



Annual Report

2019



Founding member & secretariat of Project Rhino

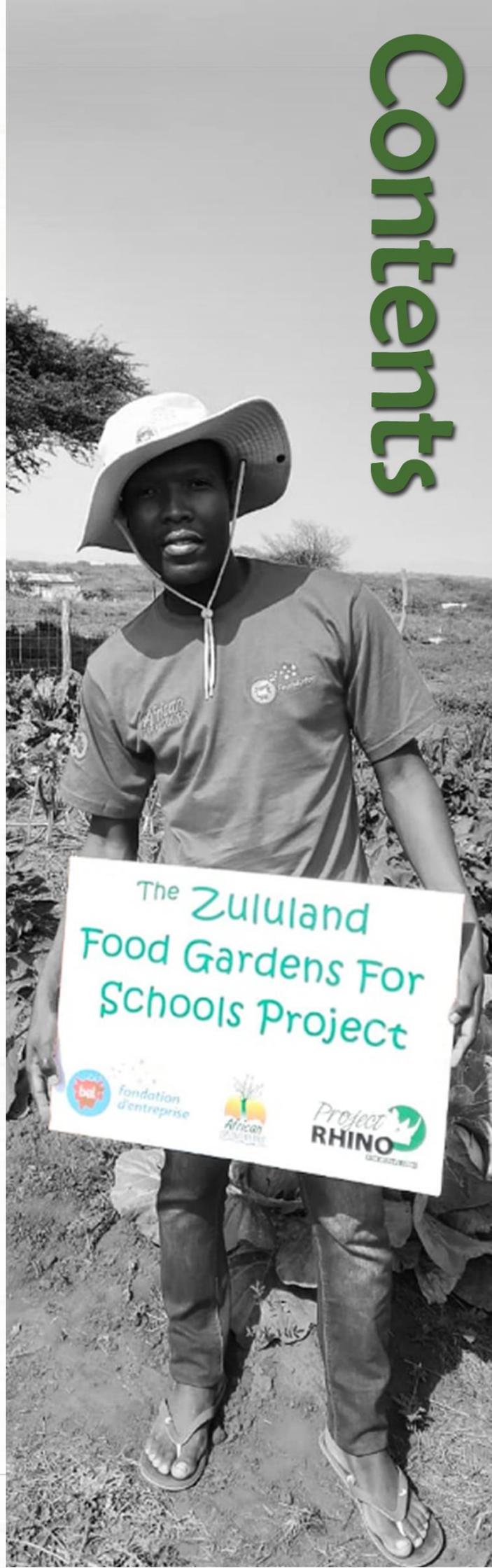
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Photograph Acknowledgements

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

*Cover photo: Barbara Fraatz (Pixabay)
Alicia Campbell (Pixabay)
Chris Galliers (Project Rhino Coordinator)
Heidi Christie (BrightBlue Photography)
ACT employees*



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

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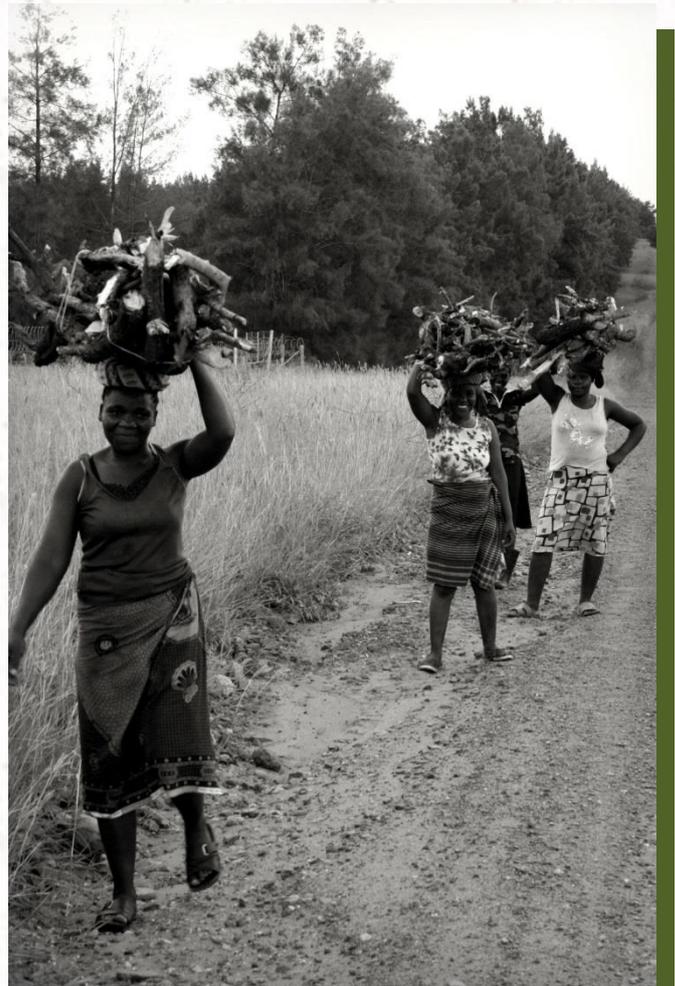
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Social Media (Facebook, Twitter): @ACTsafrica

Instagram: @africanconservationtrust



What We Do



KwaDabeka Permaculture Garden Establishment Project

ACT helped to establish a community food garden of approximately three hectares at the decommissioned KwaDabeka Waste-Water Treatment Works, just outside of Durban. The initiative forms part of a greater development project by the eThekweni Municipality, in association with local community gardeners and NGO's, establishing an integrated welfare, agriculture, youth development, eco-tourism and environmental restoration site. Our permaculture team oversaw the overall layout and construction of the garden, including swales, ponds and raised beds. A food forest was planted, as well as the indigenous re-vegetation of the fringe of the permaculture garden. We also provided on-site training for the local gardening team.



KwaJobe Crèche Food Garden Project

With funding from the Bel Foundation, our permaculture team established ecological food gardens at three crèches in the greater KwaJobe region to support their daily feeding schemes. The crèches – Vezukukhanya, Sibhekokuhile and Siyaphaphama – look after a total of 167 children, aged 0 – 6 years.



Like most schools in the area, daily meals consist mostly of a starch-based diet, like maize meal, which offers little nutritional content. The fresh produce harvested from the garden therefore provides the children with the essential vitamins and minerals required to help prevent stunting and malnourishment.

ACT provided 5-days training to community members so that they could help care for the gardens in the long term. This was enthusiastically received by the participants, who weren't afraid to get their hands dirty during the practical lessons.

The agricultural team from WILDlands joined the project in the latter half of 2018, and with their help, a further four gardens are being established at ECDs in the region. Project Rhino is also paying a small stipend to a local community member who has been trained as an ecological agriculture mentor. We are hoping to expand the project to another twelve deserving schools in the area in 2019.

Water Explorer South Africa

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.

After completing a number of interactive water saving “missions” throughout the year, Ebomvini Primary of Izingolweni on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast was declared the overall national winner. A small delegation from Ebomvini travelled to London in October to represent us at the international Water Explorer event - they walked away with both the Innovation and Students’ Choice awards! Some of their top activities

included turning chip and sweet wrappers — which often end up in our rivers — into “eco-bricks”, which were used to make outdoor furniture, safe-guarding a local wetland and building a pond to attract frogs into their permaculture garden.

The school also finished first in the youth category at the World Water Food and Air Awards (WAFA) in February 2019, and were honoured to host HRH Princess Zama Zulu, who presented them with the award at their school.

Water Explorer is supported by GAP UK and funded by HSBC.



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.

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 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 iSimangaliso 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.



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.



World Youth Wildlife Summit 2019

After the fundamental successes of the 2014 *World Youth Rhino Summit* and 2015 *Winter Summit*, African Conservation Trust, as a founding member of Project Rhino, is planning a third **World Youth Wildlife Summit**, to bring together youth leaders from Africa and the world and empower them to become local, national and international ambassadors for wildlife conservation.

Planned for mid-2019, the platform will provide a forum for passionate youth, aged 16 to 20, to engage with conservation experts and experience African wildlife first hand. These youth delegates will be educated and challenged to work together to directly

address the current threats of wildlife crime and to develop possible solutions to the problems identified. The previous summits resulted in the drafting of the World Youth Wildlife Declaration, endorsed by luminaries such as Dr Ian Player and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as a successful visit to Vietnam by a team of previous delegates.

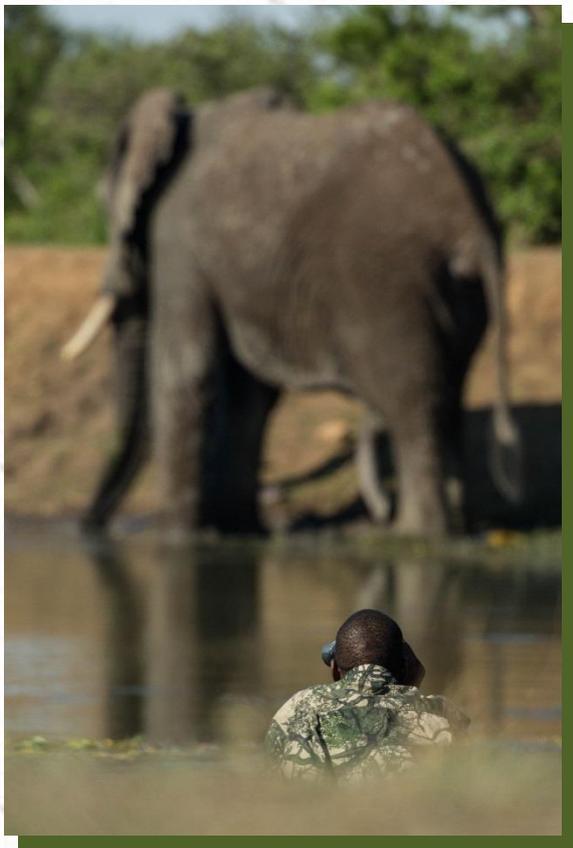
The 2019 World Youth Wildlife Summit will maintain a focus on rhino as an iconic species, but also broaden its emphasis to include other targeted terrestrial African animals, such as pangolin, gorilla and elephant. Funding for the WYWS 2019 planning and development was generously provided by USAID VukaNow.



Project Rhino

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. ACT continues to provide the valuable Secretariat & Co-ordination duties for Project Rhino which includes: employing the project management team, leasing invaluable airfield capacity, employing certain field staff, fundraising to support these initiatives and managing the dedicated the Rhino Fund.



Highlights for Project Rhino for the period:

- The official institution of the Project Rhino K9-Unit under coordinator Eric Dickson. After a highly successful 3-month trial period, the K9-Unit was established in Hluhluwe (minutes from the ZAP-Wing airfield), including 4 trained and area adapted tracker dogs and as well as Mali, the detection dog. The K9 anti-poaching unit has proven to be efficient in the detection of wildlife products, arms and ammunition and the tracking and locating of suspects in a number of reserves in the Zululand area.
- The appointment of ecologist Carlien Esterhuizen as our new Project Rhino Assistant – Carlien carries a wealth of conservation and fundraising experience and has proven a huge asset to the team.
- ACT was successfully accepted as a beneficiary on the international GlobalGiving fundraising platform and we have raised more than R50,000 for the horse and K9-Units on the platform to date.
- The continued success of the Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing (ZAP-Wing), conducting daily aerial patrols and providing immediate reaction and support to Zululand Reserves.
- Instilling a passion for wildlife among the youth through Rhino Art, reaching more than 60,000 children from schools in KZN, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga.
- The upgrading of Nyandu Camp at Weenen Game Reserve, as well as Kids Camps and Wildlife Walks for rural youth.
- On-going community engagement, including a Zululand Community Conservation and Engagement Workshop in January and Traditional Leader workshop at Mkhuze Game Reserve.

Awards and Media



Water Explorers Take Top Honours

Our Water Explorer Project, along with the top team for 2018 Ebomvini Primary, became quite a media sensation towards the latter part of the year: not only were they featured in online press, they were filmed and featured on SA's conservation TV programme *50/50*, and interviewed on the radio by Ukhozi FM and Radio Sunny South.

In February 2019, Ebomvini had the honour of being visited by HRH Princess Zama Zulu, who spent the day learning about Ebomvini's sustainability projects. The Ebomvini winners were also featured on eNCA News and interviewed by UK Correspondent Natalie Powell on DSTV 403.

Other Media & Publicity

Project Rhino hosted a Media Road Show early in 2018, joining local and international media partners for a live conservation-in-action experience. The team visited the Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing airfield, the horse-unit and had a demonstration from the K9-unit. They also got to experience a rhino dehorning and wild dog tracking in Somkhanda Game Reserve. A number of follow-on media articles have since been published on Project Rhino's activities.

ACT was cited in the Change News SA article, *Five non-profit organisations working to save the environment* (April 2018).

Water Explorers Make Every Drop Count. Article by Estcourt & Midlands News (April 2018).

Grant Fowlds represented Project Rhino at the *WTM Africa Travel & Tourism Show* in Cape Town to raise brand awareness, conduct market research and develop and maintain relationships (April 2018).

Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing pilot, Ian Waghorn, was interviewed on KZN's leading radio station, East Coast Radio on the rhino poaching crisis and Project Rhino's activities (May 2018).

London eyes on SA Water Wizzes. Article by Roving Reporters, which also appeared on Ground Up (November 2018).

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

- *Sihle Mthethwa – ACT's Applied Ecology Unit.* Sihle is an invaluable member of the ACT team, working on the IThala Range Expansion project. Words by Sandy Woods and photos by Heidi Christie (March 2018).
- *The 3 P's of ACT: People, Projects and Partnerships.* Words by Sandy Woods and photos by Heidi Christie (May 2018).
- *Growing Food Gardens For Rhinos - Food gardens for crèches, and the link to Project Rhino community engagement in northern KZN.* Kira Macdougall (February 2019).

Funders and Partners

Our grateful thanks to all the funders and donors who supported our efforts this past financial year; our work would not be possible without you.

Project Funders

- Bel Foundation
- eThekweni Municipality
- HSBC
- Humane Society International (HSI)
- USAID VukaNow

Strategic Partners

- Chemonics
- Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
- Future Farmers Foundation Trust
- Kanyenawe Training & Consulting
- GAP UK
- iSimangaliso Wetland Park
- Kenchaan Foundation
- Project Rhino
- WILDTrust

