



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



CONSERVATION

EDUCATION

INNOVATION

Table of Contents

About Us	3
Vision	3
Three-Part Mission	3
Projects and Programmes: Building a Conservation Economy	5
The Applied Ecology Unit.....	6
Comprehensive Communal Planning (CCP) ..	6
The Social Employment Fund	7
SEF: Building a Conservation Economy	7
Greening and the Environment	8
Donga Erosion Repair.....	8
Invasive Vegetation Thinning.....	9
Food Security	9
Training and Sustainability.....	10
Community and Public Art.....	11
Biometric Attendance Monitoring	11
Work for Common Good: Unpaid Days	12
Our Operational Footprint	13
KwaZulu-Natal.....	14
Free State	14
Mpumalanga	14
Project Partners	15
With thanks to	15
SEF Funders and Management	15
News and Media	15
Social Media	15
Summary Financial Statements.....	16
Contact Details.....	19
Follow Us	19
Fundraising Platforms	19

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.

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.

Three-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.



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

Mr. Stephanus Francois du Toit



PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES

BUILDING A CONSERVATION ECONOMY



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.



Comprehensive Communal Planning (CCP)

A **Conservation Economy** comprehensively integrates Social, Natural, and Economic Capital to demonstrate that a sustainable society is both desirable and achievable. It is broader than the Green Economy, the Wildlife Economy, the Biodiversity Economy. The key differentiating factor is balance and respect and a longer-term restorative approach to management of fragile assets.

Comprehensive communal planning (CCP) is a holistic process that enables a community to build a roadmap to sustainability, self-sufficiency and improved governance capacity. It is a community-led approach to planning, where the process is driven and owned by all community members rather than by a small group or committee.

ACT recognises the critical role that Traditional Authorities have in defining the cultural, economic, and social value of a Conservation Economy that incorporates but is not defined by merely Wildlife and Tourism. Our goal is to work with Traditional Authorities in KZN to help communities develop their own plan for their land, to co-create a vision for a Conservation Economy that respects culture, tradition, the environment and its resources, and respects the right of individuals and the communal communities within this space to determine their own futures. We have been engaging with selected traditional leaders on the CCP process, who are positive and enthusiastic about co-creating a sustainable society. Our initial focus is a pilot project in the Umzinyathi and Zululand district municipalities, with a core focus on food security.

The Social Employment Fund

Unemployment is widely recognized as the primary driver of poverty in South Africa, a situation that has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in widespread job losses. The Social Employment Fund (SEF) is a mechanism to support community-led initiatives that create work for the common good. Managed by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) as part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus, the SEF aims to generate 50,000 new work opportunities across South Africa. This initiative embraces the concept of social employment, acknowledging that labour holds social value, even if it lacks market value.

R800-million has been allocated to the fund, which is being led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. Eighty percent of the funds must be directed towards wages, with participants receiving a minimum wage stipend for working two days a week over a period of nine months. African Conservation Trust is one of 28 Strategic Implementing Partners (SIPs) of the project

Work for the common good refers to work that contributes to the public good, rather than to private goods and services. It can be understood as work that supports the Sustainable Development Goals and/or that improves the quality of life in communities, with a focus on poor, marginalised and/or disadvantaged communities and groups.



SEF: Building a Conservation Economy

A Conservation Economy is a resilient, respectful, restorative economy that fosters a recognition, and regeneration of culture, heritage, water, land and the plants and animals that inhabit the landscape, for the benefit of current and future generations.

The focus of the project is primarily to create jobs in the environmental sphere, but a secondary impact will be a residual skillset and empowered communities, working towards a longer-term vision, as part of a Comprehensive Communal Planning (CCP) process.

Under the SEF project, ACT is employing 2,928 community members from KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Mpumalanga. Jobs have been created under three broad themes: Food Security, Greening and the Environment and Arts and Culture.

In addressing work for the common good, these job activities meet 10 of the 17 UNDP Sustainable Development Goals, and in turn support restorative, sustainable environments including water, land, culture and heritage within these communities.



Greening and the Environment

“ (There are) strong linkages between soil degradation and desertification ... and loss of biodiversity, threat to food security, increase in poverty and risks of accelerated greenhouse effect and climate change.¹

Donga Erosion Repair

Some of the most severely eroded areas in South Africa occur in the upper Thukela catchment area of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, where dongas can stretch for hundreds of kilometres and reach up to 10 metres in height. 12 dedicated teams in the Amangwane and Amazizi traditional authority areas have been using manual labour techniques to repair these dongas (gullies).

Participants had prior training in creating anti-erosion barriers in previous projects and many had been working as volunteers for environmental working groups. The stone walls have been meticulously constructed and, through their own initiative, participants piloted the incorporation of Black Wattle (an invasive) as an alternative to stone barriers, with the smaller branches and bushes laid in the gullies to slow the water runoff.

¹ Lal, R. (2003), Soil erosion and the global carbon budget, *Environment International*, Volume 29, Issue 4.

Invasive Vegetation Thinning

The thinning of invasive vegetation is predominantly taking place in the greater Mkhuze area of northern KwaZulu-Natal. A key focus is the thinning of *Dichrostachys cinerea* (sekelbos). A consequence of poor livestock grazing practices, sekelbos easily out-competes other native pioneer species, causing bush encroachment and livestock food reduction. Fortunately, excellent firewood is produced from Sekelbos, creating additional cashflow as a project by-product. It is also donated to needy community members, used as construction material to aid in erosion control, fence building, or fence-line structures positioned on hill contours, to manage livestock movement.

Five small teams are working to remove water hyacinth from the greater Isimangaliso Wetland Park (World Heritage Site) as part of their work. Left uncontrolled, *Pontederia crassipes* (formerly *Eichhornia crassipes*) can be highly invasive, forming dense mats which completely cover the water surface leading to altered water chemistry over time. *Pontederia crassipes* can double its population in as little as two weeks. Participant teams have already removed several hundred kilograms of the plant and are experimenting with it as a composting material.



Greening and the environment highlights September 2022 - February 2023, include:

- Teams have removed some **851 tons** of *Dichrostachys cinerea* and thinned **2,198 hectares** of invasive vegetation
- **432 km of brushpiles** have been placed, used largely as natural fences to protect grass banks and other sensitive areas
- **4,817 m²** of donga erosion walling constructed by the Drakensberg teams. Additional erosion control measures (mini dams, stonewalls, bunds, gabions, road repairs etc.) amount to **40,865 m²** across the three provinces



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) supported: Clean Water (SDG 6); Sustainable Cities & Communities (SDG 11 with Targets 11.6 and 11.7 particularly address soil issues and the provision of universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces); Climate Action (SDG 13) and Life on Land (SDG 15).

Food Security

Hunger and malnutrition impact more than 20% of South Africans, and the vegetables grown by the participants under this theme are a good source of essential nutrients such as calcium, vitamin A, potassium, and fibre. Participants are saving the money that they would have used to purchase these vegetables and are also earning a supplementary income by selling them to community members.

More than **2,000 participants** and their families are benefiting from improved security and nutrition under this theme, and their gardens are also supporting clinics, schools, Early Childhood Development centres, old age homes, and other community centres. Surplus yields from participants' gardens are either sold to generate additional income or shared with those in need.

Participants have exceeded expectations in both training outcomes and garden establishment. To date **37,085 gardens** of 20m² equivalent have been established, mapped, or maintained within project sites, benefitting an estimated 15,500 direct and indirect beneficiaries. Several teams have taken initiative in sharing their profits from vegetable sales and reinvesting these into tools, seeds and other garden materials.

Training and Sustainability

1,446 participants and community members have received training in the 4-day ACT Agro-Ecological Farming Practices course - almost three times our original target. These practices have proven to be an effective means for growing nutritious food staples in remote and harsh environments and have shown to increase agricultural yields. Permaculture builds resilience to external shocks including climate change and is an alternative to marginal subsistence and small-scale farming and a complement to other livelihoods strategies.

Seed saving is an important part of training to help promote long-term sustainability. 923 seed saving kits, mini-nurseries and demonstration gardens have been established in all of the food security project sites and many teams have begun to practice saving and sharing.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) supported: Researchers from Aarhus University in Denmark¹ note that agroecology contributes to several SDGs, including no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13) and life on land (SDG 15).



Community & Public Art: San Rock Art

The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (UDP) holds the largest and highest concentration of San rock art paintings south of the Sahara, contributing to its proclamation as a UNESCO world heritage site. The legacy of rock paintings by early Bushman hunter-gatherers is a non-renewable heritage site, giving us insight into their daily lives and culture, but many have already been destroyed by vandalism, fire, vegetation and natural weathering.

Two small teams of rock art custodians from the Amangwane and Amazizi traditional authorities underwent extensive training under the KZN Amafa and Research Institute, the provincial heritage resources authority (PHRA) for KwaZulu-Natal. These communities fall just outside the formally protected UDP region. Teams visit San rock art shelters in their communities and report back on the quality of the sites and potential threats such as encroaching vegetation or visiting livestock. These teams have also been mapping a network of potential eco-trails for hikers or mountain bikers to enjoy the beauty of the Drakensberg.

At the end of February 2023, 136 rock art site assessments had been conducted and 91 km of rock art trails have been mapped, monitored and/or maintained in the two traditional authority regions.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) supported: Work in this theme underpins Sustainable Cities & Communities (SDG 11), specifically target 11.4 which calls for strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.



Biometric Attendance Monitoring

A unique aspect of the SEF project is the integrated use of biometrics (facial verification) as a means to provide additional evidence that the people enrolled in the project are present. Each team is equipped with a mobile device and KwantuGo application. Participants sign in in the morning and out again when they leave. This information is fed back to the office for participant attendance tracking and accurate payment.





Work for Common Good: Unpaid Days

Over and above their paid working days, participants in the programme have donated an incredible **28,754 volunteer days** in service of their communities (September 2022 – February 2023).

SEF employees are giving back on a number of levels – from donating vegetables to community members most in need, to collecting plastic waste, repairing roads and infrastructure, maintaining police and fire stations, assisting at funerals, and lending a hand to schools and creches.

“ People, we can transform whole communities. You never know how you can change someone's life by showing him or her that you care

Ellem Lubisi – timekeeper for the Justicia 24 team in Mpumalanga

Participants are proud to develop solutions themselves, such as fixing roads or repairing community taps, rather than relying on municipalities. Valued conservatively at R100 per day, this is worth more than **R2,8 million** for the common good.

WHERE WE WORK



Our Operational Footprint

We are currently working across 3 provinces, 17 sites, 130 communities and 174 different localities (teams). These communities face several challenges, including high levels of poverty, crime, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. Climate change and poor agricultural practices pose a severe challenge, to many sites, aggravated by droughts and bushfires.

KwaZulu-Natal

Two thirds of our SEF participants are from KwaZulu-Natal, working under all three themes. Teams are working primarily in four nodes, with the majority taking place in the greater Zululand area in the north of the province.

The Berg Site: in the Amangwane and Amazizi traditional authority areas, which form a buffer zone between two sections of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. These are deeply rural communities located in the uThukela District in the far west of the province.

The Ithala Site: The rural traditional authorities of Buthelezi, Dlamini and Sibiya located north and east of iThala Game Reserve, near Louwsburg in the Zululand District.

The Zululand Site: Stretches from the proposed Loziba Wildlife Reserve and the Jama traditional authority located near Vryheid in the west to the greater Mkhuze area on the border of the Umkhanyakude and Zululand Districts in the east. The area is characterised by a fragmented network of conservation areas, home to a number of key biodiversity species, interspersed with rural communities. In addition to Jama and Loziba, we have sites in the Myeni, Mandlakazi and Gumbi Traditional Authorities.

The Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Area: on the border of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park focussing on areas that are affected by mining

The Coastal Site: Peri-urban communities in the Greater St Lucia area and rural community at Lake Sibaya, on the outskirts of the iSimangaliso Wetland

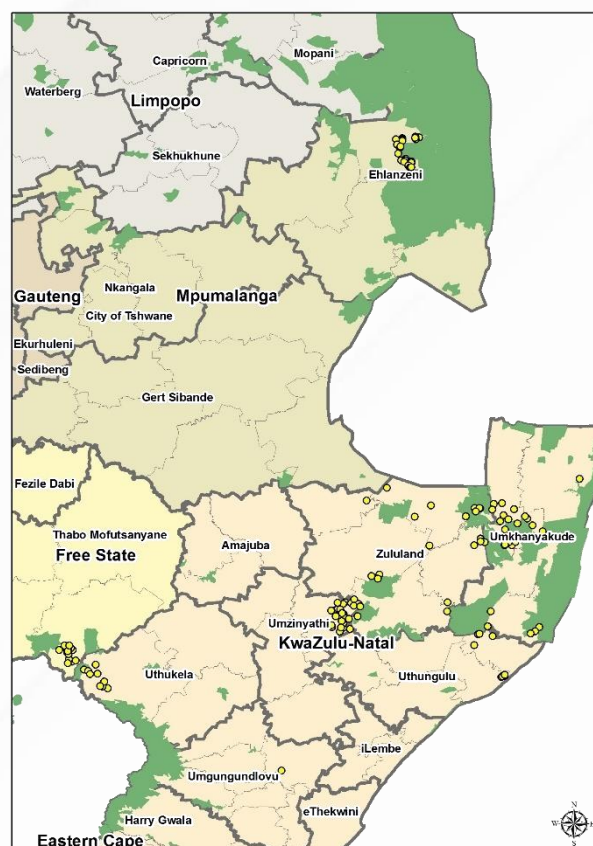
Park World Heritage Park (Umkhanyakude District), and Richards Bay region (King Cetshwayo District).

Free State

500 participants are working in the Free State province, in the urban Phuthaditjhaba node in Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. All 21 teams are working under the food security theme.

Mpumalanga

A further 500 participants are working in the Ehlanzeni District, along the western border of Sabi Sand Game Reserve. The region is a mix of rural to peri-urban and the 30 teams from 12 communities are all working to improve food security in the region.



Project Partners

- Biodiversity Conservation Foundation
- Imbewu Yoshintso
- Inkanyamba Development Trust
- KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute
- Manyoni Private Game Reserve / Zululand Conservation Trust
- Project Rhino & Loziba Wildlife Reserve
- Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust
- Save our Imfolozi Wilderness Environmental Group
- Wildlife Spirit / Emarondweni Education Centre

With thanks to

- The Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development
- Umhlathuze Municipality
- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Wildlife ACT
- Traditional leaders and authorities
- Ward councillors
- All the public, private and community entities and individuals who have helped the SEF participants with agricultural land, garden materials, tools and other support

SEF Funders and Management

- Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
- Industrial Development Corporation



News and Media

African Conservation Trust was featured in the following publications in the year in review:

Enabling a different approach to mass employment in South Africa – rolling sleeves through the Social Employment Fund.

04 December 2022

Sunday Independent (print and online to subscribers).

Readership Est. 82 000 (print) and 130 000 total

Bid to preserve historic San rock artwork in Drakensberg.

27 February 2023

The Witness Newspaper - online and print

Readership Est. 120 000

Bid to preserve historic San rock artwork in Drakensberg (repost of the above article).

27 February 2023

Die Pos (online, free)

Readership Est. 47,000

Social Media

African Conservation Trust shares updates on its projects and programmes on its social media channels, typically three to four times per month. These are primarily Facebook (10,969 followers); Twitter (10,300 followers) and Instagram (1,125 followers).

Facebook has our greatest reach, and we boosted six posts this month, with an average reach of 30,375 persons and average interaction (engagement) of 4,820 per post.

Summary Financial Statements

ACT's financial statements have been independently audited by Vigil Chartered Accountants Incorporated, registered accountants and auditors. A copy of the full report is available on request.

African Conservation Trust

(Registration number: IT2174/2000/PMB)

Audited Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2023

Statement of Financial Position as at 28 February 2023

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2023	2022
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2	858 004	520 327
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	3	34 148	589 918
Cash and cash equivalents	4	707 730	39 844
		741 878	629 762
Total Assets		1 599 882	1 150 089
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust capital		100	100
Accumulated surplus		1 481 842	1 146 897
		1 481 942	1 146 997
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5	114 022	-
Bank overdraft	4	3 918	3 092
		117 940	3 092
Total Equity and Liabilities		1 599 882	1 150 089

African Conservation Trust

(Registration number: IT2174/2000/PMB)

Audited Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2023

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2023	2022
Revenue	6	49 332 315	4 390 426
Cost of sales	7	(6 864 763)	-
Gross surplus		42 467 552	4 390 426
Other income	8	34 973	992
Operating expenses	9	(42 147 152)	(4 601 401)
Operating surplus (deficit)		355 373	(209 983)
Interest Paid		(20 428)	(5 407)
Surplus (deficit) for the year		334 945	(215 390)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income (loss) for the year		334 945	(215 390)

Contact Details

Tel: +27 (0)82 852 6466

Fax: +27 (0)86 511 7594

Email: info@projectafrica.com

Physical: Care of Wilderness Leadership School,
90 Coedmore Avenue
Yellowwood Park, Durban

Postal: P.O. Box 310, Link Hills, 3652

Website: www.projectafrica.com

Heritage Website: www.actheritage.org

Follow Us

Facebook, Twitter: @ACTsafrica

Instagram: @africanconservationtrust

YouTube: African Conservation Trust

Fundraising Platforms

- Backabuddy
- GivenGain
- GlobalGiving
- MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet

ACT is a SARS approved Public Benefit Organisation with Section 18a status and local donations to the Trust are eligible for tax relief.

As a Specialised Enterprise with at least 75% black beneficiaries, ACT qualifies as a **Level 1 B-BBEE** Rating. There are a number of benefits for donating to, using the services of, or procuring goods or services from the African Conservation Trust under the Amended Codes, with recognition of up to 100%. For more information, please free to contact us.



“ I am Thembeke Ndlovu (team admin) in a rural area called Umhlekezi, who her life changed through the SEF. After completing my tertiary education, I was struggling to find a job that make me unemployed with no hope of getting one since I am from a poor family and very developing community. Through this program I am able to put food on top of the table because now I am a home bread winner. SEF make me financially stable, I even learn how to conserve nature for future generations...

SEF along with ACT encourages the thing of one home, one garden and that helps us to save money, time and also energy even to live a healthy lifestyle. Self-reliant is also encouraged to this project, standard of living is also uplifted within the community through this project. The use of drugs decreased within the community since people now are always busy with the project. We are glad for this project and are hoping for the best...

Thank you to all our generous supporters and donors who have stood by us in our mission to create positive impact. Your support has allowed us to continue our vital work in conservation and community upliftment.