



# FOUNDATION GREAT PLAINS

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURAL HABITATS

WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITY

## FROM THE FIELD

### LATEST IMPACT UPDATES FROM OUR GREAT PLAINS INITIATIVES

Dear conservation and community partners.

As we go through this update it once again takes my breath away because despite quite limited resources the Foundation teams are getting so much done. Small things can make a huge difference to people's lives and where we are at our best is where in the same project we are protecting wildlife and providing jobs and community benefits. We're both very excited about the achievements in this last quarter and pleased with the strategic direction of the Foundation's future. We're nimble and can react quickly to needs but also now established enough to know what we can take on and what we can't.

Congratulation to everyone and many thanks to our donors and supporters.

Dereck & Beverly Joubert  
Founders, Great Plains Foundation

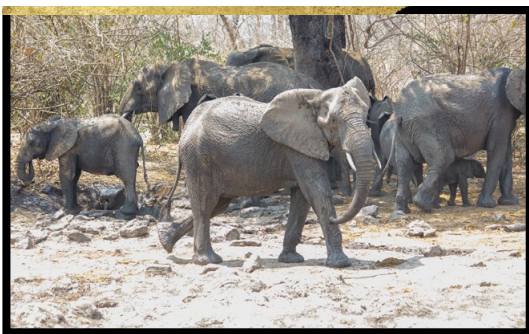
## Q4 IMPACT REPORT | OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023

Over the last quarter of 2023 our teams have been busy across biodiversity conservation efforts and community investment. Our Great Plains Wildlife Rangers across Botswana's Okavango Delta and Zimbabwe's Lower Zambezi have been extensively monitoring and managing the habitats and endangered species within. Great Plains' focus on education had a busy quarter with our annual Conservation Education Camp hosting 75 young enthusiasts in Botswana. Another 568,440 nutritious meals were provided to schools in Kenya to boost attendance and performance alongside the ongoing 34 teachers we sponsor who impact over 7,000 students. Funding from Big Cats Initiative and Project Ranger reached even further afield, supporting projects in breakthrough bioacoustics for conservation and human-wildlife coexistence initiatives not just in Africa but across the world.

## REWILD ZAMBEZI

### *Monitoring the wildlife translocated into the Sapi Reserve Ecosystem*

The team's priority has been to continue to observe the health, interactions and spatial movements of the 101 translocated elephants and 10 resident elephants. During November and December, three matriarchs were lost from translocated herds which were moved to Sapi in July and August of 2022. The monitoring team also discovered the skull of one unknown adult female. The cause of death of these elephants is assumed to be (although not yet verified) related to the conditions faced during the 2023 dry season, which was especially long, hot and dry. During investigations, it was confirmed that all of these matriarchs were on their last set of molars indicating that they were elderly.



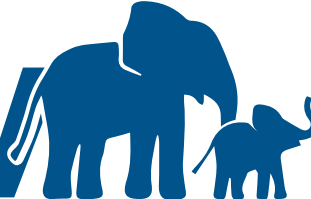
Our ongoing visual assessments of the herds, both translocated and resident have shown them to be largely intact and in good condition according to their herd profiles. At the time of writing this report, we are in the process of tracking the last herd.



During the recent aerial operation using an R44 Helicopter the team flew 14 hours representing significant coverage of the 128,000 hectare concession area, with a total of 216 observation hours. In parallel with the aerial surveillance, the team are attempting, through ground monitoring, to ascertain the status and location of the herds who lost their matriarchs. This is a challenging process but we have the herd and individual profiles that will allow us to identify them when they are found.

If you have been following the progress of the wandering herd from our previous impact reports, the initial results of the chilli strings were successful however, in late November they were destroyed by fire and the herd eventually overrode the virtual boundary, returning to the community area. The team is currently evaluating the response to the chilli strings to see how these techniques can guide the next steps with regards to herd management. The strings will be replaced when the herd moves far enough north again that the strings can be put in behind them to reestablish the boundary between them and the community. Great Plains Wildlife Rangers together with Zimparks have spent a total of 960 man-hours, covering a distance upwards of 1,800km by vehicle to deal with this mitigation issue.

Finally, the team have recorded 3 recently born calves (one translocated and two resident)!

**3 NEW**  **ELEPHANT CALVES**

# SAPI RESTORATION

*Restoring the 290,000-acre Sapi Reserve, Zimbabwe*

To restore the 128,000-hectare Sapi Private Reserve, significant biodiversity monitoring and management is underway. During the last quarter the team were busy with infrastructure builds, successfully completing the build of the Research Camp and Biodiversity Monitoring camps and welcoming the teams operating out of them. The team also completed extensive work at the ZimParks (Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority) Camp within Sapi Reserve, installing a new ablution block, bridge, 5KV Solar Power with surrounding electric fence and an Operations Centre to support their work in the region and collaboration in protecting the Sapi Reserve.

The Great Plains team in Sapi also undertook spoor transects and waterhole counts in Sapi and Mana Pools in collaboration with ZimParks and Chinhoyi University (CUT). Students from CUT studying BSc in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation were hosted by Great Plains at our new research camp. Field experience, applying classroom concepts to real life situations and developing a professional network will help the students further their careers in conservation and support Zimbabwe's efforts to achieve sustainable conservation and natural resource protection.



**650 HOURS** 🕒🕒🕒  
**& 2,600 KM**  
**OF ECOSYSTEM PATROL**  
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# BIODIVERSITY MONITORING

## *Monitoring the Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity*

Our Wildlife Ranger teams continue on their biodiversity monitoring across 163,000 hectares of protected area in Botswana and 128,000 hectares in Zimbabwe. The Wildlife Rangers work daily to monitor the habitat and biodiversity in the area to understand the ecosystem health, behaviour and changes over time. Building a database of information to inform conservation decisions is paramount. The team are recording and analysing data on species, spatial movements of large herbivores, alien species invasion and other potential threats to the health of the ecosystem. The teams also monitor the boundaries, check for illegal wildlife harvesting and conduct a number of other monitoring activities.

In Botswana a new area of operation was established with the team learning about the ecosystem and establishing patrol routes. Shortly after arriving in the new area the team conducted an elephant carcass aerial survey which lasted 11 days, with an observation effort of 20.5 hours covering an area of 130,000 ha. This survey was conducted in collaboration with Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), Botswana Defence Force and the Botswana Police. The Great Plains team extended the carcass monitoring with an aerial survey to assist the DWNP in monitoring 855km of other areas of the Okavango Delta.

The majority of 2023 had been spent with training and upskilling of our Wildlife Rangers, broadening their skills sets and empowering them with a passion for all living creatures and an appreciation for the ecosystem as a whole functioning unit. The final quarter of the year was all about learning about their areas of operation and assessing where we are as a team, where our gaps still exist and a strategic plan for 2024.



**“Our ecosystem is under threat and it needs protection. A healthy ecosystem gives us a healthy life”**

Somalia, Wildlife Ranger

# 1,196 HOURS AND 4,365 KM OF BIODIVERSITY PATROL

# ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION

*Protecting endangered rhino through security and monitoring*

Dedicated patrolling and monitoring of endangered species continue. With the rains arriving early December refreshed not only the landscape and vegetation but also the bringing mud wallows which are a favourite for the rhinos. The team has been keeping a close eye on the younger ones to check they don't get stuck in the mud! We have a few pregnant females waddling around too and there is an excitement in the team as they await the births of new generations. High reproduction rates are a great indicator to the team that the ecosystem they are working hard to protect is healthy. Training and upskilling of our Wildlife Ranger teams continue as a priority with the team participating in some valuable boat training to increase the level of our water-based patrols.

It has been a busy year of interactions with donors including an equipment donation from two young ladies who had used their birthday to raise money for the equipment and a donor reuniting with the calf they had named under our 'Name a Newborn' campaign, who is not so little anymore! The interactions encourage our field teams immensely, having first-hand experience that there are so many in support of the work we do.



**"Being part of GPF gives me that feeling that my contribution can help to make a difference. My hope for the future is to have more rangers as we need more people to work in this field. Let's save our animals we still have time."**

Tumelo, Wildlife Ranger

**4048**  **4,152KMS**  
**HOURS AND SPENT ON PATROL**  
**MONITORING ENDANGERED SPECIES**

# FEMALE RANGERS

*Training and hiring Female Wildlife Rangers from local communities in Botswana*

Our team of passionate, determined and un-stoppable Female Rangers have had yet another busy quarter with ongoing field-based training and boat training. And they were excited to be invited to share their knowledge at our annual Conservation Education camp hosted by Great Plains welcoming 75 young kids from the communities bordering the Okavango Delta ecosystem, the future conservationists of the region. They shared their knowledge with the students in both lectures as well as exciting in-the-field experiences.

Our team was lucky enough to be involved in a bee relocation. While honey is not the aim of the game in this case, providing safe sites for bees to reproduce and thrive is essential for bee conservation today considering the number of threats and challenges that they face. Threats including climate change, fires, habitat destruction and much more. The official training for our teams is to take place early next year in preparation of swarming season.





**“As women we have to empower ourselves so that we can become better people in the world. I see myself becoming a conservation ambassador to my community. It is important to upskill women because women share links within the community and tend to be more socially connected within their villages. Upskilling women is upskilling the community”.**

Lady B, Female Ranger

**“Being part of this project as a conservation ambassador is an honour to me, I get to fulfil the roles that I am most passionate about”**

Gagoope, Female Ranger

**462 HOURS AND  2004KM  PATROLLED BY FEMALE RANGERS**



# CONSERVATION ROOTS

*Planting indigenous trees for ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration*

This quarter the tree planting team have grown as well as their impact. The operation in Kenya now consists of three central tree nurseries where seeds are locally collected and propagated until ready to be planted. The Osero Forest has continued to be the focus of ecosystem planting this quarter, with 1,109 indigenous trees planted adding to the Osero Forest of 5,769 trees so far, closing the Phase 1 stage of the forest which was to secure the area, fence it, hire the team and plant 5,000 trees. A thank you to Perfect World Foundation who have been generously sponsoring the forest planting.

With a key focus of Conservation Roots being community engagement and education, 450 trees were donated to communities (250 to community members and 200 donated to two schools). Through increasing understanding and awareness of the value of indigenous trees alive we hope to encourage communities to start to plant their own and to reduce deforestation.



**1,847**    
**INDIGENOUS TREES PLANTED**  
**35,122** **TREES**  
**PLANTED**  
**IN TOTAL**

# MAASAI MARA WASTE CLEAN UP

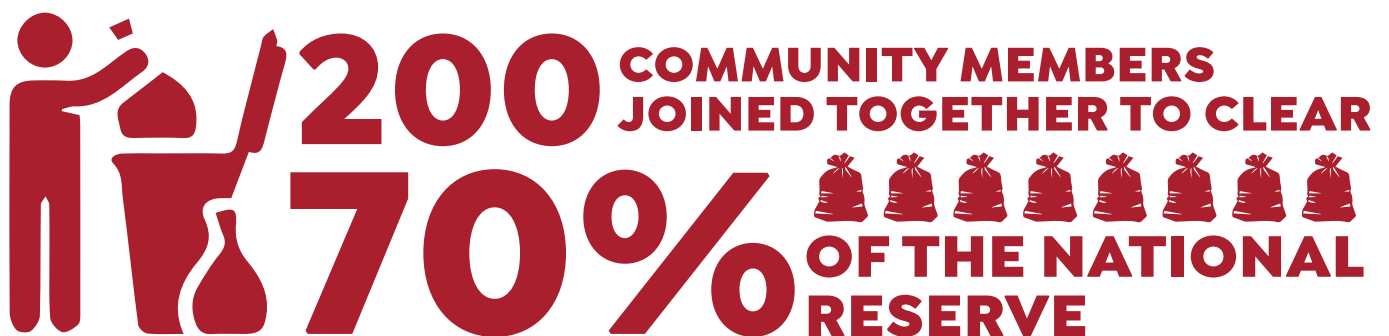
*Collaboration for Ecosystem Protection*

At the end of October, Great Plains partnered with the Talek Mara Youth Association for a Clean Up Day in the Maasai Mara. The Clean Up Day aimed to raise awareness about the importance of preserving our natural habitats and protecting the wildlife that inhabits them. Over 200 community members joined together from Great Plains, Park Wardens, Rangers and more in picking up litter. The team covered 70% of the Maasai Mara National Reserve collecting 40 sacks of garbage from the ecosystem.



**“We would like to extend a special thank you to the Great Plains team. Their dedication, professionalism, and passion for environmental conservation were evident throughout the exercise. It was truly a pleasure to collaborate with such a committed and enthusiastic group of individuals. You have helped create a positive impact on our environment and foster a sense of responsibility among our volunteers and the community. We hope to continue working together on future projects aimed at preserving and protecting our natural heritage”**

Calvin, Chairperson for the Talek Mara Youth Association





# COMMUNITY

Education • Empowerment • Welfare



## SPONSORED CONSERVATION EDUCATION

*Sponsoring the fees of Kenyans to Conservation Diplomas*

The three students that Great Plains are sponsoring through Diplomas in Environment and Wildlife Management are progressing well. Their modules this semester include natural history of invertebrates, wildlife law and police, wildlife behaviour, tourism and environment and environmental laws, policies, and conventions. These classes stimulate their problem-solving abilities and will ultimately help them to critically evaluate conservation and management in relation to the economy and environment. During this quarter the students also created three 'green groups' aimed at creating a climate-positive community. Their groups were Tree Growing (maintaining seeds, pest control etc), Conservation of Buffaloes (contributing to database collection and ecosystem understanding) and Conservation Advocacy (taking part in National Tree Planting day and cleaning up of school grounds).



**"I would like to pass my great gratitude's to the Great plains foundation under the Kenya Wildlife Trust for being part and parcel of my life especially by making sure that my stay in school is very smooth. I got passion in conservation and I enjoy making the environment look beautiful. Thank you so much and may the good Lord bless you as you continue to empower young souls."**

Jonah Lengala

**3 SPONSORED STUDENTS  
CONTINUE WITH THEIR  
DIPLOMAS IN CONSERVATION** 

# CONSERVATION EDUCATION

*Educating the next generation of leaders, the future is in their hands*

## BOTSWANA

Our long-standing Conservation Education camp in Botswana was held in December. The team, led by Gobo, welcomed 75 students (a record number!) from Okavango Community Trust primary schools living alongside the wildlife area to the educational camp. It is always a highlight of the year for our teams who are passionate about educating the next generation of conservationists in local communities. The Great Plains Female Rangers shared the importance of natural resource management for the health of people and the planet, and how to monitor the ecosystems and protect them. This year our intake of girls overtook the boys with 41 girls to 34 boys, which encouraging girls to be included in conservation by seeing our Female Rangers working in the field and something they could become.

Great Plains welcomed EcoExist, an essential human-elephant coexistence conservation partner in the region, to share knowledge on elephant behaviour, how to recognise signs, and live peacefully alongside each other. CLAWs, another conservation partner in the region shared information on human-lion coexistence showing how lions are collared and monitored, how mobile livestock pens (kraals) are constructed to protect community livestock and more. Innovation Kgotla were also included, educating the students on technology, how it works and how it can empower growth in the region.



## KENYA

Great Plains sponsored The Maa Trust, our Conservation Education partner in the Maasai Mara to host a small holiday camp for the 28 children in their scholarship program, learning all about elephants. A highlight of the camp included a visit to Mara Elephant Project to learn from the rangers and specialists about their essential work protecting this iconic species in the Maasai Mara ecosystem and the value of protecting species like the elephant.

**103** SCHOOL KIDS HOSTED FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

## SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

*Distributing nutritious meals to rural schools in Kenya to boost education*

The Great Plains School Food Program continued for the final term of 2023, providing nutritious meals to 50 schools in two rural communities of Kenya in the Amboseli Region and Shompole Region. The program aims to bring nutritious support to school children where attendance and concentration is heavily affected by lack of food. By providing nutritious food to 12,632 school children, totalling. Attendance and performance are improving at all the schools which is boosting education in the region and the opportunities for these youngsters.

**568,440 MEALS DONATED TO  
12,632 KIDS IN Q4**   
**3.2 MILLION MEALS IN  
TOTAL SO FAR**

## SPONSORED TEACHERS

*Sponsoring the salaries of teachers to improve education in rural Kenya*

Great Plains continues to support 34 teachers across 16 schools in the Maasai Mara region and the Amboseli region to boost education in the regions. The teachers cover a variety of classes from Swahili, Homescience, Maths and English. The teachers are estimated to be supporting the education of 7,000 students.

**34 TEACHERS  
SPONSORED**   
**SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF  
7,000 STUDENTS**



# GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



## PROJECT RANGER

*Granting funding to NGOs across Africa specializing in anti-poaching*

### ANTI-POACHING TRACKING SPECIALISTS (ATS), ZIMBABWE

ATS protect 25% of Zimbabwe’s black rhino population, along with specially protected white rhino, elephant, pangolin, painted dog, cheetah, lion, sable, python, ground hornbills, lappet-faced vultures, and more, in the Conservancy’s rich biodiversity. ATS are excited to report that they have had no reported rhino poaching losses or poaching related incidents in the whole of 2023, a first in 12 years. This is due to all the hard work and dismantling of poaching gangs in the preceding years. They are looking forward to their annual ear-notching in August where they will ear-notch 35 rhino calves (predominantly black rhino), giving them all their national ID numbers. This will be their largest notching operation recorded.

Over the last quarter ATS continued their valuable work in conservation from fighting illegal charcoal production, dog detections of bushmeat poaching, snare sweeps and more. Their ranger bee-keeping project was created to include rangers’ wives in a community-based entrepreneur sustainable engagement program. The aim is for the women to have a sustainable and additional income to their families.



**“We are sincerely grateful to Great Plains for helping us through our most critical time financially.”**

Lara, Anti-Poaching Tracking Specialists.

# BIG CATS INITIATIVE

*Granting funding to NGOs worldwide to projects with a focus in big cat conservation*

## BIOACOUSTICS RESEARCH GROUP, NEPAL

Tigers are a keystone species that are fundamental to maintaining balance and supporting biodiversity in ecosystems but are listed as Endangered throughout their range. Although tiger populations have increased in recent years, this recovery is threatened by escalating conflicts with humans, which leads to retaliatory killing of tigers. One way to improve the situation is to locate tigers in real-time; but tigers are notoriously hard to track. GPS collars are effective only for collared tigers and camera traps only survey small areas. So how do we find tigers non-invasively, in real-time? This is the question that a group of researchers known as the Bioacoustics Research Group is hoping to answer.



In the 4th quarter funding from the Big Cats Initiative supported the pilot phase of a project to use alarm calls from other species to detect the presence and position of tigers in the wild. With BCI support, Bioacoustics Research Group team members traveled to Nepal in November to record and identify the alarm calls of deer, birds, and monkeys to determine whether tigers trigger specific alarm calls in different species. Following the trip, the Bioacoustics Research Group are now analyzing the alarm calls to help develop an automated system for monitoring tiger locations based on the calls of other species. The aim for subsequent stages of the projects is a network of acoustic monitors and computers owned and operated by the local village that allow for near real-time monitoring of tiger locations in areas of interest to reduce human-wildlife conflict by alerting humans of areas to avoid.

**“We believe that this could be a powerful new tool to facilitate human-wildlife coexistence, conserving tigers and other large carnivores, and exploring animal behaviour.”**

Dr. Holly Root-Gutteridge Postdoctoral Research Fellow,  
 University of Lincoln & Bioacoustics Research Group Founder



## CLAWS, BOTSWANA

In Gunotsoga, a village in rural Botswana on the fringe of the wildlife area, cattle losses to lions were some of the highest in the region, with farmers actively persecuting lions and trying to kill them. Villagers expressed an interest in establishing a communal herd with guidance from CLAWS to protect cattle against lions. With funding from Great Plains, the community were able to purchase essential equipment to build the herd and mobile bomas and support farmers in mitigating lion conflict. Since the establishment of this communal herd, the herders have successfully defended cattle against lions.



## LANDSCAPE AND CONSERVATION MENTORS ORGANIZATION, TANZANIA

LCMO's vision is to promote human-lion coexistence in a healthy landscape by reducing the cost of living with lions and ensuring community engagement in addressing human-lion conflicts (HLCs) and habitat degradation. They involve local people in mitigating HLCs and benefiting from wildlife, thus making them more tolerant. Their Lion Conservation Ambassadors have continued monitoring human lions and other wildlife conflicts within the 25 focal villages. Both livestock predations and retaliations were recorded with the least impact in the last quarter of 2023.

LCMO's active 23 LCAs and Human-Lion Conflicts (HLCs) and Loud Speaker Early Warning Systems in six most HLCs threatened villages, and intensive community members engagement and protection by our partners have significantly contributed to the reduction of HLCs in the landscape. We engaged 270 local leaders in self-participatory natural resource management and governance assessments in six villages and have secured over six hundred livestock through 10 carnival-proof bomas in four villages around Katavi and Ugalla National Park. A total of 85000 trees are ready to be planted in the south of the Rukwa-Katavi ecosystem to promote habitat restoration.



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