



FROM THE FIELD

LATEST IMPACT UPDATES FROM OUR GREAT PLAINS INITIATIVES

2024 Q4 IMPACT REPORT | OCTOBER - DECEMBER

Hello everyone,

We are overwhelmed by requests for support, so it takes real discipline to keep focused on what we get involved in. There is so much need, and at times it feels like the natural world is in ICU. But our mission is clear. It is to secure and expand habitats for the maximum benefit to biodiversity, in the spaces we know well. We draw on our expertise from decades of living in the wild in Africa, and working with conservationists from around the world. It is both local and informed globally. We aim to be nimble, to react to emergencies, as well as apply solid science to where we get involved. It is about big cats, and giant elephants, it's about education of the next generation and food security for communities. We save elephants and we move rhinos (and crocodiles, giraffe and zebras.) We train and deploy rangers and support them with air patrols and logistics. We offer the land we lease, and the revenues we make from tourism, for relocations (pangolins and other species). As I scroll through the impact this quarter, while it seems varied, each project fits squarely into our mission; to make the world better, to secure these pristine habitats and to make damaged ones whole again.

On that scale, it seems that our work will never be done, but as we look back each quarter, the small steps we have made look like giant strides, in retrospect. I am pleased that we have enough scope and ideas to necessitate increasing our team, who we will introduce in our next report, and that this expanding team brings ideas, energy, and passion that any band of like-minded and dedicated people need to be able to move us closer to these ambitions. We cannot even consider new goals without first thanking you, and everyone for the support in getting us so far in our year's targets in 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Dereck Joubert'.

Dereck Joubert,
Chairman of Great Plains Foundation

CONSERVATION

Biodiversity • Healthy Ecosystems • Endangered Species



SAPI RESERVE RESTORATION

Restoring the 290,000-acre Sapi Private Reserve in Zimbabwe

In the 4th quarter of 2024 Great Plains Foundation’s team in the Sapi Reserve facilitated a game count in the Mid-Zambezi Valley protected areas. The work was done by surveying four waterholes in partnership with ZimParks, Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) students, Painted Dog Conservation and MyTrees Trust to establish baseline information on wildlife species. Waterhole game counts are increasingly critical for species conservation management, helping us understand population trends, dynamics, and range requirements while evaluating wildlife responses to management activities. Other fieldwork included a collaboration with the Zimbabwe Tsetse Control Department on the department’s largest operation to date, setting traps and monitoring hotspots to evaluate the effectiveness of these control measures.



Over this same period Great Plains made great progress in improving the infrastructure of the ZimParks wildlife ranger camp in the Sapi Reserve, with the drilling of a borehole, the completion of ranger houses, a new canteen, septic tanks and other essential facilities to improve the ranger post.

The team in the Sapi Reserve were also pleased to report on the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Chinhoyi University of Technology to facilitate substantial collaboration, capacity development, innovation and research aimed at addressing the conservation challenges faced in the region.

And finally, Thomas Mutonhori, Great Plains Ecologist in the Sapi Reserve, is commencing his PhD focussing on spatial ecology of carnivores, with an emphasis on challenges faced by wild dogs, whose numbers are declining sharply in the Mid Zambezi Valley. We are optimistic that his work will provide valuable insights for their conservation. Collaborating with Oxford University’s Wild CRU, Painted Dog Conservation (PDC), and Chinhoyi University, this project promises to yield invaluable insights for conservation.

675 HOURS ON PATROL

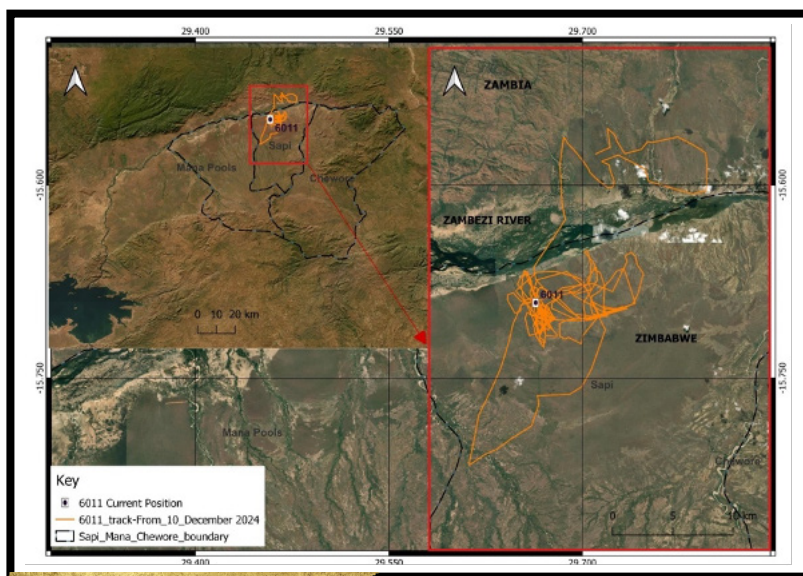
885 KM PATROLLED


PROJECT REWILD

Translocations of wildlife and post-translocation monitoring

During the 4th quarter, monitoring the collared elephant herds in Zimbabwe remained at the forefront of our work, covering the six translocated herds and the nine herds of resident elephants. We continually record data of their condition, social interactions, and movement patterns. Our monitoring efforts are underpinned by a combination of VHF and satellite-based technologies, ensuring a thorough and adaptive approach to tracking.

To further understand the success of translocated elephants and their adaptation to new environments, the team are excited to welcome an ecologist with ZimParks, Mr Patmore Ngorima, to embark on a PhD focussing on generating critical knowledge and insights into conservation-based translocation efforts.



Tragically the team reported elephant deaths in both the translocated herds and the resident herds, linked to the challenging conditions in the region attributed to the delayed rainy season. These losses emphasize the importance of sustained monitoring, which plays a vital role in identifying behavioural anomalies that may signal potential threats to elephant health.

Through their daily monitoring of all wildlife, the team have noted the proliferation of impala lambs. It is believed that the translocation of 184 impalas in 2022 has contributed to the increasing population of impalas in Sapi. The impala population is critical for the food supply of large predators, as impalas are a primary prey species for predators like wild dogs.

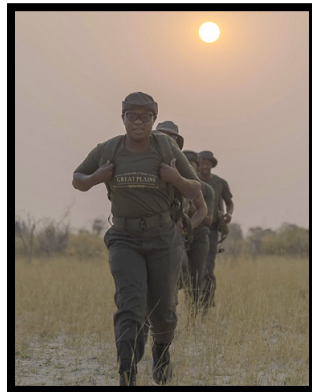
NEW ELEPHANT CALF BORN FROM A TRANSLOCATED FEMALE

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Monitoring and managing

Monitoring wild landscapes is an essential part of the Great Plains Foundation’s mission, bringing constant observations and insights from the ground, and detecting any changes or threats to the ecosystem. This past quarter the Great Plains Foundation team took part in several emergency response activities addressing wildlife welfare and conservation challenges. The team discovered various emergency situations that they were able to report to partners in the area and the government to ensure collaboration and swift action. Cases included removing snares from wild dogs, buffalo and giraffes, investigating wildlife carcasses in the area and human-wildlife conflict cases.

Wildlife Monitoring Coordinator, Dr Bourquin, continues to offer a service to communities by being on call to relocate reptiles from community areas to protect both people and the reptiles. Over the last year, the team relocated 35 crocodiles, numerous snakes including black mambas, cobras, pythons and more from community areas to be released in managed wildlife areas.



The aerial survey conducted earlier in the year not only supported a wildlife count but also uncovered illegal fishing activities. Targeting illegal fishing activities is crucial because they are often entwined with broader networks of wildlife crime, posing significant threats to both ecosystems and conservation efforts. The presence of illegal fishing camps frequently correlates with increased poaching as well as strengthening criminal distribution networks and infrastructure. Tackling illegal fishing is a vital step in securing the long-term health and integrity of these ecosystems while curbing wildlife crime on a larger scale. The team were able to confiscate illegal fishing equipment and arrest those involved, together with government departments.

Finally in the 4th quarter, Great Plains Foundation partnered with the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project to coordinate and facilitate the collection of sightings in Northern Botswana providing valuable insights into the data driving the IUCN Action Plan for this vulnerable species.

35 CROCODILES SAFELY RELOCATED 

3,689KM & 812 HOURS OF BIODIVERSITY PATROL

FEMALE RANGERS

Training and hiring Female Wildlife Rangers from local communities

Our female rangers continue to thrive in the field, engaging in extended patrols, overnight monitoring, and supporting security-oriented missions. Their dedication and enthusiasm are evident as they grow from strength to strength, embracing new challenges and eagerly seeking out their next tasks.

The ladies have been increasing their fitness, taking part in running, weights and teamwork exercises, building strength and overall well-being. The fitness program has proven to boost the health of the rangers but also had a great impact on motivation, capabilities in the field and teamwork. Due to the program four of our female rangers completed a half marathon (with another 4 rangers from the team)! A week later, the team ran another half marathon through the bush tracking in the field in full uniform and 42-degree heat! A true sign of self-belief and resilience. In Botswana the team welcomed four new women to join the Female Rangers to the team. Every new recruit demonstrates the growing impact of women in traditionally male-dominated roles, paving the way for future generations.



In Zimbabwe, we are proud to announce that two of our Female Rangers passed their driver's licenses. Many conservation roles, particularly those involving fieldwork, require a driver's license as a prerequisite and for women pursuing careers in wildlife management or ecological research, obtaining a driver's license can unlock job opportunities that were previously out of reach. In the realm of conservation, this independence enables women to travel freely to and from remote conservation sites, engage with communities, and actively participate in conservation efforts without relying on others for transportation.

Two of our female rangers celebrated milestones, being promoted to Team Leader – In training. They are now participating in a three-month development program for leadership training.

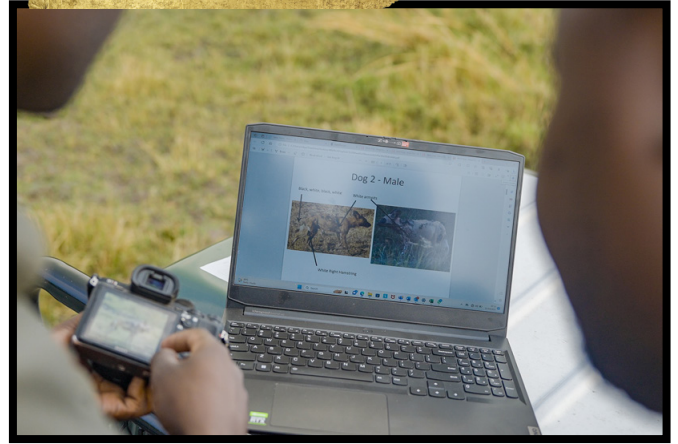
“Ntobatsang, our Ranger of the Month, has consistently gone above and beyond, showing dedication, leadership and a positive attitude. Her hard work and commitment to the team have truly made an impact this month”.

David Rubadiri, Operations Manager



CRITICAL SPECIES PROTECTION

Protecting endangered species through security and monitoring



Wildlife rangers are at the forefront of our ability to protect endangered species in the wild and Great Plains Foundation focuses on upskilling and empowering rangers to carry out this vital work. The program is working effectively by motivating and progressing passionate individuals which also gives room for new team members, the program is working effectively.

One milestone that was celebrated was with ranger Kauandovi Tjipumba, who was promoted to Team Leader – In Training. He is currently participating in a three-month development program in leadership. The program focuses on coaching, demonstrating skills, monitoring performance and identifying training needs of the other rangers. The team also welcomed three new rangers who have already started taking part in training workshops before heading into the field. In the 4th quarter the team rose to a range of challenges with remarkable dedication, resilience and teamwork, all essential qualities in a wildlife ranger team.

“I would like to commend the team for their exceptional dedication and unwavering commitment to their responsibilities. By consistently finding resourceful solutions and persevering through obstacles, the team has demonstrated a profound sense of responsibility and a relentless drive to succeed. Their efforts have not only advanced our mission but have also set a standard of excellence for our organization showcasing to our partners how seriously we take our work and the impact we strive to achieve.”

Robyn Hartley, Monitoring and Research Manager

18 RANGERS

22,960KM PATROLLED

CONSERVATION ROOTS

Planting indigenous trees for ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration



“By protecting trees, they will continue to give back to our communities for generations”

Traditional Healer, Maasai Mara

Almost all indigenous tree species in the Maasai Mara hold medicinal value for local communities. To reduce unsustainable cutting of trees such as the Green Heart Tree, Great Plains has been collaborating with traditional healers to promote sustainable harvesting in local communities. In November a Traditional Healer Workshop was held in the Maasai Mara. Three respected healers in the region came together to share their wisdom with communities, teaching them about how to harvest from indigenous tree species sustainably. Those who attended learnt valuable lessons on sustainable techniques to ensure the trees live and the importance of preserving trees and not cutting them down. Sustainable techniques included extracting medicinal properties from leaves instead of roots.

“This is about conservation and keeping the Maasai culture alive for generations to come.”

Felix, Maasai Mara Liaison for Great Plains Foundation

“Through the planting of trees in the community, we will bring the ecosystem back to its natural state where trees have been cut down.”

Paul, Head of Conservation Roots, Great Plains Foundation

85 INDIGENOUS TREES PLANTED



37,728 TREES PLANTED IN TOTAL

COMMUNITY

Education • Empowerment • Welfare



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Educating and inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders

BOTSWANA KIDS CAMP

The Great Plains Foundation team in Botswana held our annual conservation education kids camp in December, welcoming 73 young enthusiastic school kids from local communities to a 3-day camp bursting with conservation lessons in the wilderness. The camp aims to educate and inspire the next generation on wild spaces and the importance of protecting them. Activities included game drives to understand the ecosystem and interconnectedness of biodiversity. Other sessions covered keystone species, the Okavango Delta formation and its importance to livelihoods, and waste management. Other partners from the region were invited to discuss key topics such as EcoExist focussing on elephant awareness and how to safely live alongside wildlife. CLAWS shared important insights into lion coexistence in the region and the value of lions. Great Plains Wildlife Rangers also took part in running workshops of educational material on protecting ecosystems and showcasing career opportunities in conservation.

“The program is incredible”

Sebobo, Teacher from Ngambao Junior School

“Thank you to all the Great Plains aunties and uncles for taking good care of us, we really loved the camp”

Student from Gudigwa Primary School



73 STUDENTS HOSTED

40 GIRLS AND 33 BOYS

ZIMBABWE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FIELD TRIP

In Zimbabwe, the team in the Sapi Reserve were proud to host 17 students from Chinhoyi University of Technology in October. The students are pursuing a BSc in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, and the field trip enabled the students to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical setting. The field trip also contributed to a portion of their final exam marks.



17 CONSERVATION STUDENTS HOSTED

KENYA SPONSORED STUDENTS

Great Plains Foundation sponsors six students on the Kenya Wildlife Trust's 2-year Conservation Leadership Program. The course aims to educate and equip the next generation of decision-makers for Kenya's wild landscapes. This quarter saw the end-of-year exams with all students performing well and looking ahead to the next stage in the course, where some will seek attachments to conservation organisations in Kenya for on-the-ground experience.



6 STUDENTS SPONSORED

COMMUNITY FARMING

Sponsoring farms to improve food security and enterprise in rural areas



The Shompole community, based in southern Kenya, faces significant agricultural challenges due to the soil conditions. Great Plains Foundation has partnered with the Guardian Project to equip community members with the knowledge and skills to set up their own container farming and poultry businesses. In November the first comprehensive training sessions were conducted for container farming, teaching about water conservation techniques, soil preparation, container selection and repurposing, pest and disease management using organic methods and fertilization using manure from livestock.

Lessons on poultry were also conducted, including poultry house construction, feeding and watering practices, hygiene and biosecurity measures, disease prevention and balanced diet and nutrition. In December 40 selected beneficiaries launched the project by receiving seeds, planting bags, hens and roosters. The seeds included spinach, kale, cabbage, green pepper, coriander and kunde.

“I appreciate the garden project for supporting and providing us with chickens and seeds to grow in our kitchen gardens. We are hoping this project will benefit us as a community and society at large. Thank you”.

Shadrack Rokoine - Beneficiary

80 SEED PACKETS &
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DONATED TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

SCHOOL SUPPORT

Supporting schools in rural areas to boost education



Great Plains Foundation focuses on education across the communities we work with, using a tailored approach focussing on the specific needs of the different countries and communities. This quarter saw an emergency response to a school in the Maasai Mara in Kenya that had experienced a fire in the dormitory. Personal items of the students were lost alongside all the furniture including the beds. Great Plains Foundation stepped in to replace 40 bunkbeds, restoring accommodation for 80 students. Our 37 sponsored teachers continue to have a positive impact in schools, in particular this quarter as the schools had their end-of-year exams.

“The school and community are very much appreciative to Great Plains Foundation for such a great project, The beds mean 80 kids can be accommodated which means a lot to the school!”

Felix, Maasai Mara Liaison.

40 BUNKBEDS DONATED TO SCHOOL DORMITORY 
37 TEACHERS SPONSORED

GRANT PROJECTS

Big Cats Initiative • Project Ranger



BIG CATS INITIATIVE

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

INSTITUTO HOMEM PANTANEIRO, BRAZIL

Big Cats Initiative Grantee



During this quarter, the funding from the Big Cats Initiative supported both environmental monitoring and conservation education in the Pantanal in Brazil, home to jaguars. Due to the intensification of bushfires in the Pantanal in recent months, the team were busy working on rescue operations and provided support to local fauna. The vet team were deployed to identify animals that were identified as needing support, using camera traps that were strategically installed to assist in the search. The environmental education activity hosted 79 children to learn about the senses of big cats and raised awareness about the importance of predators in the Pantanal ecosystem.

WASIMA, TANZANIA

Big Cats Initiative Grantee



WASIMA addresses human-lion conflicts and habitat degradation in western Tanzania by reducing the cost of living with lions and ensuring active community engagements. Between October and December, 17 carnivore-proof bomas were built benefitting 21 households comprising 194 family members. These lion-proof bomas have secured 462 cattle and 275 shoats, worth around \$116,000. Thanks to the support of WASIMA's work only three human-lion conflicts were reported over the 4th quarter. WASIMA also hosted 2,600 local people in various educational and outreach programs including conservation cinema shows, park trips, and eco-club projects.

BIOACOUSTICS RESEARCH GROUP, NEPAL

Big Cats Initiative Grantee

Bioacoustics research group (BRG) are facilitating human-wildlife coexistence in Nepal using automated mapping of tiger presence using prey alarm calls. During the return trip to the project site in December, the team deployed their full prototype version of the acoustic alarm system they have been developing and trained local community members in how to provide ground truth data to test the efficiency of the system. They were able to set up 10 Caracal acoustic units powered by solar panels in the Dalla community forest, where the alarm calls are sent to the team for analysis. Understanding the spatial movement of the tigers allows for early detection and warning to nearby communities.



PROJECT RANGER

Granting funds to NGOs across Africa specialising in anti-poaching

CONSERVATION LOWER ZAMBEZI, ZAMBIA

Project Ranger Grantee



In the 4th quarter the ranger teams at Conservation Lower Zambezi are focussed on law enforcement, anti-poaching patrols in the community, snare sweeps and attending to human-wildlife conflict issues. The team faced challenges with the late rains driving human-wildlife conflict and competition for resources. Progress on communication was made, with the installation of a repeater for the VHF radio system, which allows access to critical radio communication systems across the valley floor in the Lower Zambezi region. The team have also been conducting aerial surveys providing vital surveillance in hard-to-reach areas to detect illegal activities, bushfires and monitor wildlife movements in and around the region.

BUMI HILLS, ZIMBABWE

Project Ranger Grantee

Bumi Hills continues their valuable work in Zimbabwe managing a team of rangers dedicated to the protection of wildlife. Patrolling 24/7 the rangers collected snares, investigated those responsible, made arrests, and consequently gave the wildlife in the area another chance. Bushmeat poaching is the biggest threat to wildlife with a statistic of nine out of ten snares are not checked by the person who laid them, leaving the animals caught there for no reason.

“The generosity we have been showing this year has been an absolute lifeline, and it’s because of this support that we have been able to make such strides in protecting endangered species (we have not lost an elephant to poaching in over 7 years), and preserving ecosystems.”

Bumi Hills



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