freely within their home ranges in East and southern Africa. Such a ‘connectivity conservation’ approach will bring greater biodiversity, enhance landscape resilience to climate change, and create a future where animals and communities can coexist and thrive.



Photo: © Rudi van Aarde

▲ Elephants observed by the Conservation Ecological Research Unit (CERU).



Photo: Michael Zomer / @IFAW

# Bringing Africa's next generation into the conservation conversation

Phillip Kuvawoga, Director - Landscape Conservation

Imagine growing up on the border of a protected wilderness area in East or southern Africa. You probably see zebras, impalas, or kudus on your way to school. These animals ordinarily don't harm people, but what about larger animals like elephants and predators such as lions? The landscape hosts healthy populations of these animals, and they can pose dangers to children if their paths cross.

Elephants and other wildlife must roam vast areas to find enough food and water. However, as they move beyond the boundaries of protected areas, they are more likely to interact with—and even come into conflict with—local communities.

That's why IFAW's Room to Roam initiative embraces community involvement in East and southern Africa as the key to conservation success. One of the most influential groups we work with is children as young as eight years old.

## Why we need to engage young people in conservation

If you look at the geography where we work, most of the youth come from difficult backgrounds and disadvantaged families. They live close to nature and rely on it for sustenance. Usually, their only interaction with wildlife is when it wanders

out of the park and destroys their crops or eats their livestock. As they get older, if they're unemployed, they can be drawn to illegal activities such as poaching, so their relationship with the park they live next to is not always harmonious.

Here's the stark reality: If we aren't involving young people in local wildlife issues, it could mean they are making decisions that cause harm to wildlife and the community in general.

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▲ Primary school, Amboseli, Kenya.

In the case of young people growing up on the edge of protected areas, if they don't see the value in protecting their local biodiversity, they are less inspired to be future stewards and champions for nature. Despite all the inherent dangers, poaching and other forms of wildlife crime become more attractive when people have very few other resources or opportunities to help their families survive. And when you combine that with a lack of understanding of the vital role biodiversity plays in our survival as humankind, the consequences could be dire.

Megafauna like elephants are critical allies in our fight against climate change. If we don't give young people the tools they need to make the right decisions, we will not just fail animals and people, but also the planet.

### **Our role as experienced conservationists**

At IFAW, we believe the aspirations of youth should drive the way.

So, what should our role as more experienced conservationists be? We must generate young people's interest

in conservation; we must build their capacity to make the right decisions about resource management; and we must develop a cadre of young conservationists who are conscious of the linkages between humans and the natural world.

We want to inspire kids to dream and map out the future they want to see and then develop the tools they need to make it a reality. To this end, we run programmes to create local champions in conservation, protection, and sustainable use of Africa's natural heritage.

### **How we develop young conservation leaders**

Our Environmental Stewards Programme has been running since 2019. Every year, we work with at least 315 children aged 8 to 13 who are students at 21 schools in the 10 buffer communities of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park.

We provide engaging educational resources and experiences for students to develop a sense of ownership and understanding of the dynamics between people, wildlife, and environmental interaction from a very young age.

Through outdoor nature education and classroom-based learning, students develop their sense of how to care for and work with nature, becoming conservation ambassadors in their communities.

The programme also pays tuition fees for 255 primary school children, has given 120 bicycles to students who walk more than five kilometres to reach school, and provides schools with hundreds of textbooks. We also provide conservation-themed supplementary materials and teacher training and support heritage and artistic activities, including poetry, folklore, choral music, films, and dances that ensure interactive, playful learning. Our engagement with local community leaders and senior citizens ensures intergenerational knowledge and skills transfer based on indigenous knowledge values and norms.

▼ Junior rangers participating in the Environmental stewardship program implemented in primary schools near Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW

## Why these programmes inspire generations

One of the most exciting aspects of the programme for students is the guided tours into Hwange National Park for experiential ecological learning. They become enthusiastic about the work—especially the first-timers who see the rangers in their uniforms and experience the vastness of the park and the scenic environment. From the teachers, we hear that students can grasp the conservation lessons better because they see and experience wildlife and nature differently.

From personal experience, I know how these experiences can transform young people’s understanding of the world around them. My father gave 42 years of his life as a scout, ranger, and game warden in Zimbabwe. I grew up with a watering hole close to our park house in Hwange National Park, swimming in the Mutorahuku River, and herding cattle in Churumanzu. Seeing and hearing about the work he did was inspiring. That’s why I joined the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority after university. When we instill a love of nature in children, it can be passed on for generations.

My daughter, who is in secondary school, wants to be a veterinarian.

We do similar work in Malawi, supporting school kids and setting up teachers’ conferences to exchange knowledge and skills. In Kenya, we run a scholarship programme for Olgulului–Ololarashi Group Ranch children, whose land borders Amboseli National Park. The scholarships take them through secondary, diploma, and university education.

For now, our programme targets kids in the buffer zones of protected areas, but we are discussing the idea of supporting exchanges between rural and urban schools. One day we may also set up international exchanges to have a more powerful programme of knowledge sharing, but we would need resources as we expand.

## The unique perspective young people bring

We celebrate the young demographic of our continent, which is projected to expand rapidly in the coming years. These young

people ask hard questions and try to shape their futures. They have a unique and powerful voice to change the narrative and advocate for conscious environmentalism. They need conservation to be smart, relevant, and attractive, and they are tech savvy enough to reimagine and transform it.

If we want to develop climate-resilient landscapes and communities, there’s no two ways about it: Young people cannot be an afterthought—if they are, we are destined to fail. They must be at the centre of decision-making processes for wildlife conservation to truly succeed.

▲ Junior rangers in the Environmental stewardship program implemented in primary schools near Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.





# Why conservation will fail if we fail our wildlife rangers

Matthew Morley, DVP - Conservation

Imagine you're a young, newly married wildlife ranger. You work in a remote national park, so you often must leave your spouse behind for several months or sometimes, if you're lucky, bring them with you. But when you arrive at the accommodation you've been promised, you discover it's a tin hut. In summer, the heat is unbearable—upwards of 40 °Celsius (100 °Fahrenheit) outside. In winter, it's freezing.

We can't expect somebody to live like this and still put on their boots every morning, pick up their weapon, and patrol the national park, where they might encounter a lion, an angry elephant, an armed poacher, or an illegal miner.

They're tired. Sometimes hungry. Worried about their families' education and healthcare.

I wouldn't be able to do it, and I don't think others should be expected to either—certainly not under conditions in which their own welfare seems to be low on the list of priorities.

As conservationists, we simply cannot leave behind the most significant and important defenders of wildlife and protected areas. Rangers are not only one of the most fundamental building blocks of conservation but are global planetary health workers. We must do everything possible to honor their tremendous bravery by improving their wellbeing, safety, and security—and that of their families.

## The dangers rangers face

Globally, we estimate that at least 150 rangers die in the line of duty every year.

The International Rangers Federation recorded 2,351 on-duty ranger fatalities between 2006 and 2021. Almost half (42.2%) were felonious deaths—wildlife crime is big business and is often connected to other organized crimes. Poachers, militias, and terrorists target and kill rangers.

The other half of the on-duty fatalities were from accidents, illness, wildlife attacks, or other work-related casualties.

Worryingly, ranger deaths seem to be increasing. Some fatalities could be avoided with better protection and equipment, more training, and safer work environments.

When a ranger's life is lost, their family is left to pick up the pieces, especially the financial burden. Many rangers do not have access to insurance policies to protect their family's financial security if they die or are too injured to work.

▲ Wilson Kosianka and Team Lioness' Eunice Peneti, Olgulului Community Wildlife Rangers, surveying the landscape while on patrol in Amboseli, Kenya.

## What do rangers need?

At the very least, rangers need decent accommodation and rations, reliable vehicles, good boots, and uniforms. When these basic needs are met, they can tackle most of the tasks set in front of them, even amidst extraordinary difficulty and physical hardship.

But there are other pieces of equipment that make a tremendous difference to their wellbeing. If they have an SAT phone, for example, they can call for help if they get into trouble. When they know their colleagues will come rescue them if they are injured by an animal or a poacher, it boosts their morale. And that boosts their performance.

Rangers need insurance that supports their families if they can no longer work.

Going to work knowing there is a safety net also raises their morale. We must also ensure rangers are receiving a living wage and are paid on time each month.

Recognition and support of the emotional toll it takes when their colleagues have been killed or injured is also crucial. Providing services like memorials and honoring their sacrifices can make a big difference.

I was fortunate to be in Zambia for World Ranger Day this year, and we held a moving afternoon ceremony recognizing fallen rangers at a monument in Lusaka Park, which was developed with support from IFAW and other conservation NGOs. If you think about the role of ceremonies in your personal life or in groups or associations you belong to, you understand that these moments of recognition matter.

They matter to your identity, your pride, and your dignity.

This understanding means that we dedicate part of our resources towards improving living and working conditions for rangers, especially ensuring that their workplace has adequate resources, since most of them spend more time protecting animals and landscapes than they spend at home.

▼ A community ranger shares the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) prevention leaflet that the "Community Ranger Network Initiative" produced with a villager going into the mountains to pick mushrooms.





## How IFAW supports wildlife rangers' welfare

IFAW doesn't employ any rangers. They are usually government or community employees whose salaries and equipment are funded by taxes or tourism revenue. But many of these governments face often challenging economic circumstances and many competing priorities. That's why it's up to IFAW and our global partnerships and funders to step in. Because, if we don't, our conservation efforts will fail.

In Kenya, IFAW supports more than 85 Olgulului Community Wildlife Rangers by providing logistical support, such as paying salaries and providing supplies like food rations, medical insurance, equipment, uniforms, vehicles, digital radios, and vehicle maintenance and data collection tools.

We also recently completed the newly constructed David Rio Community Ranger Base, which now provides ten rangers comfortably furnished living quarters.

In February 2019, along with local community leaders, IFAW's wildlife security team created Team Lioness. These Maasai women are defying social norms and creating new opportunities for women.

In Zimbabwe, when tourism shut down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAW immediately shifted its focus to support ranger welfare so key staff could

remain at their posts. As a result, not a single elephant poaching was recorded in Hwange National Park in the past three years.

IFAW recently handed over the Makona Ranger Base station to Zimbabwe's parks and wildlife management agency, ZimParks, as part of its 25-year, 50-million-dollar conservation support to Hwange National Park. Makona is a permanent, full-service ranger base with an operations center and staff housing for rangers and their families who will live there permanently to protect the park and wildlife and provide a swift response to human-wildlife conflict incidents in bordering community areas.

On the other side of the globe, IFAW partnered with local governmental partners in Jinghong, China, to support rangers as part of the Human-Elephant Co-existence Community Ranger Network Initiative. Launched in April 2021, the initiative enhances the safety of both humans and elephants, because an increasing number of elephants are roaming outside of reserve areas and clashing with locals.

To achieve our goals for rangers, we have joined forces with key global organizations to better coordinate and pool the limited resources available for ranger welfare. Our partners include United for Wildlife, International Ranger Federation, Universal Ranger Support Alliance, and Game Rangers International.

## Our hope for the future

Our goal is to ensure rangers have safe, decent working and living standards. We aim to provide adequate resources, equipment, and technology they need to carry out their duties, as well as the legal and policy frameworks that protect workers' rights over and above global human rights standards.

It is easy to find controversy in conservation practice. There are many competing agendas and opinions, but no one thinks that supporting rangers is a bad idea. In an overly complicated world, it is a simple, clear, and effective path to success. The global community must collectively recognize and prioritize these essential workers.

▲ Aerial view of housing for rangers and their families at Makona substation, Hwange National Park's first modern-era ranger station.



Photo: Cuyo Adhi / © IFAW

# Why 2023 was monumental for Kenyan wildlife

James Isiche, Director - Africa

Over the past year, Kenyan decision-makers have begun to embrace the fact that our existence is intrinsically intertwined with thriving natural systems. From our mental well-being to our food systems, economic prosperity, and clean air, nature is the ultimate provider.

However, nature has got one significant shortcoming—the space is finite. As the number of people increases, the room for wildlife decreases, and this imbalance will have severe consequences for us all if we fail to protect our natural resources.

According to the 2019 census data, Kenya's population grew by nine million in the

last decade. Population growth increases pressure on both biodiversity and human communities, exacerbating food and water shortages, and reducing resilience in the face of climate change. Community lands on the edges of protected areas have increasingly been subdivided, fenced off, and converted to agricultural parcels. What's more, as our human footprint expands into critical wildlife corridors, we create the perfect recipe for human-wildlife conflict.

This sobering reality necessitates a strategy that will strike the right balance between sustainable growth and protecting natural ecosystems.

That's why the conservation experts at IFAW have been working tirelessly to bring partners together to urgently address threats to biodiversity. Thanks to their efforts, our transformative Room to Roam initiative is now gaining tremendous traction among Kenyan decision-makers in both national and county governments.

▲ Elephants in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.



Photo: © Donal Boyd

## Giving wildlife room to roam

Backed by 20 years of science and engagement with local communities, Room to Roam is securing and connecting habitats, creating safe passages for wildlife to travel freely through their home ranges in East and southern Africa. The result will be greater biodiversity, natural resilience to climate change, and a future where animals and people can coexist and thrive.

Last year the profound initiative really gained momentum, making 2023 a monumental year for conservation in Kenya. There is an increasing realisation within political, conservation, and local community circles that we must do everything possible to protect wildlife

habitats, achieve peaceful co-existence, and safeguard the economic livelihoods of over 50 million people. Planning and legislating how land can be used is central to this challenge.

One of the biggest steps forward was an executive decree halting land transfers within wildlife zones—a demonstration of the political courage required to protect wildlife in an increasingly urbanising world.

In July, a presidential directive put a spotlight on protecting wildlife corridors, a huge relief for conservationists who've been shouting themselves hoarse for years. The directive is to implement Kenya's National Wildlife Migratory Corridors and Dispersal Areas report recommendations.

Development in one of Africa's fastest growing capitals is fragmenting land on the southern edge of Nairobi National Park, where lions, rhinos, and buffaloes once roamed freely. To safeguard the Athi-Kapiti corridors from further human encroachment, buildings such as a cement factory are in line for demolition. This will ensure wildlife find space to move, forage for food, and breed.

In September, Kenya hosted the inaugural Africa Climate Summit. African politicians and climate-change leaders gathered to chart a path to address the climate crisis. At this landmark summit, IFAW delegates made a strong call to position wildlife conservation as a natural climate solution.

November saw IFAW and Kenya's State Department for Wildlife host a milestone meeting with community stakeholders, national government leaders, county government agencies, and conservationists. The meeting paved the way to securing key dispersal areas within Kenya's Southern Rangelands, a critical habitat for 70% of the country's wildlife.

"Our plan is to protect wildlife corridors in the county to ensure elephants have enough room to roam while ensuring that communities gain tangible benefits from wildlife tourism," Kajiado County governor Joseph Ole Lenku told the IFAW delegation.



Photo: Moses Wainuri / © IFAW

▲ A herd of elephants in open grasslands with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background, Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

◀ James Isiche, Africa Director, IFAW and other guests are received by local leaders during a two-day meeting on conservation in Amboseli.



Photo: Guyo Adhi / © IFAW

## Giving people an economic boost

While Room to Roam advocates for connecting fragmented wildlife habitats, it's also about mitigating the brutal impacts of climate change, like the droughts that many Kenyans have already witnessed. Families have suffered significant livestock deaths, disrupting the flow of income and food sources for pastoralists.

Communities play a critical role in protecting wildlife and the environment, so IFAW works to ensure people living alongside wildlife reap benefits from wildlife conservation efforts. In Kenya, economic empowerment through innovative programmes such as Inua Kijiji, Jenga Mama and Team Lioness have become integral to ensuring elephants and other wildlife are protected. Nearly 90 rangers from the local Maasai community have also secured a sustainable livelihood and are advancing conservation in the Amboseli ecosystem.

The Kitenden Conservancy best exemplifies the benefits of securing conservation areas by leasing land from the communities who own it. Kitenden is a critical corridor connecting Amboseli and Kilimanjaro National Parks. The parcel of land is vital for the Maasai community's livelihoods as well as wildlife in the adjacent protected areas. Severe droughts, pressure from agricultural activities and increasing human populations brought people and wildlife closer to each other, exacerbating human-wildlife conflict incidents. To avert a potential crisis and provide a new lease of life for elephants, IFAW partnered with Maasai landowners to convert a section of the Kitenden corridor into Kitenden Conservancy. The Maasai benefit financially from leasing out 26,000 hectares of land, and wildlife can roam freely. Elephants are thriving alongside community members who value and appreciate conservation as a competitive land-use plan.

Thanks to stronger partnerships with local communities through platforms such as the

Community Thought Leaders Forum and the Maa Economic Bloc, we are witnessing genuine community buy-in and building consensus around protecting wildlife corridors and dispersal areas.

We reached fantastic milestones in 2023, and we are on an upward trajectory for 2024 that positions wild animals as a resource to propel our social-economic ambitions. Room to Roam stands out as a sustainable solution to ensure both human and wildlife populations will be viable long into the future.

▲ H.E. Joseph Ole Lenku, the Governor of Kajiado County, engages with the IFAW delegation during a roundtable to discuss Room to Roam in the Southern Rangelands of Kenya.

► Family of Jenga Mama graduates arriving to the graduation ceremony, Amboseli, Kenya.



Photo: © Donal Boyd



Photo: Karel Prinsloo / © IFAW

# How we're tackling wildlife crime in East Africa

Jacqueline Bubi, Senior Wildlife Crime Analyst

Along the Kenya-Tanzania border, elephants, big cats, and other megafauna roam back and forth across the international boundary in search of mates, water, pasture, and prey along age-old routes.

While this boundary is a boon for biodiversity, it is also a conduit for poachers and wildlife traffickers who form part of a transnational illegal wildlife crime industry worth between US\$7 billion and US\$20 billion. This trade is, according to Interpol, the fourth-largest form of organized crime in the world, going 'hand in glove with tax evasion, corruption, money laundering, and even murder, with organised crime groups using the same routes to smuggle protected wildlife as they do people, weapons, drugs, and other illegal products.'

IFAW's East Africa wildlife crime analyst Jacqueline Bubi says bushmeat and wildlife products are usually trafficked in the region by car, motorcycle, or on foot across four border points in Kenya: Lunga Lunga in Kwale, Tarakea in Taveta, Loitoktok in Kajiado, and Isebania in Migori.

'Raw and finished rhino horn and ivory, live pangolins, pangolin scales, and sandalwood are the most trafficked items across the two countries, mostly to markets in the Far East. Trafficking of venomous snakes and non-venomous reptiles for the illegal live pet trade in Europe is also common,' she says.

To curb this criminal activity, IFAW, in collaboration with partners, spearheads training of Kenyan and Tanzanian law enforcement officials to detect wildlife species and products that are smuggled or trafficked within and across the two

countries and to secure crime scenes. To date, 200 officers, including wildlife personnel from Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somaliland, and Djibouti, have benefited from training sessions funded by partners, including the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and USAID.

In addition to training, IFAW supplies the investigators and community rangers with equipment such as computers, mobile forensics tools and mobile phones, first aid and crime scene investigation kits, forensic gloves, and basic kits for collecting evidence.

▲ Confiscated ivory.





Photo: Samuel Muriua / © IFAW

## Following the money

But IFAW's Africa director James Isiche, formerly a Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) assistant director for Tsavo Conservation Area, believes there is more to stopping illegal wildlife trade than arresting poachers and traffickers.

'While we must do everything in our power to prevent poaching, we have to appreciate that illegal wildlife trade is often directly linked to organised crime syndicates,' he says. 'It takes a sophisticated network to move illegal wildlife products across the hinterland into containers at African seaports for transit to markets in Southeast Asia. To stop those who drive the process, we must scale up from the minor role-players who kill wildlife and follow the money to identify the big players who fund poaching and wildlife trafficking.'

IFAW is working to seal this gap by training KWS officers and wildlife crime investigators from the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) and

Tanzania National Parks Agency (TANAPA) in financial investigations and money laundering.

'The only way to destroy these networks is to establish how money from the proceeds of wildlife crime is wired or laundered,' says Bubi, who leads the IFAW team in the training sessions. Together with trainers from KWS, Kenya's Asset Recovery Agency, Financial Reporting Centre, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Basel Institute of Governance, and the African Wildlife Foundation, IFAW trains wildlife crime investigators to follow the money trail and connect the dots between the financier and the poacher.

The trainings involve exposure to anti-money laundering laws, finance investigation techniques, identifying suspicious financial transactions, and collaboration with state agencies such as Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), which has the capacity and expertise to unravel intricate financial crimes.

These training sessions have fostered a rapport between national wildlife agencies and forged personal friendships among senior wildlife crime investigators across East Africa, which is crucial in sharing information and responding quickly when cross-border crimes occur.

## Law enforcement gaps

As part of the training program, Kenyan and Tanzanian rangers also conduct concurrent field patrols in their respective areas of authority along the international border. In one exercise conducted in February 2022 by 40 rangers from both countries, officials arrested 16 suspects, confiscated numerous snares, and recovered 200 kilograms of bushmeat, mainly zebra and dik-dik.

Law enforcement is an expensive undertaking. Park rangers, community game scouts, and patrol vehicles are needed in wildlife crime hotspots like the Kenya-Tanzania border to deter poaching, fight wildlife crimes, and keep animals alive. This poses a massive challenge for under-resourced conservation agencies.

'The decline of key wildlife species due to poaching and other forms of wildlife crime is a universal concern that requires the attention and concerted efforts between governments, the private sector, and non-profit institutions,' says Isiche.



Photo: © IFAW

▲ Demonstration during First Responder training for Enduimet Village game scouts from Tanzania on what is contained in a wildlife scene of crime processing kit, Kajiado, Kenya.

◀ Frontline law enforcement officers in Kenya complete a species identification exercise during DISRUPT training.



Photo: Michael Zomer / © IFAW

# How a community can protect marine life in Kenya

March 15, 2024

The rich biodiversity of Kenya's coastal ecosystems faces rapid population growth, illegal fishing, habitat degradation, and the looming threat of climate change. Marine megafauna like sea turtles and dolphins are some of the victims.

IFAW works in Kenya to reduce these pressures on marine ecosystems and increase protection through locally managed marine areas (LMMAs), engaging communities to become involved in conservation. We have partnered with Kenya Wildlife Service, Oceans Alive, and Bahari Hai to ensure that Kenya's natural resources are used fairly and sustainably.

▲ IFAW and partners provide legally approved proper fishing nets, like this one shown by Dadley Kiluhula, park manager at Kenya Wildlife Service, to coastal communities in Kenya.



Photo: Michael Zomer / © IFAW

Watch the video at [ifaw.org/international/journal/marine-life-protection-community-kenya](http://ifaw.org/international/journal/marine-life-protection-community-kenya) or read the transcript:

**Lillian Mulupi, Marine Conservation programme officer at IFAW:** The ocean is our biggest hope in the fight against climate change, because it's actually the ocean that is supporting the life on Earth. If we don't have an ocean, we won't have life on Earth.

A big proportion of Kenyans living on the coast are fishermen. They depend on fishing for a livelihood. Anything affecting the fish population in the marine environment will definitely affect their lives.

**Ledama Masidza, environmental programme manager & marine conservationist at Oceans Alive:** We are in a very vulnerable and risky position, especially looking at our marine ecosystems, our coral reefs, where by 2050 we are in a very precarious position.

**Lillian:** The situation right now is that marine turtles could be safe within a protected area, but when they get out, they get poached, the eggs get eaten, and things like that. So, IFAW is setting up a programme to protect the marine species, especially the marine megafauna.

The marine megafauna that we are targeting to protect usually are migratory. They don't stay in one place. So, we need to protect the ocean along those migratory routes.

**Ledama:** The ideal scenario is a chain of collaboratively managed areas up and down the Kenyan coast—even though they may not all be doing the same thing, but each of them is operating based on a plan that is in touch with its ecosystem needs and the needs of the communities on the ground in the area, feeding towards a wider network of bodies sustainably managing our marine resource and benefitting our marine ecosystem.

**Lillian:** What we're looking at is animals and humans to thrive. We have already started engaging government agencies and the communities to figure out where the inadequacies are and what we can do to improve.

**John Mwangi Gachuru, director of Fisheries Department, Kilifi County, Kenya:** We have to understand the resource in its entirety. What are the issues that we must take care of so that, at the end of the day, that resource is able to be sustainably used?

**Mohamed Namuna, Kenya Wildlife Service, Watamu Marine National Park & Reserve:** Currently, we are in Mida Creek to perform a patrol for illegal fishermen and illegal logging. As we have seen, these fishermen are using some of the recommended gears, which are fishing lines. So, since they're using the recommended gear, we can just encourage them to do so, so that they keep this environment and the ecosystem safe for their generation and the generation to come.

**Dadley Kiluhula, park manager at Kenya Wildlife Service:** These are mosquito nets. Everybody gets it for free. So, instead of using them for the required purpose, they use them for fishing—one, because they don't have money to buy the repaired nets, two, because it is the easy option. It actually comes out with everything, everything, including the eggs.

Those people have been able to voluntarily bring these ones, and we actually give them proper nets that are legally approved.

**Lillian:** It's only when communities understand and make the decision to conserve—then is when conservation is effective.

Currently, we have about five marine protected areas that are gazetted by the government, and so in between we have communities that are utilising these areas. But when we have active management all over the coast, species that are spreading out have got a safe place to be.

**Ledama:** By setting aside a marine area for the restoration of the fishery and giving it its place in this modern-day world, 400% fish biomass increase, 30% recovery in coral, 17% in seagrass. Wow, it does work. We just need to give it its place in this action that we take.

**Lillian:** We have a plan of what we are going to do, and it is huge—and so it also needs a lot of funding. Depending on our supporters, we are positive that we can be able to raise these funds to be able to carry out these very important initiatives.

**Text:** This program is carried out by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in partnership with Kenya Wildlife Service, Oceans Alive, and Bahari Hai.



Photo: Duncan Willetts / © IFAW

▲ Aerial view of the coastline in Watamu, Kenya.

▲ Close-up of a green sea turtle in Watamu, Kenya.



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW

# Fence building in Malawi's Kasungu National Park fuels entrepreneurship

Patricio Ndadzela, Director - Malawi and Zambia

Davison Chirwa, a 27-year-old father of two from Bilale village in Malawi, has set his sights on opening a butchery in the future where he will be selling fresh and roasted goat meat.

'I am just waiting for my goats to multiply a little so that I start strong,' Chirwa said.

This business idea came after IFAW hired him and others in his village in the Kasungu District of Malawi to construct a perimeter fence around Kasungu National Park—Malawi's second largest wildlife reserve. The money he earned from this work has now empowered him to start his own business.

▲ Community fence construction in Malawi.



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW

### Fence construction employs community members

As part of our work to combat wildlife crime in the Malawi-Zambia landscape, along with partner government departments in the two countries, we are implementing various activities to prevent human-wildlife conflict, poaching, and encroachment into the protected areas in this conservation corridor.

One of those activities is the construction of a 130-kilometre fence along the boundaries of Kasungu National Park, which will keep wildlife in the park and nearby communities safe.

To do this work, we hire people from the communities within a five-kilometre radius of the park. The work is distributed in such a way that every village through which fence passes benefits. When a construction stretch enters a given village, people from that village are contracted. In this way, we promote community participation in managing and sharing the benefits of the park.

When the Bilale village phase arrived in December 2022, Chirwa was among those hired. He had no job then, only earning a living through small-scale vegetable farming.

The fence construction earned him a wage of USD\$56 per month.

‘It was good money,’ he said. ‘It came at a critical time. There is usually hunger here in December, January, and February. With this money, I was able to buy food for my family, and we were saved.’

### Wages from fence-building create new opportunities

Chirwa decided to use his wages to change his life.

‘This was piecemeal that would last just three months, and I thought I may never get

another opportunity,’ he said. ‘So this was the moment to set myself on the path to making a big difference to my life and that of my family.’

He saved some of the money he earned from the fence construction and bought two goats in February 2023. His herd has now multiplied to five.

Chirwa has already started realising benefits from this small flock. In his vegetable farming, Davie has been relying on inorganic fertiliser, which have sharply risen in price recently, making the commodity unaffordable to many smallscale farmers. For his recent tomato crop production, he used manure he collected from his goat pen.

‘It was a small piece of land, but the crop did extremely well. The income I got from the sales kept my home running for some months,’ he said.

As the rainy season begins, Chirwa is collecting more manure to apply to his maize crop. He hopes that as his goat herd increases, he will be able to collect enough manure for his entire maize field in future.

Beyond crop farming, his plan is to open a butchery one day.

Phillip Namagonya, IFAW’s community engagement officer, said when the organisation hires people from the villages for the fence project, it first gives them some advice on financial management.

‘We tell the people right on the first day that this is a short-term contract and they need to be prudent with the money they get,’ he said. ‘Naturally, some like Davie listen to that advice and they invest it or put it to good use.’

Namagonya said hiring people from the communities is also helping to reduce poaching and encroachment into the park.

‘When people have nothing to do, they will want to invade the park to extract

resources for their survival,’ he said. ‘The fence project gives them a source of a living and that keeps them away from the park.’

Ultimately, individuals working on the fence go into their communities and spread messages against poaching. Through their earnings, they also serve as inspiration to others, showing that conservation initiatives can have positive impacts on their lives.



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW

▲ Community fence construction along the boundaries of Kasungu National Park, Malawi.

▲ Aerial view of community fence construction in Kasungu, Malawi.



Photo: Luckmore Safuli / © IFAW

# Wildlife flourish again near Hwange National Park thanks to snare response team

Arnold Tshipa, Field Operations Manager

African savannah elephants, kudu, and other wildlife are once again roaming safely across a 20-kilometre buffer area that borders the immense Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, thanks in part to the tireless efforts of a specialised on-site anti-poaching team.

The team—staffed by the Dete Animal Rescue Trust (DART) with support from IFAW—has made remarkable progress.

In less than one year, the number of lethal snares they have detected in the area has plummeted by more than 80%. At the same time, local wildlife has become more plentiful.

DART programme director and wildlife conservation specialist Paul de Montille said that in 2023, a total of 43 wire snares were recovered in the Hwange buffer zone during the three-month period from April

to June. This marked a steep decline from the previous year, when a total of 231 were recovered from July to September.

▲ Elephants by the water in the buffer area bordering Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.



Photo: Luckmore Sefuli / © IFAW

### Protecting animals from painful, senseless deaths

The results of the DART team's hard work were visible during a recent spring afternoon, a time when the midday sun bakes the earth and watering holes become a convergence point for nearby animals.

While a large African fish eagle—Zimbabwe's national bird—displayed its hunting prowess, three elephant bulls emerged from the thicket, making their way to the waterhole for an afternoon drink and mud bath. A few metres away, a pair of Egyptian geese settled down for a midday sunbath while a male kudu stood proudly on the horizon, its majestic horns held high.

Until about a year ago, this wildlife spectacle could not have been imagined in this area. Now, with the DART team's dedicated presence and consistent snare sweeps, wildlife sightings like these have become increasingly common.

The steady availability of adequate water is also vital to the return of wildlife, so IFAW recently sponsored the drilling of a solar-powered borehole that now supplies 6,000 litres of water per hour to the main waterhole.

### Snare sweeps save lives

'It is so encouraging to witness a gradual and much-needed rewilding of this buffer area,' de Montille said. 'This space is now a safe zone with more and more animals taking up residence. The establishment of the permanent DART base, with the help of IFAW, has been a major deterrent to potential poachers.'

The DART team is carefully trained to understand the terrain and wildlife of Hwange National Park, a 14,600 km<sup>2</sup> area that boasts 45,000 savannah elephants as well as other mammalian species. Not far from the DART base is the famous, scenic Dete Vlei, a dried riverbed with iconic grassy plains teeming with wildlife.

Whenever park authorities or local safari operators see snared or injured animals in the wild, they contact DART first responders. 'We recently spotted an injured zebra on the Dete Vlei,' said James Kuwana, a Hwange-based tourism executive. 'We immediately contacted Paul and his team to assist with de-snaring. We have developed good relations with the DART team, and whenever we find snared animals, we reach out to them, and they are quick to attend to all the cases.'

Protecting wildlife has the added benefit of protecting local commerce.

'Wildlife remains the major drawcard for thousands of safari enthusiasts who visit our destination,' said Kuwana. 'Guests come here to see animals. Creating safe spaces for wildlife is therefore critical.'

### Creating safe spaces for wildlife to thrive

Most wire snares are made from cheap and easily acquired materials such as wire and brake cables. In the case of Dete, most of the snares are made from fallen telephone wire.

'In 2020, we had to embark on an extensive telephone wire removal exercise and removed a staggering 26 tonnes of wire that could have been used by poachers to snare our treasured wildlife,' said senior wildlife rescuer Severino Ndlovu. He is leader of the DART team, comprised of four men and four women, which patrols and combs the bushes and savannah grassland with the mission of freeing wildlife from the deadly snares.

'It's not an easy exercise,' noted Ndlovu. 'It is tough and quite demanding. The wire snares are hard to spot, and it requires very sharp eyes.' Despite these challenges, the team's persistence and commitment are bearing fruit.

Neil Greenwood, IFAW wildlife rescue director, said, 'It is gratifying that our conservation efforts under the IFAW-DART partnership are contributing to the thriving wildlife populations in and around the Hwange National Park buffer area. Our long-term goal is to ensure that wildlife and people can thrive for years to come in one of Africa's most beautiful landscapes.'



Photo: Luckmore Sefuli / © IFAW

▲ A member of the DART team removes a snare found in the buffer area bordering Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

◀ The DART team with snares found in the buffer area bordering Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

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