



ANNUAL REPORT

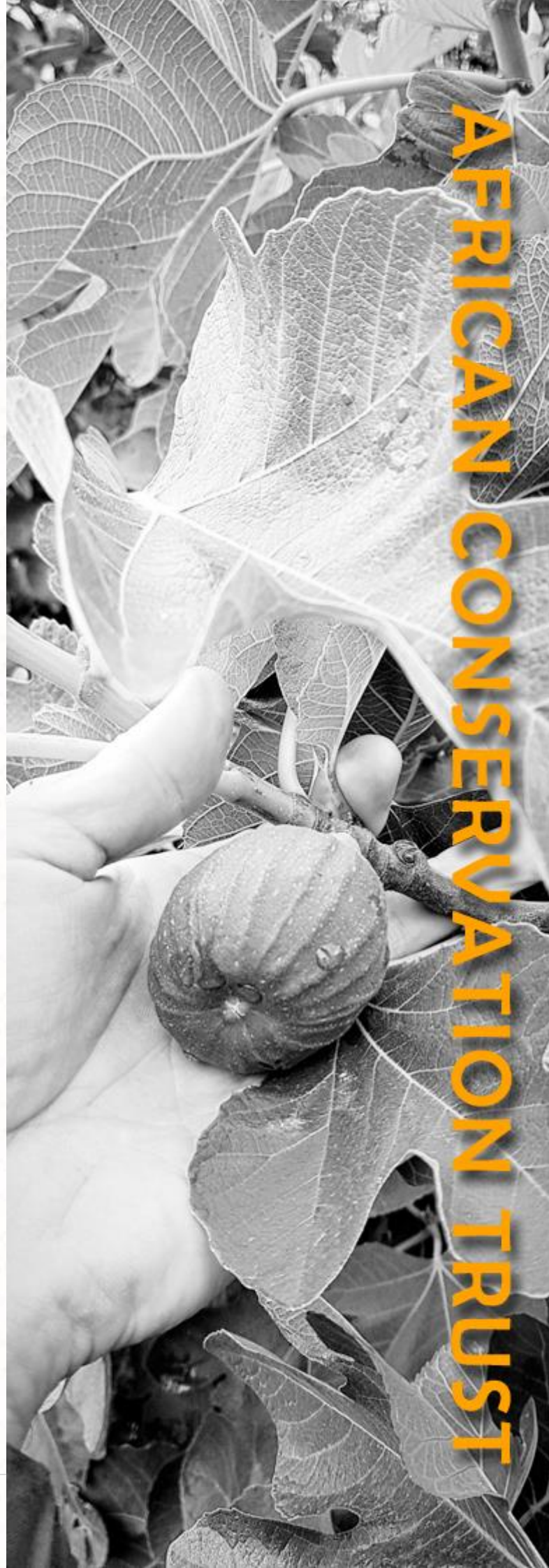
2020



Founding Member & Secretariat of Project Rhino

Table of Contents

About Us	2
3 Part Mission	2
Vision	2
ACT's Registrations	3
Memberships & Accreditations	3
Trustees	3
Chief Executive Officer	3
What We Do	4
KwaJobe Crèche Food Garden Project	5
Mandlakazi Food Security Project	6
Water Explorer/Global Search for Sustainable Schools (GSS)	7
Financial Investment Modelling Project for Mini-Solar Units in Malawi	8
The Applied Ecology Unit	8
The Greater Ithala Complex	9
CWC Africa	9
World Youth Wildlife Summit 2019	10
Project Rhino	11
Conferences, Awards and Media	12
Conferences	13
Awards	13
Press and Media	13
Events	14
Funders and Partners	15
Project Funders	15
Strategic Partners	15
World Youth Wildlife Summit Funders	16
Photographic Acknowledgements	16



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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Instagram: @africanconservationtrust

Project Rhino website: www.projectrhinokzn.org

Project Rhino Social Media: @projectrhinokzn

Rhino Art Social Media: @RhinoartAfrica

World Youth Wildlife Summit Social Media:

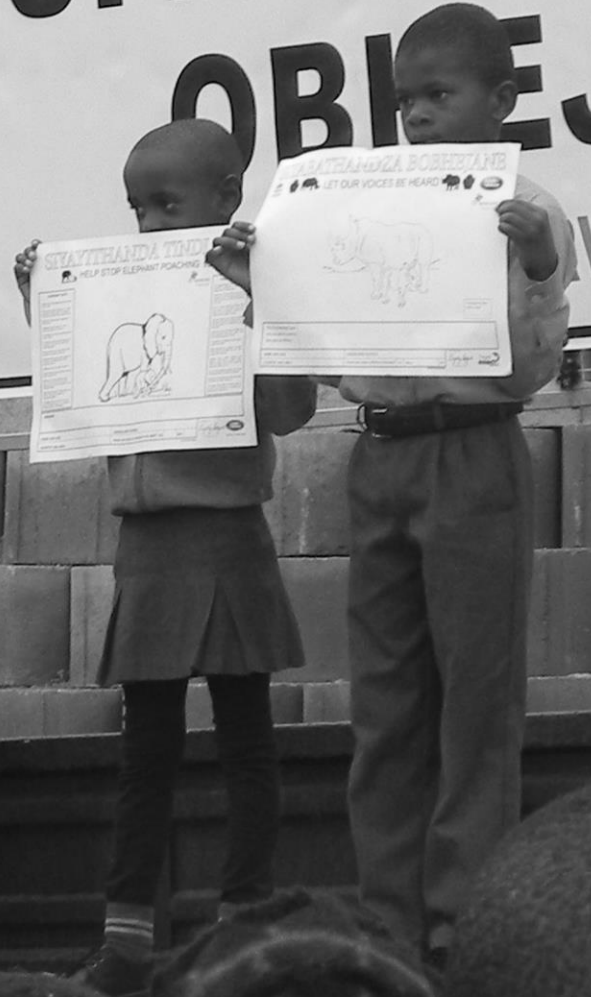
@Youthwildlifesummit



What We Do



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KwaJobe Crèche Food Garden Project

In the 2019 financial year, with the financial backing of Bel Foundation, ACT established food gardens at three crèches in the KwaJobe region, providing the young children (aged 1 to 6) with valuable nutrition in their important development years. In 2020, ACT agricultural teams expanded the project to an additional ten crèches across the region. These included the communities of Cezwane, Ezinyokeni, Ophansi, Ezineshe, Nhlanguano and Komkhulu. Mentorship and training was also provided, to help keep the gardens sustainable in the long-term.

Water remains the biggest challenge for the crèches, as there is no municipal water available at most sites. Agricultural mentors have to bring in water in a tanker when rainfall is short, which is a challenge in itself along the rural dirt roads. Funding to purchase new seedlings is also an issue for some of the crèches and we were grateful to receive a generous donation of vegetable seeds from Pep Africa to share with the gardeners. In addition to teaching crèches to save seeds, we encourage them to plan ahead and sell any surplus to the community to pay for these seedlings.

Building good relationships with rural communities neighbouring game reserves is a core focus of Project Rhino as it is critical in the fight against wildlife crime. Project Rhino has therefore continued to support the KwaJobe project, supplementing fuel and mentorship costs, wherever possible.

The HCI Foundation generously funded the training of 23 families with children attending iSiqalo Sethu Crèche. This means that in addition to receiving at least one nutritious meal at school, the children and their families will also be able to obtain fresh vegetables at home. The 5-day training programme focused on the techniques to keep gardens growing in the long-term, particularly given the lack of water in the area, as well as modules on healthy eating.

HCI Foundation also contracted African Conservation Trust to oversee the installation of a borehole for a rural community near KoQhoqhoqho, west of Hluhluwe. In a region where there is no piped municipal water to homesteads, this borehole is making a fundamental impact – saving time walking to water sources, as well as a more reliable supply for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene.



Mandlakazi Food Security Project

We have partnered with the Zululand Conservation Trust (ZCT) in an initiative to boost food security in three communities in the Mandlakazi traditional authority on the western boundary of Manyoni Private Game Reserve. As part of their greater community outreach programme, ZCT have adopted the crèches of Mbuzeli, uBhejane and Mzomayethu and provide them with support wherever possible. ACT agricultural specialists were able to assist and have established food gardens at each of the crèches to support their daily feeding schemes. Training was given to all three communities and a container unit has also been installed at Mbuzeli crèche to serve as a kitchen and food prep area. We have also planted fruit trees, installed rainwater tanks and fencing.

Phase II of the project will build on this by planting more trees and a new staple (grains and beans) garden, as well as the installation of more rainwater and run-off harvesting features as well as drip irrigations system for the vegetable gardens. In addition to providing the children with fresh fruit and vegetables which are often lacking in their diets, the gardens serve as demonstration sites - examples of thriving permaculture systems- while slowly winning the confidence of community residents through a positive continuous presence. The project is generously funded by Olivier van Walsem.



KwaQanqatho Agricultural Development Programme

KwaQanqatho, a community located within the eMakhosini Ophate Heritage Park, was the focus of a Social Economic Development initiative of the Easton Berry Group. ACT facilitated a number of interventions to advance agricultural productivity in the region, including mapping available lands for future cropping purposes, the purchase of a 7 Kw generator, electric maize threshing machine, 220 litre storage bins and a 3.5 ton maize silo. Permaculture specialists also developed a plan for the reshaping of the lands and the incorporation of a vastly increased plant pallet aiding in long term sustainability.

A significant result was the signing of an off-take agreement with a KZN-based craft distillery for the contract growing of heirloom traditional crops such as Zulu Rainbow Maize and Sorghum.



The majority of the 2019 harvest of maize and sorghum was retained by the community for future planting, with the remaining harvest purchased by the Craft Distillery at SAFEX price plus a premium of R1000 per ton on both. The community has since fenced an additional 3 Ha, at their own expense, and the long term aim is to incorporate the additional 21 homesteads in the area.

Water Explorer/Global Search for Sustainable Schools (GSS)

During the 2020 financial year, the Water Explorer (WE) team conducted 129 one-on-one support visits to 38 different schools. Each school visit lasted 2-4 hours and covered a variety of sustainability/consumption topics such as: wetlands; water filtration; secret water, climate change understanding, solar cookers, fracking, growing our own food; water audits etc. Lessons always include an action component and follow up for schools to complete until the next visit.

In July WE launched the GSS Application for project up-scaling. Seven schools could potentially receive project up-scale funding, and another 18 in-school sustainability lesson support until September 2020. Naturally, most of the schools selected had a history of environmental education and were able to demonstrate sustainability through years of commitment. The selection of schools represented a diverse cross-section, from deep rural to city schools; high, primary and even pre-primary schools. They include Shea O'Connor Combined School; Phumelelani, Ebomvini and Scottsville Primary Schools; Obed Mlaba Technical and Danville Park Girls High Schools and Birches Pre-Primary.

Our first upscale project is already almost completed. This involved the installation of a solar water geyser at Birches Pre-primary School. The second part of the project will involve liberating ten laying chickens from an inhumane laying farm and providing a free range egg option (of which there aren't any in the area) for the school as a way of generating some income and saving carbon indirectly.

Africa Exchange Workshop and GSS Top Team Selection event

From the 27 Oct – 1 Nov, WE hosted and facilitated the Africa Exchange Workshop. Delegates from both Namibia and Uganda

attended. The purpose of the four days was for everyone to share understandings, implementation ideas and tools which support outcomes of the GSS project. We also invited Environmental Education (EE) experts in the field to facilitate sessions on EE, the Sustainable Development Goals and other topics.

Part of the workshop entailed visiting three GSS supported schools and learning from them. The schools had numerous examples of hands-on sustainability projects that they had implemented, that addressed consumption and carbon reduction. The highlight of the visit was attending our special celebratory event for the seven selected teams for project up-scale. All teams presented their inspiring environmental efforts and project up-scale plans. While all schools were winners, Shea O'Connor Combined School was awarded the Top Team Tap Trophy for Water Explorer South Africa, based their exemplary efforts for 2018/19. Some of these included safeguarding and rehabilitating a wetland within their school, banning plastic outright which has several fantastic benefits including learners eating less junk and reduced litter. Ensuring rainwater harvesting is a priority, growing their own food organically and selling surplus to local markets and making their voices heard and joining climate strikes this year. They represented South Africa in the International Water Explorer on-line event on the 12th November when over 10 countries converged and only one was selected as overall International 'winner'. Shea O'Connor was awarded the Community Award which was a great honour.

Next steps

To continue to support the 25 selected GSS schools with in-school support, as well as supporting the 7 teams for project up-scale. This includes firming up their project plans and beginning implementation – we aim to have these completed by June 2020.

Financial Investment Modelling Project for Mini-Solar Units in Malawi

Malawi has the lowest rate of access to electricity in Africa; less than 12% of the 18 million people have access, and the average household electrification rate in rural areas is less than 5%. The main sources of light for the non-electrified households are battery torches, elephant grass, candles and paraffin lamps.

With funding generously supplied by Ekoenergy, ACT is currently working on an initiative piloting new 'Smart Commanda' solar lighting systems in three rural communities (fishing villages). The PV systems will offer light at a flick of a switch, but without the health and fire risks that Malawian households currently face.



The Smart Units, produced locally by Tundra Energy, have a micro-processor, GPS, GSM and Bluetooth installed which allows for pre-paid or rental options to be considered. Working with local partners, Malawi Volunteer Organisation and Rift Valley Solar, we are hoping to determine the appeal of pre-paid / rental solar lighting systems and which rent to own option generates the best Return on Investment (ROI).

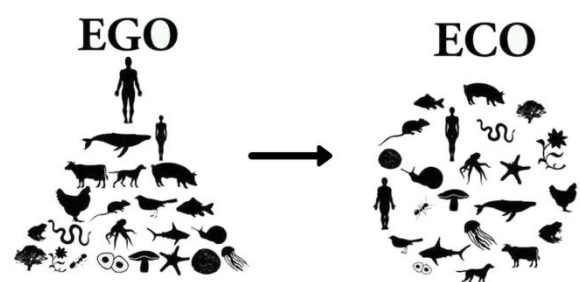
This would offer Malawians access to lighting at an affordable daily rate, offer employment opportunities to local agents and reduce environmental impact.

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.

CWC Africa

The development of the Conservation Economy and unblocking opportunities to communities that are not currently part of the tourism, ecological or conservation sector is a core focus of ACT and a pillar strategy of Project Rhino. The Conservation Economy encompasses more than the game reserve and its downstream activities and opportunities but focuses on a restorative economic activity and a holistic view of economic, social and ecological benefits for wildlife reserves and the communities surrounding them.

CWC Africa seeks to convert Africa's community land surrounding game reserves and parks into **Communal Wild Conservancies** (CWC's), which will represent an extension of the existing park ecosystems. The team has already identified 6 million hectares of landscapes, with a focus on community reserves adjoining reserves and parks in Sub Saharan Africa. These areas include both existing reserves and reclamation farms that have been transferred back to the previously disadvantaged individuals.

If we as a conservation community are to stand any chance of combatting wildlife crime, we need to create benefits for the communities that are most at risk. CWC Africa seeks to protect these areas from encroaching development, whilst creating responsible, sustainable, conservation-based revenue streams for the local communities and other stakeholders.

CWC Africa incorporates specialists from ACT, Project Rhino and our partner organisations.



World Youth Wildlife Summit 2019

Along with habitat destruction, the illegal wildlife trade, driven by criminal organisations and rebel militias, contributes to the dramatic decline of wild species. Wildlife crime affects livelihoods and poaching puts human lives at risk - it is estimated that over 1,000 park rangers have been killed in the line of duty over the past 10 years. Illegal activities, such as money laundering, corruption and document fraud also go hand-in-hand with wildlife crime.

The World Youth Wildlife Summit brought together more than 165 youth, 20 adult chaperones (educators and community leaders), 35 conservation role models and 5 keynote speakers from the 21st – 24th September, to engage, empower, educate and equip the youth to become Ambassadors for Conservation and influencers to reduce wildlife crime.

The intensive four-day program, organised by African Conservation Trust, together with Project Rhino and the Kingsley Holgate Foundation, was held at the Southern African Wildlife College. The delegates were challenged during many hours of discussion and debate regarding the responsible use of wildlife resources, strategies for demand reduction, the link between poverty and poaching, habitat loss, and the role of education and awareness.

The conservation role models, and keynote speakers gave freely of their time to impart knowledge, answer questions and even provide career guidance, further motivating the youth to explore opportunities within the biodiversity economy.

It is becoming increasingly clear that without effective communication, most conservation efforts will not work. Rangers, vets, animal care professionals and wildlife managers are all critical for conservation on the ground. But they need the support of people, in Africa and on other continents. As a result, a parallel session for the

chaperones, 'Effective Communication for Conservation' was included in the program.

Post-Summit 2019

The youth delegates submitted personal pledges regarding the actions they will take in the weeks, months and year following the event. The Summit team will be in regular communication with the youth, providing them with guidance and the tools to put these into action.

Their ideas include giving presentations and educating family and friends through social media, hosting local mini-Summits, using marketing, photography and videography to spread awareness as well as fundraising for wildlife conservation.

The youth will be engaged via numerous social media platforms as well as via WhatsApp groups. These platforms are important tools in creating a sense of community, connecting them to the conservation network, sharing news, leadership tools and events they can get involved in. It also provides a space for them to ask questions and engage with their fellow delegates. The Rhino Art conservation education program will play a significant role as another tool through which the delegates can expand their education and awareness efforts and nurture younger youth.



Project Rhino

Project Rhino takes the form of a multi-stakeholder collaborative comprised of 37 leading conservation NGOs, anti-poaching specialists and game reserves with the shared purpose of protecting South Africa's black and white rhino populations. The collaborative supports more than 30 private, community and state reserves, which are collectively responsible for the second-largest rhino population on the continent and the most genetically diverse white rhino population in the world. ACT is a founding member of Project Rhino, and serves as the Secretariat to the initiative, responsible for co-ordination, project management and strategic direction as well as oversight and management of the ACT Rhino Fund.

Project Rhino is built on four pillars, namely:

- **Coordination Unit:** The team that keeps the engines running by 1) mobilizing stakeholders; 2) gathering and synthesizing information; 3) prioritising needs; and 4) sourcing funds and donations. Without effective coordination, we would see a disjointed and dysfunctional response to wildlife crime – resulting in higher poaching levels.
- **Ranger & Technical Support:** 1) Direct training and material support to rangers; 2) providing and operationalizing K9 and equine patrols units; and 3) ZAP-Wing aerial surveillance including lease and support costs of the Hluhluwe airfield.
- **Education & Engagement:** Targeting youth and communities through 1) Rhino ART (Art, Recreation and Theatre); 2) Youth camps; 3) Leadership forums; and 4) the bi-annual World Youth Wildlife Summit.
- **Conservation Economy & Enterprise:** Building and supporting a network of responsible use landscapes and identifying business opportunities within them. For example, hunting and meat processing, ecological agriculture, agro processing and ecotourism.

Highlights for the year included:

- The Zululand Aerial Patrol Wing has flown a total of 415.3 hours this year, being our eyes in the sky for all our Zululand Member reserves.
- The K9 unit has worked jointly with SAPS, game reserves, the communities and the farmers in the Zululand landscape on numerous wildlife crime investigations, with some amazing successes.
- We continued to provide support to the equine units operating in member reserves, whose presence has made a significant impact on the reduction of wildlife crime.
- 2019 was a great year for Rhino Art KZN, reaching almost 50,000 learners from 152 schools, as well as facilitating the National Geographic Photo Camp.
- We reignited the Skydive for Rhino fundraiser and created a tangible exciting atmosphere in Zululand with 96 brave souls throwing themselves out of a perfectly safe aeroplane.
- We hosted our very first Music Festival—it was fantastic and we are excited to grow this event into an annual event.

Project Rhino and African Conservation Trust would like to extend a huge congratulations to Chris Galliers for being elected as the President of the International Rangers Federation. Chris has served as Project Rhino coordinator for the last three years and we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Chris for his absolute dedication and his passion for conservation and making a difference. Francois du Toit, ACT CEO, has taken over the Project Rhino Coordinator role and Carlien Esterhuizen will continue as Project Rhino Assistant and the first line of communication to all our reserves and partners.

Conferences, Awards & Media



Conferences

ACT CEO, Francois du Toit, was a guest speaker at the Global Wildlife Program Conference, “Investing in the Wildlife Economy for Livelihoods and Conservation” – along with conservation leaders and technical experts from 29 countries (October 2019).

Ecologist and AEU manager Paul Cryer, together with Dave Druce from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, spoke about Wilderness management in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in the *Management of Protected Areas* session of the Ezemvelo Conservation Symposium (November 2019).

Awards

Grant Fowlds our Rhino Art coordinator and Project Rhino ambassador was presented with medal number 1677 from the Explorers Club of New York, recognizing his significant efforts in conservation.

ACT was officially recognised as a *MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet* beneficiary. MyPlanet is a reward program implemented by a number of retailers like Woolworths and Engen who donate to nominated charities on their customers’ behalf. There is no cost to the customer and it is free to sign up at <https://myschool.co.za>.

Press and Media

Grant Fowlds recently co-authored a monograph entitled “*Saving the Last Rhinos: The Life of a Frontline Conservationist*”, published by Jonathan Ball. This book follows his life from childhood to the present day, and narrates the highs and lows of conservation in Africa.

Grant Fowlds was interviewed on Sky News by Emma Crosby in the UK on the work of Project Rhino (April 2019).

Francois du Toit was interviewed on 88FM Ballito - Radio Life & Style – on the work of Project Rhino and the Skydive for Rhinos and World Youth Wildlife Summits (August 2019).

Grant Fowlds guest authored a column entitled *New agents of change* for Explore South Africa (online) (October 2019).

Water Explorer winning team was featured in the online Meander Chronicle, *Top team trophy for Shea O’Connor School*. Article by Garth Johnstone (November 2019).

The school was also profiled by Roving Reporters, *Shea class: Midlands school scores in water compo* (November 2019).



Skydive for Rhinos

The campaign received extensive media coverage and publicity, including being featured on SABC News, East Coast Radio, Radio RSG and in the Zululand Observer.

The World Youth Wildlife Summit

The World Youth Wildlife Summit has been featured in Wildside Magazine Dec 2019, the Klaserie Chronicle Autumn 2020 as well as the Mail & Guardian, The Green Times, the United Nations Environment Programme website, People Magazine, the Zululand Observer, the Lowvelder and Roving Reporters as well as Jacaranda FM.

Events

In addition to the World Youth Wildlife Summit, the ACT team assisted in a number of educational, environmental awareness and fundraising events:

- National Geographic Photo Camp
- The Charity Challenge Relay
- Skydive for Rhino
- The Rhino Music Fest
- The Hilton Arts Show
- Ballito Ride for Rhino
- The uBhejane Xtreme Mountain Bike Challenge
- Howick "Trashion" Show
- GSS Africa Exchange Workshop
- Jozini Municipality Mandela Day Event
- World Water Day Clean-Up in KwaJobe
- Nelspruit Hospitality Trade Show



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

- Easton Berry Group
- EKOenergy
- Global Search for Sustainable Schools
- HCI Foundation
- Humane Society International (HSI)
- Olivier van Walsem

Strategic Partners

- Chemonics
- Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
- Jennifer Seif and Associates
- Kenchaan Foundation
- Kingsley Holgate Foundation
- Malawi Volunteer Organisation
- One Planet
- Project Rhino
- Rhino Art
- Rift Valley Solar
- Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC)
- Water Explorer
- Zululand Conservation Trust



World Youth Wildlife Summit Funders

R100,000+

USAID
MegaDome
Peace Parks Foundation
SA Tourism
Jacaranda FM
Traversing Africa
South African National Parks (SANParks)
Cullinan Holdings Limited
Hylton Ross
Springbok Atlas

R50,000+

Bongani Mountain Lodge
DHL

R25,000+

Letaba Wireless Internet
WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project
City Logistics

R10,000+

Viva Safaris
Mr Price Sport
Timbavati Safari Lodge
BeBold Consulting
Helping Rhino Netherlands

>R10,000

Bizlink Hillcrest
Bidvest Waltons
African Penguin Picture Books
Halls Retail
The Other Animal Safaris
Lesedi Cultural Village
Melvill and Moon
Sable Tours
Jabulani Safaris

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