



JANUARY 2023

BLACK MAMBAS APU: 10 YEARS IN ANTI-POACHING

Transfrontier Africa Monthly Newsletter



Photo: 3.D.E.Studios

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THE BLACK MAMBAS

Black Mambas APU: 10 years in Anti-Poaching

We are thrilled to announce that this year The Black Mambas APU project is celebrating its 10th anniversary!

It has been a long journey for all of us: from 6 women recruits in 2013 to 42 Black Mamba team members, including women rangers, response team, educators, management and maintenance, with some changes and losses in between.

In the last decade we have had 4 intakes of rangers and 2 intakes of Bush Babies educators.

We originally started in Olifants West Nature Reserve, then moved to 4 other regions, and recently centralized to deploy from our current headquarters.

From ranger recruits, The Black Mambas have grown into Sergeants, Corporals, 4x4 Drivers, Media Liaisons, PT Instructors, Pangolin Guardians, and acquired many other skills in nature conservation and related areas such as sustainable vegetable gardens and bee keeping. Some of them went further in their education and completed courses in teaching, ranger leadership. and FGASA Level 1 guiding.

All of this happened thanks to all of our friends, partners, funders, donors, supporters, people who share our vision and help us so much every year to grow and evolve further.

Stay tuned for updates and events to celebrate our 10th anniversary together with us!

2023

2022 - second intake of 6 Educators



2022 - fourth intake of 6 Mambas



2019 - third intake of 10 Mambas



2019 - first intake of 7 Educators

2015 - Bush Babies EEP launched



2014 - second intake of 30 Mambas

2013 - first intake of 6 Mambas



2013

THE BLACK MAMBAS

Pangolin Guardians in action

In January our Pangolin team took part in another sting operation which resulted in seizure of one pangolin. The pangolin was taken to the *Provet Animal Hospital* immediately to monitor its health condition. Meanwhile our four Pangolin Guardians kept on monitoring one of the pangolins in the remote area. So far, the pango has been picking up weight!

We are grateful to *Provet Animal Hospital*, *Limpopo Endangered Species Unit*, *Umoya Khulula Wildlife Centre* and *Rettet Das Nashorn* for the collaboration and sponsorship.



Patrols and Snare Sweeps



In January The Mambas did 34 observation points. 77 stop-and-searches of vehicles, found 20 snares in total (old and new, set up and not set).



NEW PODCAST

Listen to the Rhino Man podcast with Leitha Mkhabela. It is one of the most insightful podcasts about women in ranger force!



THE
RHINO MAN
PODCAST

EP 31

LEITHA MKHABELA
THE BLACK MAMBAS, AND THE LIFE
OF A FEMALE ANTI-POACHING RANGER.

THE BUSH BABIES

Exciting start of the year!

Festive season is over, school started! The Bush Babies have been looking forward to it, and so have our educators.

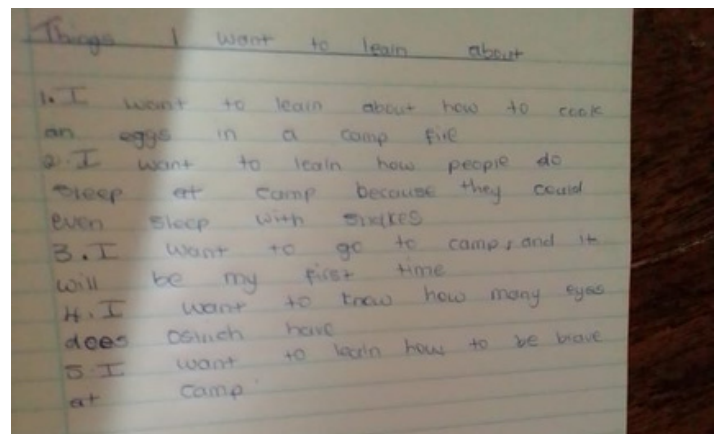
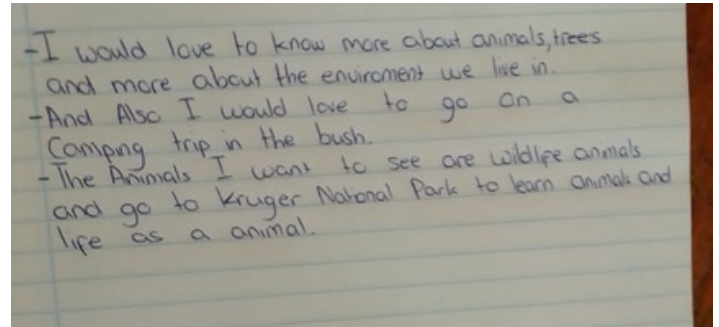


In the first week after Christmas holidays, the Bush Babies had a few ice-breaker sessions to reconnect to each other after a long break.



What do we want to learn about in 2023?

The Bush Babies were tasked to make a list of everything they would like to learn during their environmental classes this year. Let us have a look what they wished for!



" I want to learn how to be brave at camp"

THE BUSH BABIES

New Project - Bush Camp for grannies and their grand daughters

We are excited to announce our new project - Bush Camp for grannies and their granddaughters. Nature is the best place to bring two generations of women together to share adventures and experiences.



At our first camp the grannies and their granddaughters had fantastic game drives with the Big Five sightings.

At the camp the grannies told stories about animals, shared traditional beliefs and riddles, played conservation games.



Huge thank you to *Connected Planet* for sponsoring the camp and *Koru Camp* for facilitating us

We are truly looking forward to the next one!

"To invest in people, prioritize education"

On the 24th of January, which was the International Day of Education, Lewyn presented the Bush Babies project at the *Leadership for Conservation* talk.



WATCH HERE

We are harvesting our veggies!



We have finally harvested some of the vegetables we have been growing in our vegetable garden. Chillies came out first, now we are waiting for tomatoes to ripe!

Big thanks to *Der Touristik* and *Kansas City Zoo* for sponsoring the garden.

Welcome to the new team members!

The new year is only one month old but already much to share. Very happy to announce that Elwenn Le Magarou has joined the research team. She first came TA as a volunteer and then conduct her Masters' research which she successfully completed last September. We have also got two new students from the Centurion academy doing their final year with us as well as two students from Germany, Ilka and Leon, conducting their Bachelors' thesis.

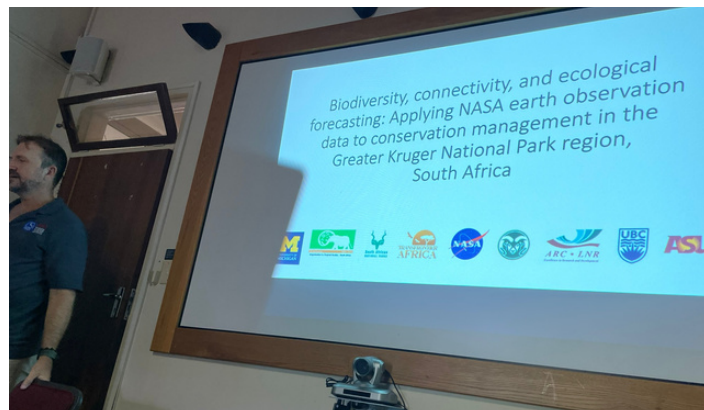


Ilka will be looking at the changes in grass species composition over time to see how the annual rainfall is impacting it and if there are also other factors that we need to consider such as herbivore pressure. We will be starting this year's grass survey next week so those data will also be included into her research. Leon will be continuing with our alien vegetation work and looking into how effective the various control methods are at truly eradicating the invasive aliens from the landscape.

Land use change & connectivity

Project sponsored by NASA

We have been collaborating with professor David Bunn on a project funded by NASA looking into land use change and connectivity. For the past 6 months we have had camera traps deployed on the landscape and have been servicing them. This month the whole team from America and Canada joined us for several days in the field and we joined a workshop in Skukuza, Kruger, to discuss the next steps of this very large project. Very exciting to be part of such broad collaborations.



And finally, in 2020 we hosted dr. Chris Gordon who was working under the lab of professor Jens Svenning. We were part of a large study into trophic rewilding, specifically on the impact that returning elephants to an ecosystem have on the broader biodiversity. The final part of the study has now been published: "Elephant rewilding affects landscape openness and fauna habitat across a 92-year period".

ABSTRACT

INDLOVU BUSH CAMP

Volunteers continue exposing aliens

We keep on fighting the aliens! One of them is Prickly Pears which are native to Mexico.

Dense infestations of this plant reduce the grazing potential of the land, and restricts access by wild animals, including White Rhinos. The spiny cladodes (flat green leaves), cause injuries to animals which, in turn, may lead to an animal being unable to feed.



DID YOU KNOW?

In cacti, spines are transformed leaves

- they protect the plant from herbivores
- radiate heat from the stem during the day
- collect and drip condensed water vapour during the cooler night

Annual grass survey

Our Indlovu Bush Camp team and volunteers continued assisting our researchers with the annual grass survey (check Research section). Volunteers went out to the field to identify grasses, using the book, and collect the samples for our future herbarium!



Leonie's visit

Leonie Hofstra paid us a wonderful visit. Now an official staff member of the Wildlife Justice Commission in the Netherlands, Leonie also took on the role of a consultant on Rhino monitoring and data capture for Transfrontier Africa NPC.





"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"

~ African proverb ~

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to all our sponsors, donors and fundraising partners:

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Endangered Wildlife Trust*Elephants Alive*Empowering Success
Helping Rhinos*Flying4Rhinos&Conservation*Hi-Tec South Africa
How Many Elephants*JuliusK9*Kanzas City Zoo*Kruger2Canyon Biosphere*Ker&Downey
LUSH Charity Pot*Linda Crawford*My Planet*My Green World*Maidknew
Odyssey Teams*Pedalling Against Poaching*Perfect World Foundation*Pennies4Eles
PJ Kombucha*PJ Nisbet&Associates*Platter Project*Point Foundation
Pohl Foundation*Pondoro Game Lodge*Rettet Das Nashorn*Rhino Mercy
Rocking4Rhinos*Ray and Margie Dearlove and Family
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