

Room to Roam Impact Report 2024



ifaw

Room to Roam Leadership



Jason Bell
Executive Vice President,
Strategy, Programs
& Field Operations
Based in South Africa



Jimmiel Mandima
Vice President, Global Programs
Based in Washington DC, USA



Matthew Morley
Deputy Vice President,
Global Programs
Based in Washington DC, USA



Matt Collis
Senior Director, Policy
Based in London, UK



Katie Moore
Senior Director, Animal Rescue
Based in Massachusetts, USA



James Isiche
Africa Director
Based in Nairobi, Kenya



Phillip Kuvawoga
Senior Director, Conservation
Based in Harare, Zimbabwe



Neil Greenwood
Director, Wildlife Rescue
Based in Cape Town,
South Africa



Patricio Ndadzela
County Director,
Malawi & Zambia
Based in Malawi



Allela Nyahuye
County Director, Zimbabwe
Based in Harare, Zimbabwe



John Kogada
Program Director
for Community Engagement
Based in Nairobi, Kenya

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Photo: © Donal Boyd

With thanks

The International Fund for Animal Welfare is grateful for the generosity of donors and partners who have championed **Room to Roam** since 2018.

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▲ Elephants with trunks intertwined at sunset in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

Your support has impact

The problems we face are urgent, complex, and require creative solutions. Thanks to your ongoing commitment, IFAW is making notable strides for animals and communities throughout East and Southern Africa. Below is a snapshot of the impact we have made thanks to your dedicated support.

Rescue

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7

orphaned elephants brought to soft-release site in Panda Masuie, Zimbabwe



244

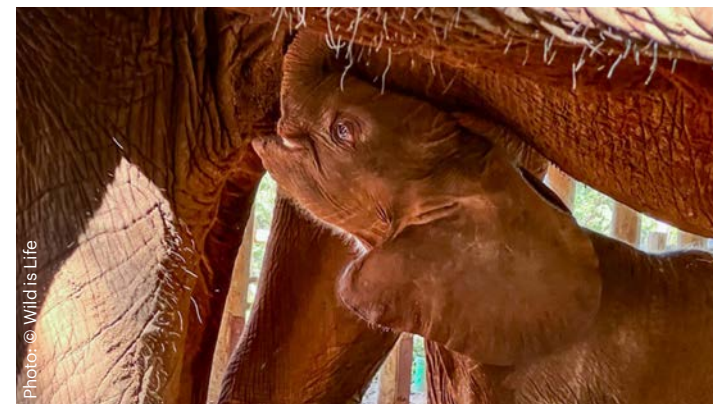
wire snares were recovered in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park buffer zone during a six-month period

3

elephants released back into the wild in Kafue National Park, Zambia

2

rescued orphans became the newest residents of the Lusaka Elephant Nursery in Zambia



First elephant calf born

into the orphaned herd at Wild is Life – Zimbabwe Elephant Nursery.

Conservation

Page 9



1,320 km²

of land secured throughout Kenya's rangelands to develop wildlife corridors

113

green energy solar systems installed in Tsavo to reduce fuelwood demand

5,500

tree seedlings planted within four newly created nurseries around Kenya's Amboseli National Park



121 km²

of land outside of Kenya's Amboseli National Park now privately protected through the Kitenden Conservancy



1,250

avocado seedlings donated to farmers surrounding Kenya's Tsavo West National Park

People and Policy: Communities

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25-year \$50M partnership

signed with ZimParks to support wildlife conservation in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park

100

bicycles donated to students living in buffer communities around Hwange National Park

500

Maasai community women from 3 villages around the Illaingarunyoni Conservancy joined IFAW's Inua Kijiji initiative

500

textbooks donated, benefiting 1,600 children

315

children between the ages of 8-13 participated in our Environmental Stewards Program

1

new borehole drilled in Zimbabwe to provide fresh drinking water

69

predator-proof bomas installed in selected villages bordering Hwange National Park

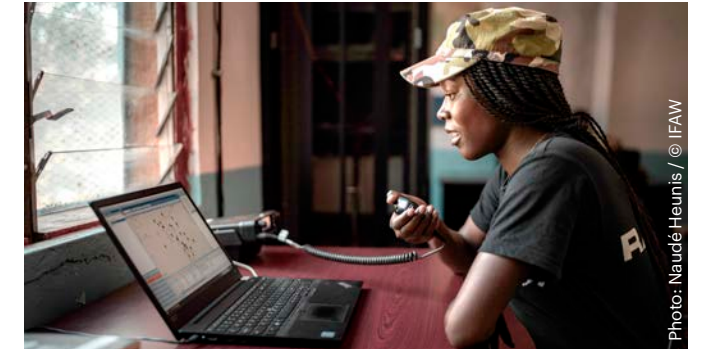


60

women from Kenya's Amboseli community graduated into phase two of Jenga Mama's vocational training program

People and Policy: Wildlife Rangers

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0

recorded elephant poaching instances within Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park

2

new ranger bases opened in Kenya and Zambia

2

renovations completed to elevate an existing ranger base

2

dogs joined ZimParks K9 unit

1

year since joining the International Ranger Federation



2

new ranger bases under construction in Kenya



The balance of nature

People, animals, plants, and the land and seascapes comprise life on our planet. Rather than competing with one another for shared space and resources, each essential strand is woven into the balance of nature, overlapping and connecting to form one strong and healthy planet: a dynamic world prospering in a harmonious and symbiotic relationship. This is fundamental to IFAW's work to promote coexistence and our vision of people and animals thriving together.

Room to Roam puts belief into action within several critical landscapes in East and Southern Africa. Through investments in establishing viable elephant populations, empowering local communities to create their own livelihoods and environmental successes, and restoring and reconnecting fragmented ecosystems, we continue to deliver solutions that will make the earth a more sustainable and healthier place to live—for all of us.

Room to Roam enhances the lives of people and animals through Rescue and Conservation, anchored by People and Policy. IFAW is working with traditional leaders and local communities, government officials, law enforcement agencies, other NGO's, private sector partners, and more to deliver the long-term vision of sustainable use of planetary resources and improved human well-being.

Please join IFAW in celebrating the milestones made possible thanks to your continuous support throughout the reporting period of July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024. The impact is clear, and we are grateful for your belief in our work. Together, we are changing lives for animals and people.

Mandima

Jimmiel Mandima
Vice President, Global Programs

We continue to deliver solutions that will make the earth a more sustainable and healthier place to live—for all of us.

▲ A herd of elephants grazing along a river bank.

Rescue



Within IFAW's mission to conserve and protect all animals, we consider elephants a natural ally due to their role as ecosystem engineers. As carbon sequestration is seen as an essential element in alleviating the ongoing climate crisis, we see the protection and growth of Africa's elephant population as a definitive opportunity for positive impact. We're continuing our support of elephant orphanages in Zimbabwe and Zambia, which are

working to ensure that baby elephants who lose their mothers do not lose the opportunity to survive.

In 1979 the total number of African elephants was well over a million. Today, that number is closer to 450,000. Each orphaned elephant returned to the wild may represent a future descendant, adding to the overall genetic health of the population.

▲ Annabel with her new calf Summer in the boma at the Panda Masuie elephant release site.



Preparing for life in the wild

In summer 2023, seven elephants that had been rescued and raised by partner Wild is Life in Harare, Zimbabwe were transported to Panda Masuie Forest Reserve, a soft-release site near Victoria Falls. The 343km² habitat is the second of three stages in the rehabilitation journey these orphaned elephants take as they gather strength to return back into the wild. The reserve is part of the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area and serves as a safe homebase to reintroduce the elephants to life in the wild, letting them integrate and eventually join established herds migrating through the area.



The next generation of wild elephants in Zambia

Our partners at Game Rangers International have been keeping busy. Two new orphans, Ndewa and Kasungu, were rescued and welcomed into the Lusaka Elephant Nursery where they are currently receiving 24-hour expert care. Meanwhile, Mbila and Zongo were deemed strong enough to graduate from the nursery to the Kafue Release Facility and join the release herd where they will slowly adapt to life in the wild. Finally, Musu was the first bull elephant to ever leave the release facility and head south into Kafue National Park, where he joined an established herd.

The first birth within Panda Masuie

In January 2024, Annabel, one of the elephants residing within Panda Masuie, unexpectedly gave birth to a female calf named Summer. Although she had not fully embraced the wild around her, the mother had been spending her nights away from the reserve, and the team from Wild is Life suspects a wild bull to be the father. Summer marks the first birth within the rescued elephants living in the forest reserve; her arrival provides providing invaluable information on how herds raise their calves.



A decline in snare poaching thanks to the Dete Animal Rescue Trust (DART)

Between September 2023 and January 2024, 117 snare patrols were conducted within a 589km² area bordering Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe recovering 244 wire snares. It is believed that this increased number of snares found, up from 67, was due to the greater size of the area patrolled thanks to IFAW's support of the DART team. In addition, 21 poaching suspects were apprehended, up from two in the previous year. Thanks to these snare sweeps, wildlife has returned to the area that was once known as a 'poaching hotspot'.

- ▲ A member of the DART team holds a piece of found wire snare.
- ◀ Mbila and Zongo before being translocated to Kafue National Park from Lusaka Elephant Nursery, Zambia.
- ▲ A group of elephants at Panda Masuie Forest Reserve.

Conservation



In order for **Room to Roam** to yield long-lasting results we cannot ignore the real effects climate change is having on the habitats inhabited by animals and people. Protecting, restoring, and effectively managing biodiverse ecosystems and landscapes will benefit the livelihoods of people and wild animals' dependence on these natural and limited resources.

▲ The Hwange-Matetsi-Zambezi landscape in Northwest Zimbabwe.



Securing Kenya's Rangelands

In early 2024, more than one thousand landowners from the Maasai community agreed to lease out their individual parcels of land—almost 117 km²—under the stewardship of IFAW, creating the new Illaingarunyoni Conservancy. Nestled within the last remaining wildlife corridor between Amboseli and the Greater Mara landscapes, this piece of land is significant for more than 2,200 elephants, African wild dogs, pangolins, and other wildlife to roam freely in and out of Amboseli National Park.

IFAW has been accelerating connectivity and sustainable management of Kenya's Tsavo and greater Amboseli landscapes. By creating partnerships with local conservancies, communities can thrive economically and get value from their land while giving wildlife populations access to freely roam through the landscape. IFAW has been able to secure over 283 km² within the Kasigau community land to serve as a corridor that connects Tsavo East and Tsavo West national parks and by extension Mkomazi National Park in Tanzania. IFAW has also secured 161 km² in Bura and 430 km² in Lualenyi that offer connectivity along the Eastern rangeland of Kenya. This project was made possible by generous support through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Ole Narika Conservancy is 72 km² of critical elephant habitat that forms part of the habitat connectivity between Amboseli National Park and East and West Tsavo National Parks. It is home of the IFAW supported Team Lioness who protect the land from habitat destruction, encroachment, and other illegal activities. Rarely seen species such as gerenuk, lesser kudu, and cheetah can be found in this optimal rangeland for **Room to Roam**.

Working with local community-based organizations and county governments, IFAW has facilitated efforts to develop further

wildlife corridor linkages within the Amboseli Kilimanjaro Tsavo landscape, and the Mara Ecosystem. These critical steps have led to securing 80 km² from landowners for the new Ewaso-Suswa Wildlife Conservancy. The landscape is home to an elephant breeding zone and sits just east of the world-renowned Maasai Mara National Reserve, acting as a secured link to the Amboseli ecosystem. Discussions with landowners for an additional 121 km² will begin soon.

Within the Mt. Kenya-Samburu ecosystem, an additional 174 km² of habitat has been set aside for the Kirimon Game Reserve, a haven for wildlife species threatened by the loss of habitat.



Creating a conservation plan

The Kitenden Corridor is a sliver of land nestled between Kenya's Amboseli National Park and Tanzania's Mt Kilimanjaro National Park. It is a critical space for the elephants and other wildlife who spend the day in Amboseli, taking advantage of its water resources, and then retreat to the Kitenden area at dusk in search of fodder and saltlicks. The area is surrounded by the Olgulului-Ololarashi Group Ranch (OGR), one part of the Maasai community. In 2012, IFAW and 1,600 Maasai landowners entered a five-year agreement for IFAW to lease the land for our conservation initiatives in exchange for

tourism revenue. In 2017, another thousand signed up when the leases were renewed. In total, 105 km² were secured for conservation.

In 2023, 11 years since the initial lease agreement, IFAW returned the land of the Kitenden Conservancy to the landowners of the OGR. Following the end of IFAW's lease agreement, the landowners entered into an agreement with a private investor, Conservation Equity, which will pay the lease fees to the landowners. Plans are in place to develop a high-end eco-tourism facility that will create employment to members of the local Maasai community while protecting the conservancy's natural resources.



Increased community and ecosystem resilience

In the Amboseli and Tsavo communities, over 130 households are benefiting from climate-smart agriculture and cooking techniques. IFAW trained technicians to improve cookstoves in the villages which reduces fuelwood demand. Thirty-six cookstoves have been built in Amboseli and fifty have been built in Tsavo. IFAW also installed 113 green energy solar systems in Tsavo, lessening the pressure on the nature woodlands that double as habitats for wildlife.



▲ Daniel Leturesh, Chairman of Olgulului Land Trust engages over 1,000 landowners from the Maasai community during the Special General Meeting in Mashenani, Kajiado County.

◀ IFAW's Bernard Tulito (second from left) and Evan Mkala (center) reviewing the signatures of community members who signed the lease for Kitenden Conservancy.



Planting trees in Kenya

The recent droughts in Kenya have been exacerbated by climate change. The rivers that flow between Tsavo East and West National Park have not seen a rainy season in four consecutive years, threatening to dry up this crucial water source for both wildlife and nearby farming communities. In 2023, IFAW implemented a tree-based restoration project in Tsavo, donating ten avocado seedlings to 125 members of the community-based organization, Chawia Farmers. The fruit trees retain moisture and attract cloud cover, helping to restore water catchment areas. With better food and water security, these communities use fewer resources from the wildlife habitats, helping to foster a healthy and growing population of the area's elephants.

In 2023, IFAW partnered with the Luigi Footprints Foundation help fund the Olchani Project, an outreach program that promotes restoration among the Maasai communities living around Kenya's Amboseli National Park. Traditionally, Maasai communities do not plant trees, as they rely on pastoralism, but through the Olchani Project, four tree nurseries were established with a capacity to generate over 50,000 tree seedlings annually. Once fully grown, these new trees will increase the tree cover around the Amboseli ecosystem, creating a micro-climate that will help combat desertification and climate change. With a focus on women and youth, four women and youth groups were established to run the nurseries where they sell the tree seedlings as a way to earn an alternative source of income. Currently more than 5,500 tree seedlings have been planted.

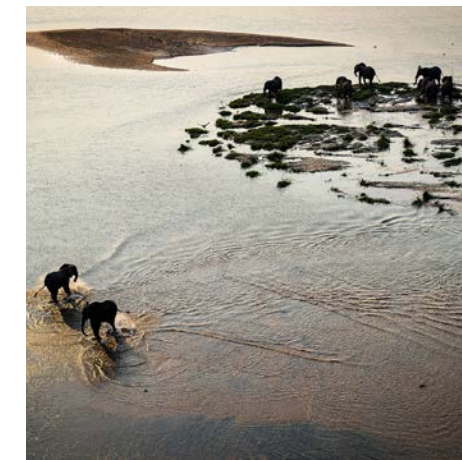


Conserving Kenya's coastline

Kenya's marine ecosystems are home to more than 35 species of marine mammal including turtles, dolphins, sharks, whales, and rays. The coast, running approximately 600km along the Indian Ocean, is facing threats both manufactured—illegal and overfishing to cater to the rising population—and environmental—degradation of natural habitats due to climate change. IFAW is working with partners to build better capacity among the local fishing community, curb illegal fishing practices, and decrease entanglements and debris that can be deadly to marine animals.

To better understand the full scope of the marine world below, we conducted aerial surveys along the coastline to track and record species behaviors and identify marine traffic and fishing boat activity. IFAW is supporting Oceans Alive and their ongoing mission to protect and naturally restore 30% of coral, which can lead to an increase in fish populations. Our partners at Kenya Wildlife Service have set up patrols to search for illegal fishing and logging operations and are providing fishermen with free regulation nets and lines to dissuade them from using mosquito nets and other monofilament materials that end up catching fish eggs, which can lead to the rapid decline of fish populations.

In summer 2023, two marine rescuers from the Wildlife Research and Training Institute traveled to IFAW's International Operations Center to train with IFAW experts in marine rescue and disentanglement. In March 2024, IFAW partnered with Kenya Marine Mammal Research and Conservation to deliver a three-day training workshop centered around whale disentanglement and dolphin stranding response, led by Marine Mammal Rescue Director, Brian Sharp.



A new conservation partnership in Zambia

In the spring of 2024, IFAW and Conservation Lower Zambezi announced our partnership to support conservation initiatives in the Lower Zambezi National Park and surrounding Game Management Areas. The partnership's aim is to strengthen conservation and management within the 20,000km² national park and adjacent areas, focusing on wildlife and habitat protection, biodiversity conservation, combatting wildlife crime, wildlife rescue, and research. On the opposite side of the Zambezi River sits Zimbabwe's Mana Pools National Park. Together, these two parks form a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and formal Transfrontier Conservation Area, that is home to a large elephant population, lions, leopards, many antelope species, crocodiles, and hippopotamuses. The partnership is considered a big step forward in securing wildlife habitats for connectivity and protecting biodiversity.



▲ Elephants at Mana Pools National Park, Zimbabwe.

▲ A local fisherman demonstrates how to cast his grapple towards his fishing gear in order to disentangle a whale caught up in nets during an IFAW marine training session.

▲ Constance Mwandoe, Member Chawia CBO, shows off one of her avocado trees, Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

People and Policy: Communities



Photo: © Dorral Boyd

Room to Roam will not succeed if the people who live amongst wildlife feel that their safety, well-being, and health comes as an afterthought. We know that when communities feel a connection to the wildlife with whom they share their homes, they are more likely to live in harmony and help protect the animals with a sense of pride and ownership. Therefore, it is critical to the success of

Room to Roam that we invest in fostering the connection between people and wildlife through an improved standard of living and safety enhancements throughout villages and national parks.

▲ Children play soccer as people and elephants coexist in the community surrounding Amboseli National Park, Kenya.



Photo: © IFAW

Environmental Stewards Program

Since 2019 IFAW has been running the Environmental Stewards Program (ESP) as a means of introducing the concept of wildlife conservation and providing engaging educational resources and experiences to students near Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. Through outdoor nature education, conservation-themed supplementary materials, teacher training, and heritage and artistic activities (including poetry, folklore, choral music, films, and dance), 315 students, aged 8-13, are learning to develop a sense of ownership and understanding of the dynamics between people, wildlife, and environmental interaction. Through the ESP, tuition fees were paid for 255 primary school children, and 500 school textbooks were donated, benefiting 1,600 students. One hundred bicycles were also donated to students who must daily traverse through wildlife corridors to and from school, exposing them to the risk of being attacked by elephants, lions, and other wildlife.



Photo: Paul Wambugu / © IFAW

Income opportunities through beadwork

Since 2018, through the Inua Kijiji initiative, IFAW has been helping women in the Maasai community earn a living by creating jewelry and ornaments made from beadwork and selling them for profit. This year, 550 women living near the newly established Illaingarunyoni Conservancy joined the initiative. As the Maasai are a traditionally patriarchal community, with womens' roles defined by cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, having a means of earning their own income allows these women to create their own paths towards financial freedom.



Photo: Naudé Heunis / © IFAW

Water is Life

As part of our ongoing efforts to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, IFAW has drilled a new borehole near Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park to provide community members with clean drinking water. With an increase in drought throughout Zimbabwe, having access to water year-round reduces the need to compete with animals for resources. Water availability has also allowed communities to plant gardens that provide vital nutrition for growing children and additional income to pay for school fees.

▲ Watering a community nutritional garden in Zimbabwe.

◀ Margaret Macharia, one of the over 600 women that IFAW works with on an empowerment project in Amboseli and Loita.

▲ Students with bicycles donated to rural Chezhou Primary School to reduce human-wildlife conflict on the outskirts of Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.



Photo: Luckmore Sauti / © IFAW

Partnership with ZimParks

Building on the success of our initial 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), IFAW and Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) have extended our partnership with a 25-year US\$50M pledge, with a focus on supporting conservation efforts in Hwange National Park. Hwange NP is Zimbabwe's largest park at 14,651 km² and is home to more than 45,000 elephants, 150 other mammal species, and 400 bird species. It is a crucial area for wildlife and a key anchor to the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area with people living less than 5km from its border. After renewing the MOU, IFAW wasted no time in keeping up the momentum: 69 predator-proof bomas were installed in selected villages bordering Hwange National Park to deter lions from killing and eating community livestock; roads surrounding the park and wildlife ranger stations have been upgraded to improve mobility and minimize vehicle damage; and a wildlife ambulance was donated, allowing on-site care for injured and sick animals.

With tourism to the park already on the rise, the IFAW-ZimParks partnership supported upgrades to the Mandabvu picnic site and refurbished guest accommodation lodges. In October 2023, construction began on a tourism complex at Hwange's main gate. This increase in eco-tourism brings economic stability to local communities and additional funding for wildlife rangers.



Photo: Moses Matofu / © IFAW

Phase two of Jenga Mama

In 2021, IFAW and foundation Margarete-Breuer Stiftung created Jenga Mama—Swahili for 'Empower a Woman'—to provide women within the Amboseli community of Kenya the opportunity to generate their own incomes, enhancing their resilience to climate change, reducing their over reliance on natural resources for their basic needs, and mitigating the likelihood of human-wildlife conflict. Through this three-phase transformative program, 60 women have acquired professional skills such as hairdressing, dressmaking, catering, and plumbing. In March 2023 these trailblazing women graduated from the vocational training centers and are currently undergoing a training period, learning about financial literacy, business startups, and development. Phase two involves setting up the registration and operations plans for their businesses, with the concluding phase consisting of final business reviews and learning adaptive management and sustainability skills. As

these traditional Maasai women become business owners and entrepreneurs, each phase of Jenga Mama ensures that their businesses have the greatest probability of success.

Women are often at the forefront of interacting with nature, but they are frequently marginalized when it comes to socioeconomic empowerment and leadership. This exposure as income earners for their families has given the women of Jenga Mama the confidence to actively participate in governance and decision-making.



- ▲ To reduce cases of livestock predation, enhance food security, and promote peaceful coexistence between people and wildlife in Hwange and Tsholotshlo Districts, predator-proof bomas were constructed.
- ◀ Jenga Mama graduate preparing for her graduation ceremony.

People and Policy: Wildlife Rangers



Photo: Guyo Kehr / © IFAW

Rangers are the heart of our **Room to Roam** initiative. They are the first line of defense in our conservation work inside the national parks, making it imperative for us to ensure their needs are taken care of. Rangers whose welfare is prioritized—having their basic needs consistently met, and attention given to their mental health—are more enthusiastic and resilient, work harder and more

collaboratively, and are more determined to meet the challenges of operating in a wild and often dangerous environment. IFAW is responding with new and improved housing and supplemental gear and vehicles to extend their efforts.

- ▲ Rangers from the David Rio Community Ranger Base scour the landscape during a routine morning patrol in the Illaingarunyoni Conservancy.



New David Rio Community Ranger Base

With the establishment of the 117 km² Illaingarunyoni Conservancy comes the construction and opening of a new ranger base. The David Rio Community Ranger Base provides comfortably furnished living quarters for ten rangers, allowing the conservancy full-time protection from threats including poaching and human-wildlife conflict.

▲ Rangers enjoy a morning cup of tea at the David Rio ranger base in Illaingarunyoni Conservancy.

▶ Lukusuzi National Park ranger at the Chikomeni base supported by IFAW.

▶ Upgraded ranger housing at the Mara Musiara National Reserve ranger base in Kenya.



A modern base for Lukusuzi NP

Over the past five years, IFAW has supported field officers in the Malawi-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area with uniforms, patrol vehicles, equipment, training in law enforcement, and food rations—provisions that were historically difficult to come by. As part of our continued investment in ranger welfare, we set our sights on upgrading the existing Chikomeni base in Zambia's Lukusuzi National Park. Aside from upgrades to the housing portion of the base, IFAW donated three Landcruisers, four motorbikes, and twenty bicycles.

Poaching is still an active threat in the area, and Lukusuzi NP currently does not have any resident elephants, therefore the movement of elephants from Kasungu NP into the park is critical for a balanced ecosystem. Since IFAW's initiatives in the area first began, poaching in Lukusuzi has decreased.



Renovating Mara Musiara

Upgrades and renovations were completed in fall 2023 at the Mara Musiara National Reserve ranger base in Kenya. The base supports 17 wildlife rangers and ten civilian operations staff, significantly improving the living and working conditions from the previously rundown facilities built in the 1960s. Renovations to the new base included the installation of solar power and more spacious ranger accommodations. The upgraded housing is now more conducive to accommodating female rangers, making it possible for park management to assign female rangers to the Mara Musiara for the first time. The Masai Mara National Reserve provides habitat to Kenya's largest concentration of wildlife and is a premium global tourism destination, but it is also known as a spot prone to poaching.



Pups on patrol

As part of our partnership with ZimParks, we are helping to support the K9 unit which employs three types of police dogs: sniffer dogs to find illegal animals and animal parts that wildlife criminals are trying to smuggle; tracker dogs to follow scent trails through the landscape; and security dogs to subdue suspects so they can be arrested or detained. This year, Themba and Wana are the two newest recruits to join the pack, ready to assist rangers on patrol in their search for would-be poachers.

Breaking ground on two new bases in Kenya

Two ranger bases are under construction within Amboseli and Tsavo to facilitate quicker response times for poaching threats and instances of human-wildlife conflict. These ranger bases are being built with modern technology and will be fully loaded with amenities designed for the well-being of those working within difficult landscapes. This project was made possible by generous support through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



Zero recorded cases of poaching

In December 2023, it was reported that there were no recorded instances of poaching within Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park for the entire year. A spokesperson from our partner ZimParks credits its work with IFAW and other partners for the increased deterrents, such as a highly visible ranger force, for would-be poachers entering the park.

Luambe National Park base under construction

Construction is underway for ranger housing units in Zambia's Luambe National Park. The base will sit at a strategic point near a corridor that wildlife use between Kasungu National Park in Malawi and Lukusuzi NP and Luambe NP in Zambia, which will enhance our conservation objectives in the landscape.

IFAW becomes a member of the International Ranger Federation

IFAW recognizes rangers as essential planetary health professionals for the critical tasks they perform such as protection, conservation, biodiversity monitoring, visitor services, fire management, law enforcement, education, first responding, preventing zoonotic disease, and community support. Our membership in the world's leading federation representing rangers strengthens our ability to advocate and combine efforts and resources to better protect, equip and empower our world rangers. Through this partnership, we commit to improving the welfare of rangers across the globe by providing better housing, working conditions and equipment, and increasing the capacity of IFAW-supported wildlife rangers. By improving their welfare at home and work, we will attract more rangers, enabling us to get closer to meeting the global target of 1.5 million rangers needed to successfully protect our biodiversity and landscapes.

▲ Themba and Wana are the newest recruits to ZimPark's K9 unit, where they'll track potential poachers in Hwange National Park once their training is complete.

◀ DART ranger with an elephant in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

Using science to understand a movement



To maintain a thriving, healthy, and persistent elephant population we need to better understand the health of herd populations and the landscapes they travel across. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, African savanna elephant populations have been rapidly decreasing, as much as 60% in 50 years, due to poaching and ongoing conversion of their habitats for agricultural and other land uses.

Room to Roam was founded on solid scientific research and continuous evaluation and discovery. Through satellite images mapping out suitable habitats, a two-decade study on elephant population dynamics, and data collected from collared elephants in the

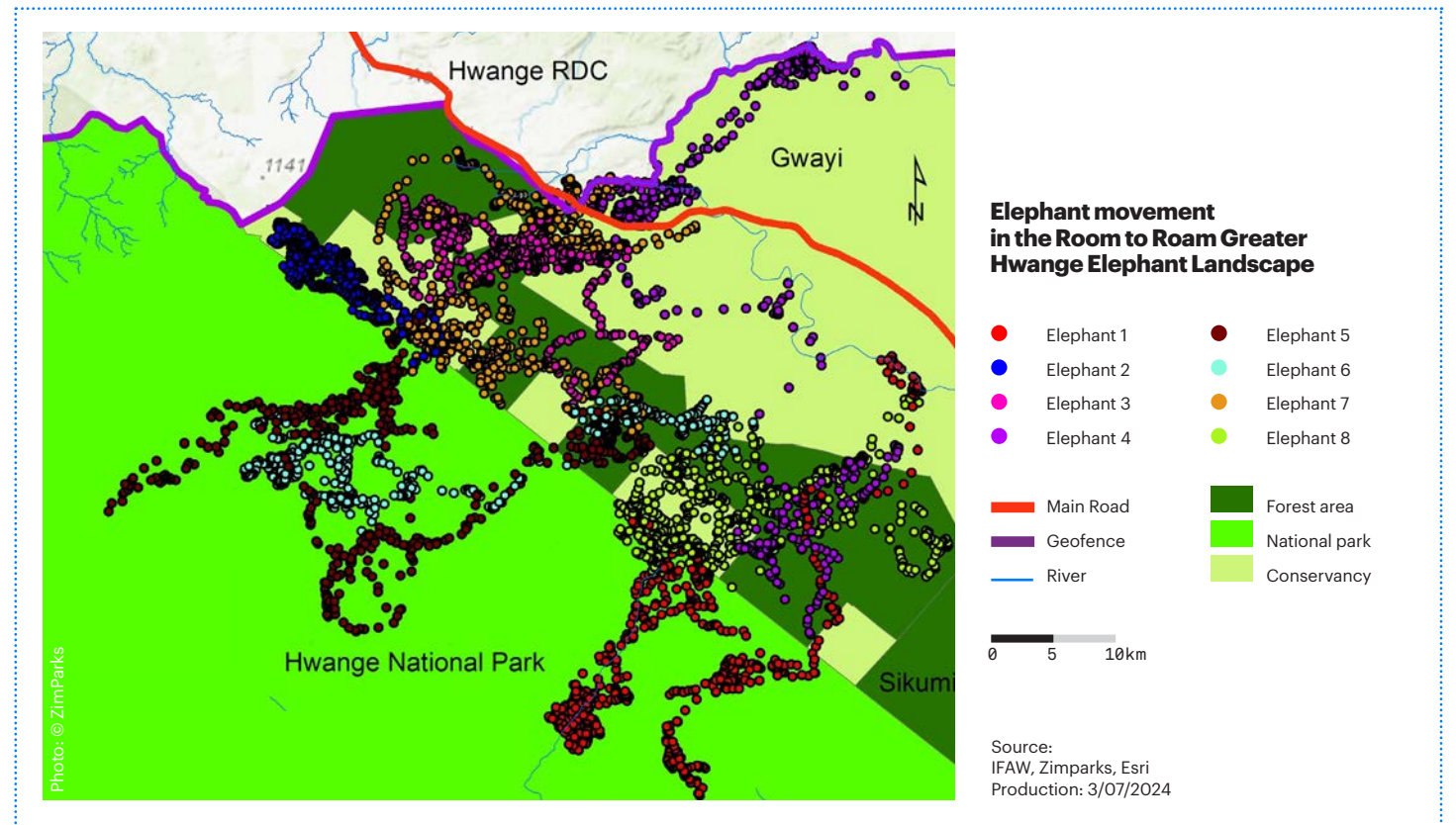
wild, the use of science validates that our vision of connectivity is a strong and promising path forward.

Results from the elephant study

For the past 20 years, IFAW has partnered with the University of Pretoria's Conservation Ecology Research Unit (CERU), ensuring our approach to elephant conservation is based on robust and science-informed principles. In January 2024, the results from this two-decade study were published, indicating that different methodologies of conservation can yield various results.

While "fortress" conservation (keeping wildlife isolated from humans) did maintain high population growth, it can present its own set of threats such as overcrowding within the confined areas, a lack of ecological resources, and a reduction in genetic variability.

Conservation solutions that promote connected and protected areas, like **Room to Roam**, can stabilize elephant numbers as they allow a natural equilibrium to occur within a mix of protected areas and buffer zones. Since elephants spend a lot of time outside of protected areas, this is a critical insight to factor into any successful conservation plan.



Additionally, having communities included in conservation decision-making can also promote habitat recovery and allow for an equitable distribution of economic benefits. The community engagement components of **Room to Roam** are critical to inspiring local people to take the lead in conservation.

IFAW is using the Rapid Elephant Population Assessment method established by CERU to understand why populations decline so we can accurately predict when and where a population decrease may occur. This noninvasive method uses the elephants' body measurements taken during the calving season to determine survival and reproduction rates and to help estimate long term population rates. IFAW will continue to build on these decades of science and field research to better understand the drivers of elephant population change and ecological dynamics.

Using satellite tracking data, we plan to add layers of details such as temperature, vegetation type, distance from crops and human settlements, and regions likely to be impacted by climate change to help us map out what connected landscapes could look like, guiding us to valuable linkages and informing where we need to restore and maintain connectivity. Conservation know-how and science are the best ways to guide land use planning and help reduce human-wildlife conflict that will deliver successful conservation work.

Satellite collars and herd roaming patterns

In 2023, our partners at Game Rangers International (GRI) outfitted four released elephants with satellite collars to track their movements in Zambia's Kafue National Park. Initial data showed one of the elephants, Tafika, separating from the herd to explore areas north of the elephant release facility. A week later the entire herd was tracked at a lakeside water source in the area after being led there by Tafika, adding knowledge to the group's understanding of resource locality which is necessary for survival. We hope that this knowledge will also be passed down to the next generation of GRI orphans when it is their turn to be released back into the wild.

In April 2024, partner ZimParks collared eight wild elephants to discover how the construction of the Gwayi-Shangani Dam, happening less than 50 km east of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, may alter their movements within the landscape. Six elephant matriarchs and two bulls were fitted with satellite tracking collars. These matriarchs, combined, lead family herds consisting of more than 60 elephants in the communal areas between Hwange NP and Sikumi and Mzola Forest reserves. The bulls, who often roam away from family herds, are being monitored on their individual patterns.

Infrastructure like the Gwayi-Shangani Dam, as well as nearby mining, inhibits free

passage of elephants across the landscape and therefore poses a risk to their survival. Research on the movement patterns of these herds is important as initial data is already showing that the elephants are moving within the land, especially close to the Gwayi River. Creating a permanent water supply may create a local overabundance of elephants that might increase human-elephant conflict. We plan to increase our collaring efforts to continue monitoring these herd patterns.

From 2013-2019, IFAW documented the patterns of 19 collared elephants in the Greater Amboseli Ecosystem. During those five years of study, the elephants traversed an area of over 37,000 km² defining the southern rangelands of Kenya as a key roaming landscape. This data clearly mapped the elephant corridors and potential conservancies connecting the Tsavo and Mara ecosystems, making it easy for IFAW to know where to go and thus laying the foundation for our work in the Tsavo, Amboseli, and Kilimanjaro landscapes.

◀ Two collared elephants in Kafue National Park.



Partners

IFAW has immense gratitude for our partners and grantees whose shared vision of saving animal lives and conserving the planet allows us to help animals and people.

Kenya

African Wildlife Foundation

Ambosemi Ecosystem Trust

Big Life Foundation

County Government of Kajiado

County Government of Laikipia

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Ewaso Suswa Wildlife Conservancy

Ilkimpa Community Conservation Association

Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association

Kenya Marine Mammal Research and Conservation

Kenya Wildlife Service

Kitenden Conservancy Trust

The Luigi Footprints

Oceans Alive

Olgulului Community Wildlife Rangers

Olgulului Land Trust

RAMAT Wildlife Society

Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association

Tsavo Trust

Malawi

Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife

KAWICODA

Zambia

Community Markets for Conservation

Conservation Lower Zambezi

Game Rangers International

Wildlife Crime Prevention

Zambia Department of National Parks and Wildlife

Zimbabwe

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Room to Roam
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International Operations Center
290 Summer Street
Yarmouth Port, MA 02675

Tel: +1 508 744 2000
Tel: +1 800 932 4329

Fax: +1 508 744 2099

info@ifaw.org
www.ifaw.org

For additional information on any of IFAW's work, please contact:

Tel: +1 (508) 744-2000
philanthropy@ifaw.org

▲ Elephants in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.

Cover photo: © Donal Boyd
Elephants walking through
Amboseli National Park, Kenya.

