

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Who we are



About Us

The African Conservation Trust (ACT) is an established not-for-profit and public benefit organisation that has been operating in southern Africa since 2000. We strive to contribute to a world where urban and rural communities take responsible care of their environment, work consciously to conserve and protect natural resources in sustainable ways, and preserve historical assets and heritage for the benefit of future generations. Our core focus areas are environmental conservation and the socio-economic upliftment of vulnerable communities. Wherever possible, ACT initiatives work in partnership with local communities and other stakeholders to promote long term success. Job creation, poverty alleviation, community sustainability and education are key principles in all our projects.



3 Part Mission

Conservation:

Create significant and sustainable environmental change, specifically focusing on climate change, water conservation, food security, waste recycling, sustainable energy, preservation of endangered indigenous fauna and flora and greening projects that incorporate poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods

Education:

Increase the capacity and expertise of the southern African environment/conservation community, by transferring skills, providing mentorship and building supportive networks that support the development and sustainability of the entire environment/conservation sector.

Innovation:

Use modern technology, specifically GIS capacity to enhance conservation efforts and to pioneer socio-ecological approaches to sustainable protected area management.

Vision

A LIVING WORLD

People on a Profitable Planet

A world that is able to sustain human life, profitable as a result of investment into our most precious asset: Planet Earth, with its abundant natural resources; profitable enough for people to and from a social and economic sense. Living, in that our Planet and its inhabitants are not simply surviving, but are flourishing, and have capacity to give, share and grow.

Do the Right Thing

ACT's Registrations

- Not-for-Profit Trust No: IT2174/2000/PMB
- South African Registered Non-Profit Organisation No: NPO 030-243
- SARS Public Benefit Organisation No: 930014758 (*plus Section 18A tax exemption status*)

Memberships & Accreditations

- Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Accreditation: Level 1
- Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Founding member and secretariat of Project Rhino
- Founding member of the SAFE Alliance (now Frack Free SA)
- Founding member of the Imfolozi Community Alliance

Trustees

Mr Carl Hector Grossmann (Chairperson)

Mr Oscar Mpiyani Emmanuel Mthimkhulu

Miss Nomfundo Phewa

Mr Leonard Outram van Schalkwyk

Chief Executive Officer

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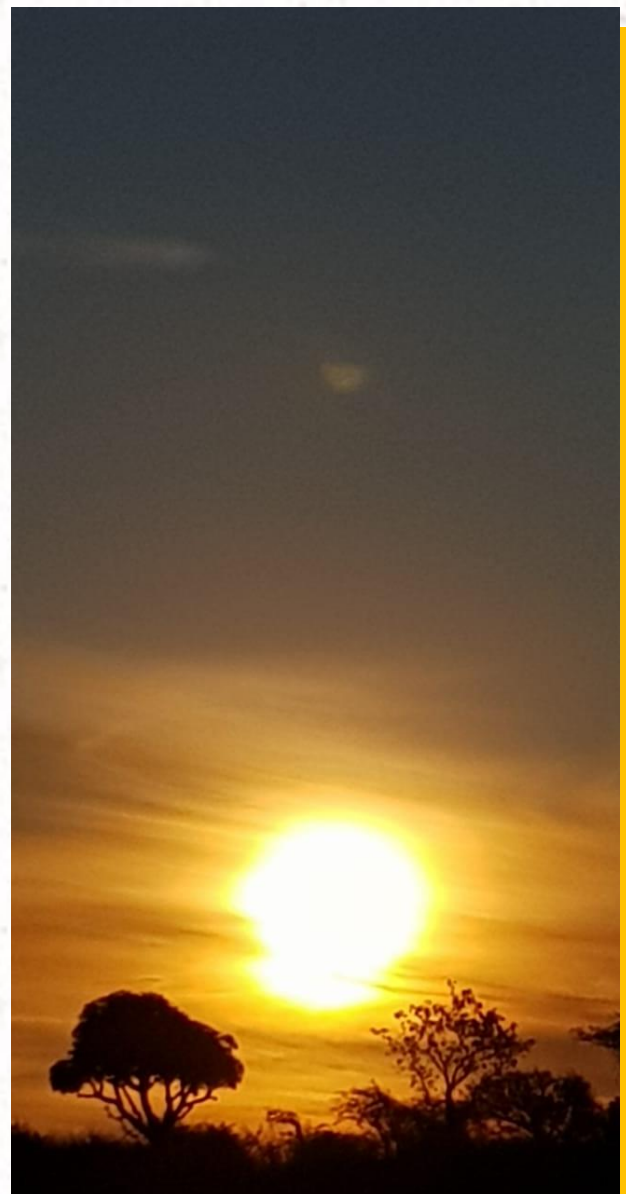
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Website: www.projectafrica.com

Heritage Website: www.actheritage.org

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter): @ACTsafrica

Instagram: @africanconservationtrust



The Year in Review

The fiscal year once again came with its political and environmental challenges, but it also brought a number of exciting opportunities. Although our projects may not have been on the scale of previous years; we are proud of what we have achieved, as we continue to make a difference to the environment and impoverished communities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our board, management team and staff for their ongoing commitment and enthusiasm, as well as our funders and donors for continuing to make our work possible.

We welcomed three new projects this year, with a focus on solar energy, childhood nutrition and environmental education. The *Zululand Community Solar Project* is providing solar lighting systems to families living in three deeply rural communities. We have already seen the visible impact these systems are having on community members, as families have lighting readily available for school work, home business and increased leisure activities.

We are also excited to be implementing the *Water Explorer* programme as the South African partner. The innovative platform encourages school learners to save water by guiding them through fun water saving “missions.” Young children are also the focus of the *KwaJobe Crèche Garden Project* which will be boosting the feeding schemes of 160+ children with permaculture vegetable gardens. This will support both daily nutrition and the community engagement work of Project Rhino and its members.

Project Rhino continues to play an essential and indispensable role in the protection of our wildlife, particularly as KwaZulu-Natal lost 222 rhino to

poaching in 2017 - our worst loss to date. Poaching methods are always changing, and counter-poaching interventions need to be constantly evolving and adapting. One such example is the newly introduced K9-Unit Pilot Project, which in just a few months has already proven effective in road blocks and in locating a number of carcasses of critically endangered white-backed vultures.

African Conservation Trust fulfils the role of secretariat of the Project Rhino association, which includes the management of the dedicated bank account, leasing of the Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing airfield, administrative and fundraising support.

South Africa's rich cultural heritage remained a focus for our Digital Mapping Unit, whose work took them to the Karoo and the Kruger National Park. Working with local non-profit, Northern Cape Environmental Heritage Trust, the team digitally documented 15 examples of the unique corbelled houses constructed by the *Trek boers* in the Loxton region of the Northern Cape. A further three significant heritage sites were modelled in the Kruger Park, and the project included exploration for unrecorded Iron Age sites, yielding positive results.

Our following on social media platforms grew substantially this year, and we added an Instagram account to our profile to share photographs from the field. We were fortunate to have a number of blog articles written on our team and projects by Sandy Woods, featuring beautiful photography by Heidi Christie (BrightBlue Photography). These are available from our website.

We look forward to sharing new success stories in the next financial year.



What we do

The Applied Ecology Unit

The Applied Ecology Unit (AEU) was formed within the African Conservation Trust to address the complex problems associated with the protection of ecosystems. It works by viewing challenges in an holistic manner and working with all stakeholders to find the best solution.

The AEU consists of people with ecological, agricultural, sociological and economic expertise. Rather than reducing projects, tasks, or problems into component parts, the team makes use of “systems thinking” in which multiple aspects are understood as systems that influence each other within an inseparable whole. This is an holistic way of thinking, which acknowledges that society, the economy and the environment are inextricably interrelated.

We understand that the problems that affect us today often relate to the interaction between social, economic and environmental issues. These issues have different priorities for different stakeholders- for example, municipal planners may prioritise social issues and ignore broader economic trends or the environment care that protects soil and water provision; farm planners may put people and the environment second to short-term agricultural production and conservationists, too often, separate environmental protection from the human context. The role of the AEU is to examine these challenges holistically; in a manner that does not ignore the complex interplay between different systems, objectives, time scales and human interpretations.



eThekwini Municipality Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative (EMSLI)

African Conservation Trust continued to work with the eThekwini Municipality in the delivery of its *Sustainable Livelihoods* programme, an initiative which seeks to advance food security and personal livelihoods, whilst mitigating the effects of climate change and increasing local resilience.

As part of its Municipal Climate Protection programme, the eThekwini Municipality has been implementing a Community Reforestation Programme at three project sites: Buffelsdraai Landfill Site, Inanda Mountain and Paradise Valley. The programme involves a collaborative effort between the eThekwini Municipality, NGO's and local communities in the restoration of indigenous forests at these projects sites; creating opportunities for community upliftment, whilst establishing natural “carbon sinks” and restoring biodiversity.

The African Conservation Trust implemented the sustainable livelihoods, food production and value adding phase of this intervention. The 18 month project provided training to community members in growing their own food, and establishing homestead food gardens in accordance with ecological agriculture (permaculture) principles. Value-adding and entrepreneurial activities were also explored, including the erection of a small beekeeping site, with associated training at Buffelsdraai.

The EMSLI project included a number of activities:

- We provided accredited NQF Level 2 Agro-Ecological training to 50 micro-farmers from five communities (Buffelsdraai, Osindisweni, Matata and Maphephetheni and Nazareth communities)
- We assisted these farmers to develop gardens, with ongoing mentorship for remainder of project as well as the construction of community nurseries
- A *Pay-it-Forward* component, whereby beneficiaries also assisted a further five micro-farmers in their community to develop their own gardens
- The promotion of income generating activities: bee-keeping, a herb buy-back programme and the establishment of cooperatives

The project will have far reaching effects toward household food security, improving farming and entrepreneurial skills and increasing income generating opportunities throughout the project communities.

KwaJobe Crèche Food Garden Project

We have recently partnered with Bel Foundation (<http://www.fondation-bel.org/>) in a project which will improve nutrition in three crèches (Early Childhood Development Centres). The project focuses on the KwaJobe region of northern KZN, an area vulnerable to food insecurity and climate change.

As a severely impoverished area, households in the area are food insecure, and depend on refined, purchased white maize-meal for their daily energy. Very few families consume an adequate diversity of fruit and vegetables and as a result suffer from malnutrition. As well as impacting on children's learning and performance, this has led to an increase of stunting in small children (South Africa is one of only 12 countries in the world where stunting has increased).

The project will be providing vegetable gardens to the ECDs, supplementing the feeding schemes of 167 children, aged 0 – 6 years. We will also be providing training and ongoing mentorship to the teachers, so that the gardens remain lush and abundant in the long-term.



The Greater Ithala Complex

The Ithala Complex (incorporating Ithala Game Reserve) is home to a number of significant plant and animal species, including the Lebombo cycad, Pepper-bark tree, elephant and black and white rhino. It also encompasses the northern extremity of the Mistbelt Grasslands; a corridor that is under considerable threat from overutilization and land use change. The northern boundary of Ithala Game Reserve is the unfenced Pongola River. Of concern is Ithala's growing elephant population who cross this river into community lands.

In the 2013, *Securing the Provision of Ecosystem Services in the Greater Ithala Complex* project (funded by the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund), social ecologists engaged with local communities to identify and protect landscapes which have high biodiversity value, and that are significant to them for the delivery of ecosystem services.

Building on these relationships, ACT has been working with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the Kenchaan Foundation and Humane Society International (HSI) to find sustainable solutions for the Complex. HSI is generously funding a 5- year programme which seeks find viable and long term solutions for communities and wildlife in the Reserve. ACT's Applied Ecology Unit is currently examining the expansion of elephant and rhino habitat and the establishment of sustainable communities around the protected area through integrated land-use planning and the building of strategic partnerships.



The Butterfly Routes Project

This unique project resulted in the establishment of network of 4 community-owned butterfly domes in KwaZulu-Natal housing indigenous butterfly species. The domes contribute to biodiversity conservation and the upliftment of local communities. They are also used as a base to conduct environmental education and awareness programmes.



The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Youth Environmental Education Programme

This project is lending logistical and operational support to the iSimangaliso Authority's Education Programme, offering groups of school children from underprivileged backgrounds the opportunity of visiting the park to learn more about the park's biodiversity, particularly marine life.

Small groups of learners, together with their teachers, spend a day visiting different areas of the park with an experienced guide. Here they receive a hands-on learning experience as they interact with a variety of plant and fish species, as well as witnessing the park's wildlife in their natural habitat.

The Authority aims to bring 150 schools, totalling 2400 learners and 300 educators, into the Park over the next few years. The current programme is funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs and the National Lotteries Commission.

Project Rhino

ACT continues to provide the valuable Secretariat & Co-ordination duties for Project Rhino which includes:

1. Managing communications and maintaining relationships between Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, private game reserves and conservation NGOs;
2. Providing strategic direction for the association and representing the KZN conservation community at provincial, national and international levels;
3. Mobilizing resources against rhino poaching;
4. Managing fundraising efforts and maintaining relationships with celebrity supporters, major donors and the general public;
5. Acting as the public face of Project Rhino – particularly with schools, rural communities, general public, government, businesses, international stakeholders and the media;
6. Providing overall financial management of the ACT Rhino Fund: transparent and accountable distribution of funding and reporting;
7. Providing financial management for Project Rhino's projects and initiatives: ZAP-Wing, Rhino Art, community engagement and ongoing ranger support;
8. Strategic relationship building to raise awareness of the plight of rhinos, and of the conservation personnel who are putting their lives on the line in the name of duty.

The **ACT Rhino Fund**, established in 2011, continues to serve as the dedicated funding account for Project Rhino. In partnership with Project Rhino members, we have raised more than R10 million in cash and kind in support of the conservation of South Africa's white and black rhino populations. All funds donated through the ACT Rhino Fund go to bona-fide rhino conservation and anti-poaching efforts of reputable NGOs, game reserves and state conservation agencies.

PROJECT RHINO was launched on World Rhino Day, 22 September 2011.

It is a province-wide, rhino-focussed association that brings together a provincial government conservation body, private and community-owned reserves, rhino owners, leading conservation NGOs and anti-poaching security specialists.

Project Rhino brings together organisations with a common vision and goal, identifies synergies through an integrated, common approach and collectively is a representative body which carries powerful leverage ability.

Website: www.projectrhinokzn.org



Zululand Community Solar

Project

In rural Nongoma, only 12% of the homesteads have access to electricity. The remaining 88% meet their energy needs using hydrocarbon (coal, gas, and paraffin) and/or biomass (wood, cow-dung, and crop waste). Inhaling the smoke and fumes produced from burning these fuels has severe consequences to health, whilst the collection of fuel (typically done by women) is incredibly time consuming and often dangerous.

The **Zululand Community Solar Project** is providing solar lighting systems to families living in three deeply rural communities near Somkhanda Game Reserve. 130 households have received solar lighting kits which can easily supply enough light for the household for the full evening, without the fees and environmental costs that come with coal powered electricity. The kits include up to three hanging lights and a desk lamp to help with evening school work. An adaptor for charging cell phones is an added advantage as community members are saved from having to walk or commute to spaza shops to charge their mobile devices. Training was given to a community member from each region to help with the installation and to promote long term sustainability.

Funding for this project was generously provided by EKOenergy (<http://www.ekoenergy.org/our-results/climate-fund/>) and the Siemenpuu Foundation (<http://www.siemenuu.fi/en/about>).



Water Explorer

Water Explorer is an online fun, inspiring and educational programme that empowers students to lead joint action on water issues. The programme started in 2014 and is now being implemented by more than 3,000 teams in 11 countries.

Water Explorer encourages students to take bold and powerful action to save our precious water through fun, interactive water saving missions. School teams are able to earn points as they complete a variety of water challenges which 'fill up' a virtual online reservoir. Through their efforts to manage their water more wisely, they stand to win many appropriate prizes to assist them in achieving their water goals.

We are proud to join this international programme, supported by GAP UK and funded by HSBC, as the South African implementer and are looking forward to reaching many young hearts and minds in 2018.

Digital Documentation of Heritage Sites within the Kruger National Park

The Kruger National Park is world renowned for its wildlife, but also contains a diversity of historical and cultural sites, ranging from early Stone Age (roughly 1 million years ago) to San rock art and various Iron Age settlements.

With funding provided by the National Heritage Council, the ACT Heritage team documented three significant cultural sites found within the Park: the Makahane Ruins, the Albasini Ruins and the Mahula Complex.

Each of the three sites was laser scanned using a C10 Leica terrestrial scan station, thereby creating metrically accurate models. A virtual tour of each site was created and high resolution aerial photography of Makahane and Mahula sites was also flown. In addition to this, San rock art found at the Mahula site was digitally enhanced and detailed archaeological reports written and submitted to both the NHC and SANParks to assist in their management activities.

Further information on the three sites is available on our heritage website: <http://www.actheritage.org/kruger-documentation/>. The resulting datasets will not only assist in the preservation of these sites for future generations, but also provides highly accurate baseline data for change monitoring.

The team also conducted exploration activities in search of unrecorded Iron Age settlements. Drawing on GIS modelling and historical data, nine potential sites were identified and six were explored. Of those, 3 Iron Age settlement sites were found which included remnants of stonewalling, ceramics and stone tools. Items were photographed and experts are resolving the information from diagnostic markings on the ceramics. The team is very excited about one piece in particular that may lead to a far greater investigation and even excavations of the one site.



Partnership projects



Initiating Agri-Ecology in Imbali & Ashdown

The African Conservation Trust assisted in the agricultural training and garden development programmes of this initiative which seeks to bring about environmental protection of rivers and wetlands in the Imbali and Ashdown regions of Msunduzi. ACT's primary role was to establish community, school and homestead gardens which showcased permaculture activities in the vicinity of the Imbali and Ashdown Green Hubs. The project was implemented by the Duzi Umngeni Conservation Trust (DUCT) in partnership with the Msunduzi River Health Youth Situated Learning Project Enviro-champs and other stakeholders.

ACT hosted a number of 5 day, 2 day and 1 day permaculture workshops for the Enviro-champs and local communities. We also oversaw the development of homestead gardens for the 12 Enviro-Champs, a keyhole garden for Ashdown School, a small nursery for Ndabendle School and two Green Hub Gardens in Imbali and Ashdown which demonstrated indigenous landscaping, Agro-ecology/Permaculture and river care and restoration.



The Corbelled House Mapping Project

The unique corbelled houses of the Karoo are found nowhere else in Southern Africa and are an important part of our cultural heritage. However, many of the corbelled buildings have been lost, and the remainder are at risk of damage from the elements, theft of building materials, or use as housing or livestock enclosures.

With funding provided by the National Lotteries Commission, ACT worked with the Northern Cape Environmental Heritage Trust (NCEHT) in an initiative to digitally conserve these houses. 15 examples were selected and 3D laser scanned, thereby creating accurate models of the structures. High resolution photography was also taken and a number of virtual tours were created. Further information is available on the NCEHT website (<http://www.capeheritage.org/virtual-tours/>).

Future Farmers Foundation Trust

ACT works closely with the [Future Farmers Foundation](#), whose mentorship programme is uniquely geared to provide experiential training and on site transfer of skills and knowledge. The Foundation provides a platform from which young men and women who would otherwise be unable to attend tertiary education, but who are passionate about agriculture, can become successful commercial farm managers or farmers in their own right. Future Farmers provides them with an apprenticeship system whereby they are placed on farms to gain experience, starting from the bottom and learning a large variety of skills. ACT has employed, trained and grown many of these Future Farmers into mentors for our food security programmes, including the eThekweni Municipality Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative.

nSimbi Partnership Projects

ACT provided support to three existing, and one new organisation, over the financial year, each implementing projects in a variety of environmental and educational fields. The nSimbi partnership process aims to build capacity of small or new organisations and ACT provides assistance in aspects such as administration, policy development and financial management, where required.

1000 Hills Chef School

1000 Hills Chef School facilitated bursary funding from First National Bank for four underprivileged, top performing, culinary students who completed their first year, but were unable to pay for the remainder of their studies due to their personal circumstances.

African Raptor Trust

The African Raptor Conservation Project is currently renovating the African Bird of Prey Sanctuary. Situated near Pietermaritzburg, the facility is dedicated to the conservation of indigenous raptors through education, research, breeding and rehabilitation projects.



PMMB Trust

The Preservation of Mkondeni Mpushini Biodiversity Trust is engaged in a number of research, public education and legal representation activities to preserve the ecological and environmental integrity of the biodiversity area for the communities living in the vicinity of Pietermaritzburg.

Wilderness Action Group

This project is currently underway in the Maloti Drakensberg Park and aims to promote wilderness conservation regionally and internationally through advocacy, technical planning, management advice, education and training.



Frack Free South Africa

In 2012, ACT, together with Treasure the Karoo Action Group, the Wilderness Alliance and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, founded the Sustainable Alternatives to Fracking & Exploration (SAFE) Alliance, a group serving as a platform to oppose hydraulic fracturing, “fracking,” and seek alternative, more sustainable development options for targeted fracking areas.

This has now evolved to embrace [Frack Free SA](#) – a volunteer alliance which opposes, on ecological, health, social, and economic grounds, the use of Fracking or other techniques to recover unconventional gas. It is specifically concerned about the risk of contamination of groundwater in an already water-stressed environment. As a cause so pertinent to all of us, Frack Free SA has gained extraordinary support from a broad range of organisations, community groups, farmers, traditional leaders and concerned citizens from all walks of life.

The alliance (including ACT CEO, Francois du Toit) continues to educate and inform the public about their rights and the dangers of fracking, including maintaining an open presence at public information meetings, and presentations at environmental events and public forums.

iMfolozi Community Wilderness

Alliance (ICWA)

African Conservation Trust is a founder member of the iMfolozi Community Wilderness Alliance (ICWA) and an active campaigner for environmental rights, and the rights of communities affected by mines and other environmentally hazardous activities. The iMfolozi Alliance was formed in August 2015 to unify opposition to the Fuleni Coal Mine on the border of the iMfolozi Wilderness area. This is being led by a *Save our iMfolozi Wilderness* campaign facilitated by the [Global Environmental Trust](#).

The iMfolozi Wilderness lies within the oldest proclaimed nature reserve in Africa, home to a vast array of wildlife, including the Big Five. It also has a strong cultural heritage, dating back to the Stone Age with a strong connection to Zulu people, including King Shaka. The region currently supports the greatest concentration of rhinoceros in the world, but experts fear that this mine will clear the way for poachers. iButho Coal also seeks to relocate 16,000 people from area, a footprint of over 12,000 hectares.

This campaign is seen to be one of the most bitterly contested battles in KwaZulu-Natal’s environmental history. It is also one of the most successful alliances between conservation and environmental and social justice.



Funders and Partners

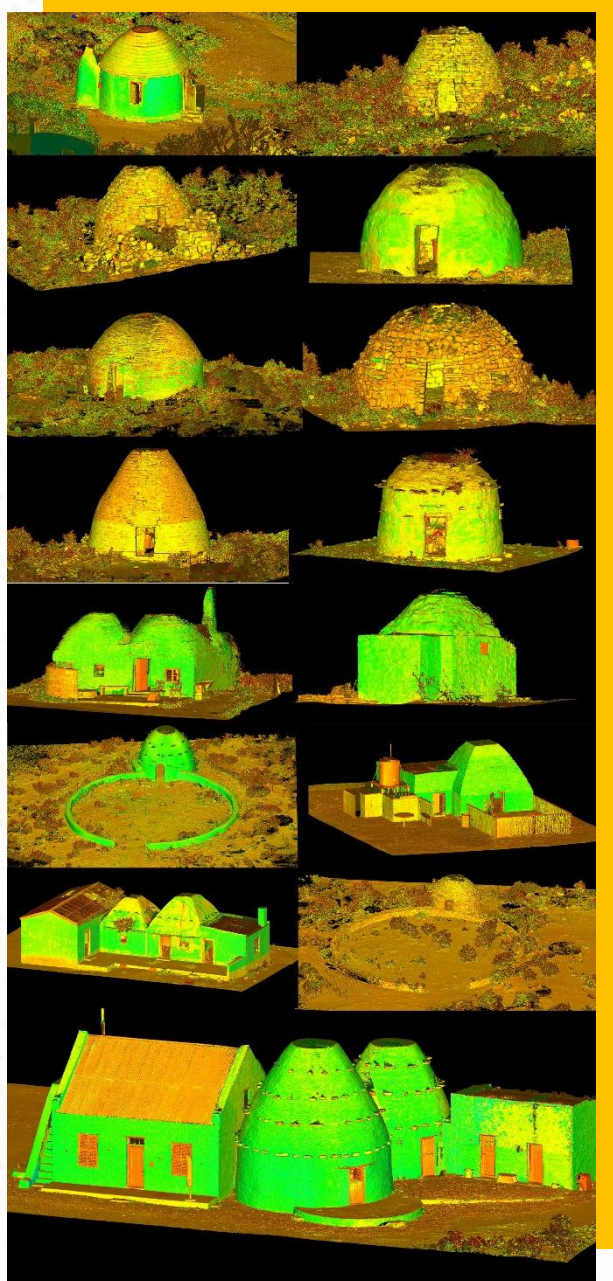
Our grateful thanks to all the funders and donors who supported our efforts this past financial year.

Project Funders

- Bel Foundation
- EKOenergy and the Siemenpuu Foundation
- eThekweni Municipality
- HSBC
- Humane Society International (HSI)
- The National Heritage Council of South Africa
- The National Lotteries Commission

Strategic Partners

- Business World Skills Developers
- Duzi-Umngeni Conservation Trust
- Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
- Future Farmers Foundation Trust
- Kanyenawe Training & Consulting
- GAP UK
- iSimangaliso Wetland Park
- Kenchaan Foundation
- Northern Cape Environmental Heritage Trust



Awards and Media

Media & Publicity

African Conservation Trust held information stalls at the Royal Show, Pietermaritzburg (May/June, 2017) and the Illovo Wagtail Conservation Festival (July, 2017).

Our heritage team was featured in two newspaper articles:

Taking History into the Future, Die Courier Beaufort West, Article by Steve Moseley (May, 2017), and

Corbelled Houses of the Karoo, Noordwester/Messenger (May, 2017)

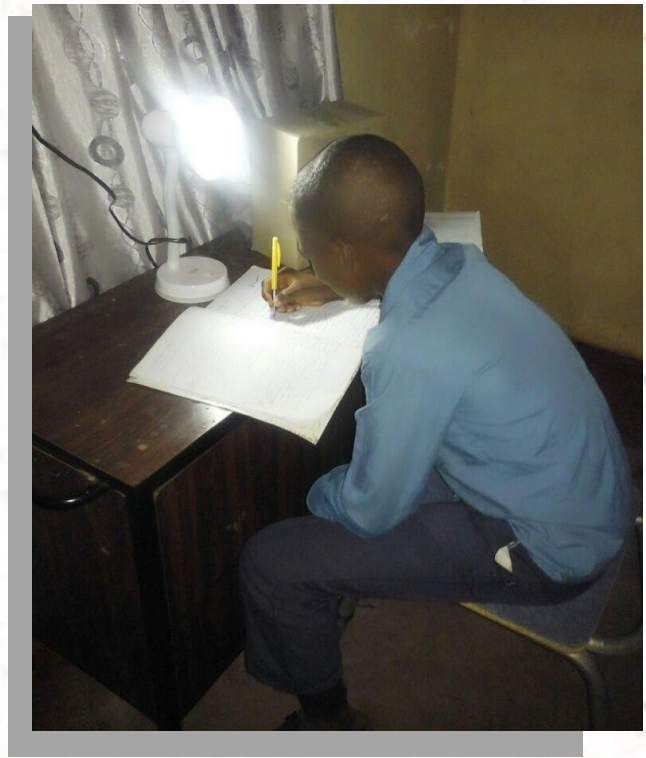
And our solar lighting project in an online article: *ACT & Tundra team up to bring solar energy to rural Zululand*, Umhlanga News (September, 2017)

In addition to this, a number of blog articles were written highlighting the people and projects of ACT. These are available on our website.

- *Smiles in Inanda*, discusses the eThekweni Sustainable Livelihoods Project, with words by Sandy Woods and photographs by Heidi Christie (BrightBlue Photography)
- *Mending Fences*, details the work of ecologist Paul Cryer in the Ithala Project
- *Etienne Gerber: ZAP-Wing Pilot*, outlines the critical role that Etienne plays in the Zululand anti-poaching aerial patrols
- *Lost Cities and Settlements of the Kruger National Park*, a blog detailing ACT's exploration activities for Iron Age settlements
- *Nomfundo Phewa - Lighting up Lives in Zululand*, features the installation of solar lighting kits in rural Zululand
- *Shannon Hoffmann – The Puppet Master*, a blog about the invaluable conservation work of partner organisation, African Raptor Trust

Awards

Hillcrest Rotary Club recognised the work of ACT Chairman, Carl Grossmann, at their annual award ceremony. Carl was awarded Project of the year, Rotarian of the year & a Paul Harris Fellow.



Photograph Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following individuals for allowing us to use your photographs in this document:

Chris Galliers (Project Rhino)

Heidi Christie (BrightBlue Photography)

Shannon Hoffmann (African Bird of Prey Centre) & ACT employees

