



FOUNDATION
GREAT PLAINS
CONSERVING AND EXPANDING NATURAL HABITATS

FROM THE FIELD

LATEST IMPACT UPDATES FROM OUR GREAT PLAINS INITIATIVES

I'm exhausted just reading about the patrolling numbers from both our Female Rangers and the Monitors at Great Plains. 'Boots on the ground' has been proven to be the most effective method to prevent poaching and to getting a real sense of wildlife health. We are hiring more teams on the ground as we speak. Patrolling is vital but we are also finding not just that we can feed extended families by providing jobs but those employed become our conservation ambassadors back home too. I've never been as excited about the impact we are having, on wildlife, on our people, on the planet. It feels to me that our strategy is well known and tested, and that we are gaining traction in our efforts to raise awareness, to physically move wildlife to safety and to uplift communities. There is no greater an endorsement of that growth than the massive increase in approaches we are fielding now, invitations from people all over the world, for assistance with rewilding efforts, for projects, ideas, appeals and associations. We're on our way! But we have work to do.

Many thanks to all who have supported us and who wish to continue.



Dereck & Beverly Joubert
Founders, Great Plains Foundation

Q1 IMPACT REPORT | JANUARY – MARCH 2024

It has been a busy start to the year across our portfolio of projects Protecting Biodiversity and Empowering Local Communities. Our team have collectively covered over 11,000 kilometres of wild landscapes collecting data and monitoring critical species. Our team are overjoyed to share the new arrivals of a rhino calf and elephant calf under their protection which always gives our team hope. The Conservation Education program has been busy with our Indigenous Tree Planting project, Conservation Roots, hosting workshops with schools and the 6 sponsored students at Kenya Wildlife Trust are thriving. The School Food Program continues with 12,632 kids receiving a nutritious meal every day to boost their attendance and concentration. This quarter our Grant Projects, Big Cats Initiative and Project Ranger continue to support conservation initiatives globally, supporting initiatives in Nepal, Brazil and Senegal protecting big cats and critical species.

CONSERVATION

Biodiversity • Healthy Ecosystems • Endangered Species



FEMALE RANGERS

Training and hiring Female Wildlife Rangers from local communities

This quarter was a huge milestone for the Female Ranger Program. This quarter, the Female Rangers who have completed the 12-month Great Plains Ranger Training Program started doing patrols on their own. The year started out with competency assessments before the ladies were ‘let loose’ ensuring that they were following all safety and data collection quality standards. The confidence that this exercise has provided the ladies with has been invaluable. The ladies have patrolled 3,763 kilometres collecting data on the biodiversity in their areas and building datasets to track changes and base conservation decisions off. Additionally empowering the ladies to patrol on their own has given our training program great direction on any skills gaps and reflections on where we can support the ladies in other areas that we feel are necessary.



Training and upskilling is a constant feature of our Female Ranger Program. Two of our Female Rangers attended a two-week Guides Refresher Training course to complete their Level 2 with and enjoyed the opportunity to go to a new area of Botswana and build on their field knowledge and skills. The ladies also started a fitness training plan for development, confidence building, discipline and stamina they need for long hours in the field.

3,763KMS 
PATROLLED BY FEMALE RANGERS

SAPI RESTORATION

Restoring the 290,000-acre Sapi Reserve, Zimbabwe

We strongly believe collecting baseline data on the habitats we are protecting is essential. To keep ecosystems balanced, a real-time understanding of changes is essential. Our team in the Sapi Reserve have been doing ongoing biodiversity monitoring and data collection to produce a detailed map of the Sapi Reserve. While several maps exist for the region, they are outdated and no longer reliable as habitats are constantly changing. Great Plains are creating an updated and detailed map that covers both vegetation and habitat diversity. The team are taking regular soil samples in every vegetation plot to become the baseline for various studies, as many ecological systems are influenced by soil type and condition. In the last quarter the team have successfully sampled 11 plots and aim to complete the remaining 59 plots in the next quarter to complete the map.



Every year there are rangers across the world who lose their life because of inadequate first aid response in the field. Performing basic life support on victims in the bush while medical assistance is on the way doubles chances of survival, and we want to ensure that our teams in remote landscapes are well equipped to deal with any incidents. All members of the Sapi Reserve team took part in an ACE First Aid training with both theoretical and practical lessons and hands-on scenarios to make sure they are best prepared when dealing with real-life situations. The training was a valuable addition to the rangers ongoing training.

650 HOURS 🕒🕒🕒
& 2,450 KM
OF MONITORING BIODIVERSITY
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REWILD ZAMBEZI

Monitoring the wildlife translocated into the Sapi Reserve Ecosystem

The daily ongoing monitoring of the 101 translocated elephants in 13 herds into the Lower Zambezi in Zimbabwe, alongside the 10 collared resident herds, continues to be the priority of our team. The primary focus of the team has been monitoring these collared elephants to document their physical condition, overall well-being, social behaviours, and movements, encompassing both resident and relocated elephants. The team do this with daily patrols entering data on Earth Ranger, a software which collects, integrates and displays all historical and available remote sensing data and combines it with reports from the field to provide one unified view of collared animals, rangers, enforcement assets, and infrastructure within our area.



Throughout this quarter, the team have been closely observing, in particular, the movements of elephant herds wandering nearby to community areas. This is to be able to intervene and steer the animals back to avoid any human-elephant conflict. The team are pleased to share that the herd they were monitoring that had moved closer to a community area has now moved back to its former home range in the wildlife area without endangering the local communities. The team visited the community area and there had been no reports of crop damage or injuries.

The team's monitoring and analysing the movements of each herd to understand their behaviour and mapping the region. Interestingly five of the translocated herds are currently roaming in Zambia, indicating a broader range of movement beyond the initial release areas. These observations underscore the dynamic nature of elephant behaviour and the importance of ongoing monitoring efforts, mapping and data collection to track their movements and adapt conservation efforts.

And finally, the team are overjoyed to share that a newborn elephant calf from one of the herds has been born, giving hope to the next generation.

**2,450KM OF MONITORING
1 NEWBORN
ELEPHANT CALF**

A blue silhouette of an adult elephant and a young calf. The adult elephant is on the right, facing left, and the calf is on the left, facing right. They are both standing on a flat surface.

CRITICAL SPECIES PROTECTION


Protecting endangered rhino through security and monitoring

Protecting large herbivores is not only about safeguarding a single species but also about preserving ecosystems, supporting local communities, and addressing broader climate regulation. Elephants and rhinos are keystone species, meaning they play a crucial role in their ecosystem. They help maintain biodiversity by shaping their habitat through their feeding habits, dispersing seeds and nutrient cycling contributing to the ability for thousands of other species to thrive in the ecosystem. Which is why Great Plains has a serious focus on protecting these species.


As usual patrolling and monitoring continue as the priority for the rhino monitoring teams. Our team were pleased to welcome the arrival of two new highly skilled wildlife rangers to the team, both with a background in guiding, tracking and rhino monitoring. We continue to develop and grow our teams to ensure the long-term protection of critical species. This quarter the team have been also busy establishing a carrying capacity survey, taking 359 sampling points of habitat type and grazing capacity to understand the rhino carrying capacity of the area, as part of the ongoing ecosystem monitoring and research.



The team are overjoyed to announce that a female calf has been born to the herd. The team was extra celebratory as this time they were privileged enough to witness the birth of this beautiful little girl. The knowledge and skills needed to predict the time of a wild animals birth, understanding where she would be and her individual characteristics led the team to be able to witness this and for this we are extremely proud. Every calf born wild is hope for this species and confirmation of the strategies in place to protect them.

 **5,324KM PATROLLED**

2 NEW HIGHLY SKILLED
RANGERS HIRED

1 NEWBORN RHINO 

CONSERVATION ROOTS

Planting indigenous trees for ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration

The Great Plains indigenous tree planting project, Conservation Roots, continues this quarter with the planting of saplings in both ecosystems and communities. The team coordinated the planting of 612 trees with a variety of 8 species. We are planting indigenous trees to mitigate soil erosion, strengthen riverbanks, provide shade and offer food security in Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe.



“As Olesere Primaty school. We are very grateful to Great Plains Foundation for the gift of trees and we will make sure the trees survive. Thank you so much.”

Mr Nabala
 Olesere Primary School Headmaster

In Kenya our tree nurseries are thriving with the recent rains and the team have been busy with school workshops with the Environmental Clubs sharing knowledge on the value of trees and how to protect them. The team donated 300 trees to schools and 28 trees community members for their individual plots. Through the workshops on the endangered Warburgia Ugandensis the community members are now interested in repopulating the area with the species which is a positive sign for the species.

Great Plains has also sponsored the planting of 5,000 indigenous with MyTreesTrust in Zimbabwe. Working with individual farmers the project is planting indigenous trees in rural communities of Hurungwe, bordering the protected areas of the Zambezi Valley. The project has a strong community engagement focus with financial benefits to tree growing as well as education benefits.



COMMUNITY

Education • Empowerment • Welfare



SPONSORED CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Sponsoring the fees of Kenyans to Conservation Diplomas

Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT) is a renowned Kenyan non-profit organization dedicated to three of Kenya's most important ecosystems: Greater Mara, Samburu, Laikipia and Amboseli-Tsavo. KWT's Conservation Leadership Program's mission is to raise Kenya's next generation of home-grown conservationists and it is highly successful for upskilling young people into jobs in conservation in Kenya. Great Plains currently sponsors 6 students to both earn diplomas at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute and receive additional guidance and support through KWT's Conservation Leadership Program.



This quarter the students were put through their paces with a range of activities. The students hiked 37km up Mount Longonot for an overnight wilderness survival camp. The camp included lessons on water rescue, navigation, team building, leadership and trekking. The trainees were then taken on a field training in Amboseli National Park's salty lake ecosystem, Tsavo West National Park, Mombasa's Haller Park and finally Watamu National Park where they conducted a beach clean-up exercise. The Evergreen Group continue with their tree planting project, planting indigenous trees for conservation and sustainability.



SHOMPOLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Understanding the priorities for local communities in Shompole Conservation Area

The Great Plains mission is clear, to work closely with the local communities within or surrounding the ecosystems we work in; supporting education, empowerment and upliftment of rural communities. When a new opportunity arises for Great Plains, the first step we take is to engage with the local communities and to listen and understand the main challenges of the community with a focus on Education, Empowerment and Ecosystem Biodiversity.



The Shompole Community Engagement took place over two weeks of meetings and discussions, with an external facilitator to lead the engagement for transparency and neutrality. To get a holistic and representative understanding of the Shompole Community, Great Plains hosted weeks of meetings with different groups ranging from community elders, to women, youth, schools and more. From this integrated discussion a report has been compiled that will be shared back to the community and we will now work in partnership to build an impact plan that aligns Great Plains' mission and skills and the unique needs and strengths of the Shompole community.

9 COMMUNITY GROUPS ENGAGED
12 SCHOOLS VISITED
12,000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS REPRESENTED

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Distributing nutritious meals to rural schools in Kenya to boost education



The Great Plains School Food Program started in 2022 as an emergency relief to a drought in the region. The community reached out with concerns about dwindling attendance at schools due to the lack of food. The teachers also raised concerns that those who did attend had struggling attention spans. Great Plains specialises in understanding hurdles to education and reacting quickly to be able to reduce hurdles, as education is the basis of a thriving region. This quarter 51 schools were supported across the Amboseli communities, Shompole and Maasai Mara regions.

“It is January 2024 term one, Great Plains Foundation feeding program landed today! Many thanks to the Great Plains families for this maximum support towards our community members through this Education program and many others. You can tell by last year KCPE school exam results the impact of this program. Oltiasika Primary School and Enkaji Naibor were the leading schools in Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem, and this was efforts through Greatplains Foundation ongoing feeding program.”

Konee, Amboseli Community Liaison

12,722 STUDENTS SUPPORTED WITH DAILY FOOD

827,650 MEALS DONATED THIS QUARTER

3.99 MILLION

MEALS DONATED IN TOTAL SO FAR



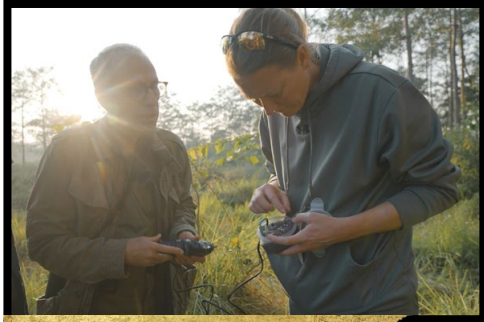
GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



BIG CATS INITIATIVE

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



BIOACOUSTICS RESEARCH GROUP, NEPAL

The Bioacoustics Research Group is exploring technology that will allow communities to track tigers non-invasively, in real-time using the tiger specific alarm calls of other species. With BCI support, Bioacoustics Research Group team members travelled to Nepal in November 2023 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 successful December field trip, the group spent the first quarter of 2024 establishing which features of the system need adjustment and creating software that will collect alarm notifications and display risk on a site map that can be used by community members and rangers bordering Bardiya National Park in Nepal. In late March 2024 the team left on their second trip to Nepal to launch phase 2, “Ranger Ears.” With collaborative relationships now established with the rangers and Government officials, the goal of this trip is to deploy CARACALS in situ, gather additional transmission data, and develop an in-country system for managing the display of real time data on a base station.



WATU, SIMBA NA MAZINGIRA (WASIMA), TANZANIA

WASIMA (People Lions and Environment in Swahili) is a BCI grantee that aims to promote human-lion coexistence in Western Tanzania and they hit the ground running in 2024. Between January and March 2024 the WASIMA team led a collaboration with Mpimbwe Local government and Katavi region Natural Resource department to plant 35,885 trees, constructed 10 lion proof bomas and conducted field assessments to support the construction of 13 others. They developed two Wildlife Clubs Guiding Manuals: the youth club manual and the youth engagement manual and believe the combination of their Lion Conservation Ambassadors and their Loudspeaker Early Warning Systems (LEWS) prevented eight instances of human-wildlife conflict. No lions were killed despite the report of 7 lion sightings on village land.



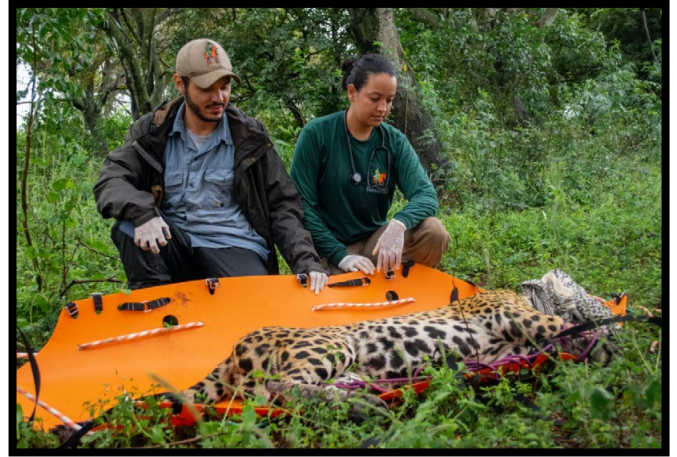
Finally, WASIMA and the Honeyguide Foundation underwent a baseline assessment of governance and equity for Uyumbu Wildlife Management Area utilizing SAGE, a participatory methodology that has demonstrated promising results in amplifying diverse voices when soliciting stakeholder feedback and recommendations regarding governance and management functions within protected areas. By facilitating dialogue among stakeholders and capturing their perspectives, the outcomes of the SAGE assessment will inform targeted capacity-building efforts to support governance within the UWIMA. The three-day workshop involved a total of 60 people (44 males and 16 Females).

GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



INSTITUTO HOMEM PANTANEIRO (IHP), BRAZIL



The Big Cats Initiative has given its first grant supporting big cat conservation in Latin America with a grant to Instituto Homem Pantaneiro (IHP) in Brazil to support its work with the Jaguar, the largest big cat in the Americas. IHP's Felinos Pantaneiros program aims to guarantee coexistence between humans and the species in the Pantanal. The program evaluates herd management to minimize the conflict caused by jaguar predation on cattle and other domestic animals. In addition to evaluating anti-predation strategies and supporting herding best practices, the project estimates and evaluates ecological aspects of the Pantanal's big cat population using camera traps and GPS collars. The project carries out non-formal environmental education activities in rural schools, rural properties, riverside communities and in the cities of Corumbá-MS and Ladário-MS. The program has reached nearly 7,000 people to date, including adults and children.

LEO FOUNDATION, SENEGAL

Big Cat Initiative's first grant of 2024 was issued to the Leo Foundation to support training in for local rangers and eco-guards in Niokolo-Koba National Park is located in the Southeast of Senegal. The training course is set to take place over several weeks in April and May and will focus on the hands-on skills required to adequately monitor the current large carnivore populations in and around the park including camera trapping, and the monitoring and analysis of large carnivore scat. These trainings will be some of the first activities carried out under Senegal's recently National Lion Conservation Action Plan which was developed with support from the Leo Foundation and with funding from BCI under National Geographic.

GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



PROJECT RANGER

Granting funding to NGOs across Africa specializing in anti-poaching

ANTI-POACHING TRACKING SPECIALISTS (ATS) K9 UNIT, 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. Between February and March, the ATS ranger and K9 team notched 248 Antipoaching Unit Detections, 116 snares were removed and they made 21 arrests. After having lost two rhinos to poaching this year, the one case being deliberate and the other incidental, the team has on high alert in all areas, increased their capacity and activity in specific areas of concern and are continuing to work with law enforcement and intelligence networks to bring those accountable to justice. After the sadness of these losses the team was thrilled to have confirmed three rhino births so far this year. The team participated in Zimbabwe’s National National Rhino Security Meeting, a two-day event that focused on the rhino population performance in 2023, and the future of rhino meta-population management.



The team also participated in First Aid training, and a Legal Systems workshop that covered evidence collection and handling, arrest procedures, court procedures, and the relevant legal statutes. Finally in March, ATS embarked on a new component to their anti-poaching division, their first all-Female Community Ranger Team. The female rangers will have an active interface reporting role, the first layer of intel collection on human wildlife conflict (HWC), meat-poaching, river netting, logging, trespassing, and any illegal activity in the community. We look forward to following the journey of the all-Female Community Ranger Team.

GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger

BUSHMEAT DNA ANALYSIS AT THE WILDLIFE FORENSICS AND GENETICS LABORATORY, KENYA

The Kenya Wildlife Service established the Wildlife Forensics and Genetics Laboratory to examine bushmeat exhibits using modern DNA techniques in support of presenting strong evidence for successful convictions of accused bushmeat poachers in court. Project Ranger funding aided the laboratory in enhancing its analytical capabilities through:

1. Procurement of sequencing services, basic equipment, and laboratory reagents to enhance the analysis of bushmeat samples received by the laboratory.
2. Support field enforcement teams by providing evidence to ensure exhibit integrity is maintained to guarantee accurate and reliable results.
3. Capacity building for first responders at the scene of the crime.

In the first quarter of 2024 we received the final report on the project. During the year-long grant period a total of 576 exhibits, from 29 different locations, were received by the laboratory. The analysis done on these sample helped to identify hotspots for the bushmeat trade within Kenya and identified Kirk's dik-dik, plains zebra and giraffe as the three most common species present in the confiscated samples. Project Ranger was proud to be able to support the enhanced capacity of the KWS Wildlife Forensics and Genetics laboratory in their efforts to be able to combat illicit bushmeat poaching.



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