



FROM THE FIELD

LATEST IMPACT UPDATES FROM OUR GREAT PLAINS INITIATIVES

It's with great delight that we present our Great Plains Foundation quarterly report and with even greater gratitude to everyone who have got in behind these efforts from the rangers and community workers, to donors and friends who have recognised that initiatives to enhance communities, and conservation are the only way to secure environmental health for the future. Everyone plays a role. Every role is as vital as the next. The Foundation has just crossed a threshold of momentum, where ideas are being generated, people are now approaching us and those ideas are being converted into action quickly and effectively. It is a blend of being open to conversations and being nimble to act quickly that we most like about our work, and most appreciate of our teams.

Many thanks

Dereck and Beverly

Dereck & Beverly Joubert
Founders, Great Plains Foundation

Q3 IMPACT REPORT | JULY – SEPTEMBER 2023

Over the last three months the Foundation has been busy across Kenya, Zimbabwe and Botswana. In Zimbabwe we are pleased to share updates on Rewild Zambezi reporting a newborn elephant calf, and the ongoing Sapi Restoration seeing the completion of the Research Camp and Monitoring Camp to increase the data collection and conservation of the Sapi Reserve. In Botswana we can report a new rhino calf, and incredible progress with our Female Ranger cohorts out in the field monitoring biodiversity. The Great Plains Earth Academy has been going non-stop, hosting 4 courses in hospitality, sewing, carpentry and photography to 50 enthusiastic trainees from local communities in Botswana. Our annual Sports for Development initiative Conservation Goals was held in September attracting a crowd of 850 spectators! In Kenya we have built another bridge in the Maasai Mara and are pleased that the first phase of the Great Plains Osero Forest has planted 5,349 indigenous trees so far for ecosystem protection.

CONSERVATION

Biodiversity • Healthy Ecosystems • Endangered Species



REWILD ZAMBEZI

Monitoring the wildlife translocated into the Sapi Reserve Ecosystem

The team’s priority continues to be to monitor the physical state, general health, social interactions, and spatial movements of both resident and translocated elephants. The team use SMART and Earth Ranger to collect, integrate and display data and field reports to give a unified overview of the area. We also use Earth Ranger for establishing geofences for our human-elephant conflict protocol. Our main objective has been to record the health condition and to build herd profiles. We are also working on individual ID kits for every animal in a collared herd (both resident and translocated) using standard protocols.

During this quarter one herd encroached into a local community on two occasions, but we responded immediately to both cases to mitigate human-wildlife conflict. The team intervened to redirect them back into the less populated areas with the intention of sending them back to Sapi. During one of these interventions the team was lucky enough to see that there was a brand-new calf of less than 2 months with the herd. Chilli strings have been erected to deter the herd from moving closer to the populated rural villages. The team is busy studying the response to the chilli strings and determining how these measures can assist to prevent future encroachment.

The above exercises were done in collaboration with Zim Parks, Mbire Rural District council and the concession holders through which the animals were moving.



1 NEW ELEPHANT CALF

SAPI RESTORATION

Restoring the 290,000-acre Sapi Reserve, Zimbabwe

Similar to the previous quarter, this one was extremely busy finishing the building of the Monitoring camp, Research camp, and some of the ZimParks G-Camp infrastructural upgrades. Our team has been working hard to keep operations running.

The monitoring team is also continuing data collection as part of a vegetation survey. The aim is to develop a detailed but accurate vegetation map for the area. While a number of maps exist for the region including the main vegetation types, we aim to provide a more accurate map to support on-going research and analysis of our monitoring efforts. The aim is to finalise ground truthing and produce a final vegetation map in the next quarter.

Monitoring of keystone species continued as well as processing photos received from WildCRU's Camera Trap Survey conducted during the 2022 dry season. All monitoring rangers were also able to attend the vehicle care and maintenance short course. The course provided them with basic knowledge and experience in taking care of vehicle assets, fixing tyres when in the bush, and solving small technical problems when encountering a problem in the bush.



2,800KM  **OF PATROLS BY BIODIVERSITY MONITORS**

1 NEW OPERATIONS ROOM

1 NEW RESEARCH CAMP 

CRITICAL SPECIES PROTECTION

Protecting critically endangered species through security and monitoring



As always, the monitoring of critically endangered species and habitat protection continues to be our priority, with our teams working around the clock patrolling and checking on their wards recording sightings, behaviour, family groups, health of the individuals and monitoring the habitat. Our teams have expanded and increased patrols, covering more ground and more animals with boots and time on the ground.

Ongoing training to the teams continues. One of our Rangers joined a month-long Nature Training which he thoroughly enjoyed, saying

“My developing knowledge is certainly broadening my horizons as well as helping me to understand how endangered species are just one part of the ecosystem. It is certainly amazing how connected all aspects of the ecosystem are and how important it is to understand the influential factors across the system”

Great Plains Ranger

5,089KM
PATROLLED

FEMALE RANGERS


Training and hiring Female Wildlife Rangers from local communities

Our Female Rangers are striving forwards and we are inspired by their dedication and progress. The first cohort (onboarded for their 12-month training in 2022) are now out in the field, applying their training, further developing their knowledge and monitoring biodiversity. The second cohort, who joined in 2023, successfully completed their intensive Nature Course learning about African wilderness, bush survival skills, the art of tracking, bird and mammal identification, and more. The ladies also attended a training course on emotional intelligence development and communication skills, adding more strings to their bow.

When it comes to biodiversity monitoring there is nothing too big or too small! Our team this quarter was also lucky enough to interact with a trained beekeeper and start the process of becoming beekeepers in training. While most people may think that beekeeping is all about honey production, the team learnt that they can play an essential role in assisting and supporting the protection and reproduction of bees that can then be released back into the wild to repopulate areas where colonies have been decimated due to fires or pressure from elephants.

The next quarter will see the first cohort engaging in dry season surveys for the first time and the second cohort beginning their biodiversity monitoring theoretical learning. Also planned for this time period are ongoing performance assessments, career development and boat training.



1,002 HOURS SPENT ON PATROL  **2,007KM OF WILDERNESS PATROLLED BY OUR**
15 FEMALE RANGERS

CONSERVATION ROOTS

Planting indigenous trees for ecosystem restoration, food security and carbon sequestration

This quarter has seen the growth of the new Osero Forest in the Maasai Mara, led by our resident passionate horticulturalist, Paul. The Osero Forest has so far planted 5,241 indigenous trees mimicking an ancient forest with 23 different species. The area has been temporarily fenced off to give the young trees an opportunity to grow to withstand natural nibbling. The team are reporting exciting sightings such as wild flowers and other trees sprouting naturally, showing that protecting the area allows seeds that have been stored in the soil to flourish. The team also continued community workshops, planting 60 more indigenous trees in Nkoilale Community.



ALIEN SPECIES CLEARING

Clearing invasive species for ecosystem protection and human-wildlife coexistence.

A critically invasive alien species *Prosopis Juliflora* has spread rapidly in the Shompole Conservancy in Kenya causing critical ecological problems such as loss of native species, reduced water availability, soil degradation, habitat displacement and impenetrable thickets near communities. To combat the spread, Great Plains partnered with local conservation organization SORALO to clear the alien species. The project hired 56 community members to clear 801 acres of the invasive species in four weeks. After the clearing the team replanted grass seed in this area to support the restoration of the ecosystem.



COMMUNITY

Education • Empowerment • Welfare



GREAT PLAINS EARTH ACADEMY

Upskilling rural communities into employment through training courses

The Great Plains Earth Academy in the heart of the Okavango Community Trust Villages in Botswana has been incredibly busy this quarter, hosting four trainings, with the aim of ensuring each student is placed in either an attachment or employment after training. Trainees were selected from each of the five Okavango Communities Great Plains partners with.

The first training was Hospitality, seeing 20 young enthusiasts learn all about housekeeping and front of house service, with tourism being a huge employment sector in the region. Our team on the ground, led by Great Plains' Training and Development Manager Patience, have been working hard to connect all trainees with either work placements or full-time employment after their training. They were very excited to report that all hospitality trainees have been placed! The next training was in Sewing, teaching the students the skills to become a tailor. After that the Great Plains Earth Academy was taken over by angle grinders, saws and wood for the Carpentry training. And finally, a Photography course. We look forward to following the students and their paths into careers in hospitality and conservation.



50 TRAINED AT THE
GREAT PLAINS
EARTH ACADEMY 
4 COURSES RUN



BUILDING BRIDGES

Creating safe crossings for communities to access schools, clinics and markets

Great Plains is excited to announce the opening of the 4th bridge in the Maasai Mara built in partnership with Bridging the Gap Africa. During the rainy season communities face challenges with fast-flowing rivers. The Ngousani community need to cross the Lemek River to access schools, clinics and markets. Sometimes learners are forced to take risky routes by crossing the flowing river which is dangerous and often unsuccessful. Some students were opting to skip school altogether when the river was high. Now that the Ngousani Bridge is complete, there is a safe crossing for kids to cross and make it to school.

“I am a mother of two kids. Education is a really vital thing in our lives. The community had a big problem, the villages are on one side of the river and we have the school and the health centres on the other side of the river. There are some times when the rain is a lot and comes with a lot of force, it is very dangerous to try and cross when it is flooded. Now because we have a bridge, our children can safely get to school throughout the year and learn without any mistakes or any complications. So me, I am very happy, because I know my boy is going to learn without any problems. Thank you Great Plains for building a safe bridge for our communities.”

Damaris, Mama of the Ngousani Community, Maasai Mara.



1 NEW BRIDGE BUILT
4 BRIDGES BUILT IN TOTAL

SOLAR MAMAS

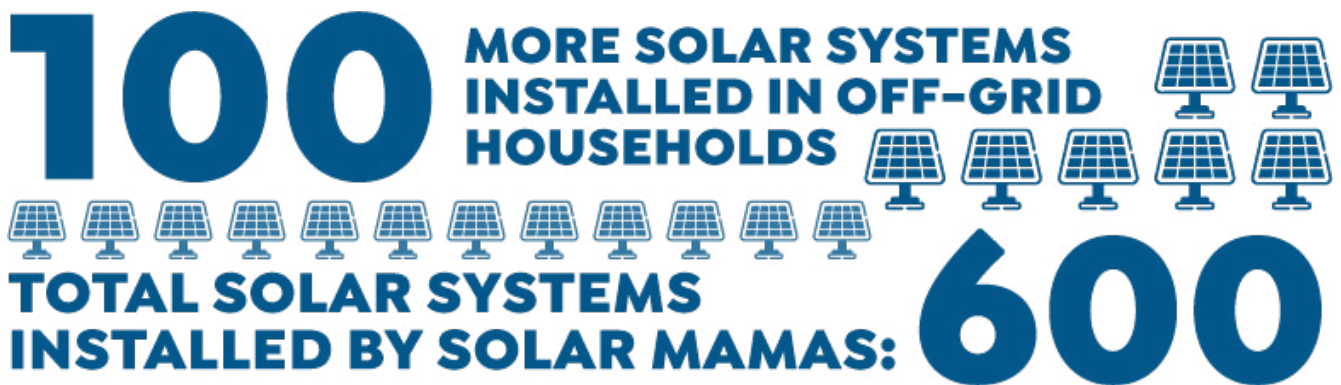
A women empowerment project bringing safe light to off-grid communities in Botswana

The Solar Mamas continue to install household solar systems to rural off-grid communities in Botswana's Okavango Delta region. The Solar Mamas have now installed 600 systems to families with kids in school, bringing safe light to families to be able to do homework after school, safely move around their home and more.



“The program is going very well. We are seeing young ones able to work hard on schoolwork in the evenings and give them hope for opportunities later in life. And we are also hearing of scenarios where elephants are not coming near households thanks to the bright lights on the houses making them turn away and choose another route.”

Lebo, Solar Mama



CONSERVATION GOALS

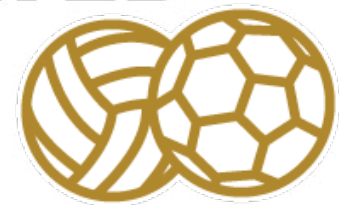
Inspiring conservation and development through sport

Every year in Botswana, the Foundation organises a Conservation Goals sports tournament in the Okavango Community Trust Villages bordering the wildlife areas. Conservation Goals brings the top Netball and Football teams from each of the five communities to compete for the Golden Cup and funding for a conservation project in their community. In the lead up to the tournament, Great Plains Foundation hosted a series of training clinics for the teams. The first half of the training was on physical fitness, sports tactics and techniques for the tournament. The second half of the training covered life skills lessons to support them into bright futures.



The tournament, hosted by Eretsha village, consisted of three days. The opening ceremony was led by the Village Chiefs giving welcome remarks to over 850 community members. Great Plains shared the projects they have ongoing, and the Great Plains Female Rangers and Rhino Monitors gave speeches on conservation and taking care of wildlife for tourism and natural resource protection.

175 YOUTH PARTICIPATED
850 SPECTATORS ATTENDED



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Supporting Conservation Education in Rural Communities for Ecosystem Protection

Great Plains continue to support three enthusiastic students attending the two-year Conservation Leadership program with Kenya Wildlife Trust. The students are focusing on the Greater Maasai Mara, Laikipia and Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystems in both environmental topics and wildlife management modules. This quarter they undertook 525 hours of academic work, and one fieldwork course. The students travelled around Kenya learning about birds, snakes, lakes, forest species, alien species and more.

“As an Environmental Studies student, I came across several activities during the field trip. It was both surreal and sad to see how things like mining, deforestation, poor disposal of waste among other emerging issues were severely affecting environment. I was motivated to want to do something to help reduce/end the negative effects of poor environment management. I must just do something!”

Nelson, KWT student.

Great Plains has supported another Conservation Education Camp in the Maasai Mara in partnership with The Maa Trust. The Maasai Mara is an ecosystem rich in biodiversity with a variety of threats, these Conservation Education Camps aim to address these threats and inspire conservation. The Conservation Camp hosted 27 children and 35 parents together to learn discuss Climate Change, Environmental Restoration, Child Protection, Afforestation and more.



62  **COMMUNITY MEMBERS HOSTED FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION**

SPONSORED TEACHERS

Sponsoring Teachers in Kenya to support education in schools.

Great Plains continues to sponsor 36 teachers across schools in the Maasai Mara and Amboseli regions of Kenya. The teachers cover various subjects from Maths, Home Science, Swahili, English and more. We are excited to share we have just added 2 more teachers to our Sponsored Teachers program for a Special Needs Unit who will be supporting 42 special needs children.

36 TEACHERS SPONSORED
2 SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHERS SPONSORED



GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



BIG CATS INITIATIVE

LUCRECIA AGUILAR, HUMAN-LION COEXISTENCE, KENYA

In the third quarter Ms. Aguilar began implementing her field research on human-lion conflict and coexistence in Laikipia, Kenya. She spent June-August in Laikipia organizing a large collaboration among academic, nonprofit, government, conservancy, and community groups to create the solid foundation necessary for an impactful conservation project. In addition, she mapped the general distribution of lion groups and pastoralist communities in northern Laikipia. Ms. Aguilar and her field assistant Sam Kiuna from the Mpala Research Centre used GPS locations from currently collared lions to collect over 70 lion scats to use in genetic diet analyses that will tell them more about which lions consume more (or less) livestock and why.

Ms. Aguilar’s plan is to return to Laikipia in November 2023 and January-March 2024 to deploy lion collars and livestock ear tags, begin community social surveys, and conduct a drone-based landscape remote sensing campaign.



CONSERVATION LOWER ZAMBEZI, ZAMBIA

The Great Plains Big Cats Initiative grant to Conservation Lower Zambezi supported 4 community scout patrols, 18 hours of aerial patrol activity (including a helicopter operation in June 2023), and 2 full months of the Operations Centre costs, the intelligence and communications centre of the Lower Zambezi operating area. The team also recently participated in training on the collection of whisker spot pictures to facilitate the compilation of unique lion ID kits which they hope will add efficiency to a Lion Survey planned for 2024. The CLZ team are very excited about this work and how it will inform big cat conservation in the Lower Zambezi.

“Thank you so much to the Great Plains Foundation for this critical support, aerial patrols and operational support are areas that we have found particularly challenging to fundraise for, it is hugely appreciated.”

CLAWS, BOTSWANA

In June 2023 CLAWS received a Big Cats Initiative grant to expand their communal cattle herding program in the Okavango Delta. The program is a holistic response to lion conservation and human-lion conflict and includes communal cattle herders, predator proof bomas and trained herders employed to look after the cattle. The program has been an incredible success in the village of Eretsha over the past four years and in July 2023 CLAWS launched the first Communal Herd in Gunotsoga Village.

Great Plains BCI stepped up and provided support to purchase equipment such as the mobile, predator-proof bomas, uniforms, camping equipment, herder salaries, support for herder salaries and to purchase equipment such as mobile, predator proof bomas, uniforms and camping equipment. Launching the new herd is a triumph- not only for the participant farmers- but for cattle health, rangeland health and predators. Since the cattle were brought into the system, they have had one interaction with lions where the cattle were stirred up but not a single cow was killed by lions. There are currently 150 cattle in the herd, but farmers have pledged to add several hundred more. The boma and herders can handle up to 500 head of cattle in the herd when at maximum capacity.



“Thank you Great Plains Foundation for helping us initiate, build and expand this program. It is with your support that we’ve made this happen!”

PROJECT RANGER

WILDLIFE FORENSICS AND GENETICS LABORATORY OF THE WILDLIFE RESEARCH & TRAINING INSTITUTE, KENYA.

This Project Ranger grant provides support to the Kenya Wildlife Forensic and Genetics Laboratory. The Laboratory was established in part to examine seized bushmeat samples from across to provide DNA evidence against suspected poachers. The Project Ranger grant is directly supporting the laboratory to enhance its analytical capacity through the procurement of sequencing services and laboratory equipment and provide support to field enforcement teams by providing evidence bags to ensure evidence integrity and capacity building for first responders at the scene of a crime. During this quarter (July – Sept 2023), the laboratory received a total of 121 exhibits from 61 suspected bush meat cases across the country, including meat tissue, skin, weapon, hair, and blood swabs. As the project enters its final quarter the team anticipates that more than 150 bushmeat samples will still be analyzed. They are also bracing for the increase in confiscations and arrests that typically accompany the festive season. In their final report they aim to produce a detailed map of the key hotspots and common bushmeat species identified during the project.

ANTI-POACHING TRACKING SPECIALISTS (ATS), ZIMBABWE

ATS provides rhino monitoring and a Special Species Protection Unit (including K9 team members and their handlers) to 25% of Zimbabwe's black rhino population as well as specially protected white rhino, elephant, pangolin, painted dog, cheetah, lion, sable, python, ground hornbills, lappet-facet vultures, and more. ATS' activities this past quarter included 200 K9 detections, 194 snares removed, 22 arrests of bushmeat poachers, 17 rhino notching operations, 2 rhino calves born and, most importantly, zero incidents of rhino poaching. This quarter ATS established a new 10-man snare sweeping team that will be solely dedicated to removing snares in their area of operation. The ATS team are also proud to confirm net a 4.8% population growth rate for black rhino in their conservancy through the first half of the year and that through the increased use of drones their rhino visuals have almost doubled when compared to last year. Using drones, the team can closely monitor injured animals in a non-invasive way, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of their condition and recovery.



WWW.GREATPLAINSFOUNDATION.COM | INFO@GREATPLAINSFOUNDATION.COM



Twitter



Facebook



Pinterest



YouTube



Instagram