

# African Parks Conservation Training Program

## 1. Final report - December 2016

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**Project Start Date:** January 18, 2016

**Project end Date:** December 15, 2016

## **2. Conservation needs addressed by the project**

The African Parks Conservation Training Programme seeks to address our growing need for additional well-qualified field and management staff within the African Parks portfolio.

Currently, African Parks manages ten national parks and has over 1,200 employees in the field, the highest among African conservation entities. One of the ongoing challenges inherent to managing this vast number of employees is providing adequate training for park staff, particularly when it comes to wildlife management and anti-poaching enforcement.

African Parks (AP) aims to have a portfolio of twenty protected areas and over 3,000 employees in the field by 2020; meanwhile, expansion of human settlements and perpetuation of systemic social problems on local and national levels means managing parks is a more nuanced challenge.

To meet this challenge, the African Parks Conservation Training Program was initiated in 2014 in partnership with the Southern African Wildlife College to provide essential training in law enforcement and conservation management. Much of the year-long curriculum, delivered to the six chosen trainees, centred around anti-poaching, particularly of elephants, as they represent the most frequently-poached species across our parks. Elephants are central to the conservation mission of African Parks; they are a symbol of the beauty of African wildlife as well as of the threats present, and play a key role in providing ecological health and tourism revenue—both drivers of park sustainability. African Parks' Training Program has a direct impact on efforts to rebuild, maintain, and grow elephant populations in our parks through effective conservation management and poaching prevention.

The trainees selected to participate in the programme had limited access to formal training programmes and were therefore inadequately equipped to deal with the current conservation challenges facing their parks. The training received by our candidates is part of our overall goal to enhance management effectiveness across all parks.

## **3. Goals and Objectives of the Programme**

The project objective, broadly, is one shared by the Southern African Wildlife College as stated in their prospectus: “to produce highly competent and motivated protected area managers that are able to manage and conserve their protected areas and associated fauna and flora on a sustainable basis within the stated conservation objectives and in cooperation with local communities.” In particular, our objective is to create well-qualified leaders dedicated to upholding conservation policy.

In order to fulfil our objective, parks were requested to identify staff members that would be eligible to participate in either one of the three tiered levels of training that form our programme:

Tier 1: Higher Certificate in Nature Conservation: Conservation Implementation and Leadership (Southern African Wildlife College)

Tier 2: Advanced Certificate in Nature Conservation: Trans-Frontier Conservation Management (Southern African Wildlife College)

Tier 3. Customized advanced skills development, based on the training needs of the staff member identified.

#### 4. Actions taken:

Six places were earmarked for the Conservation Training Programme for 2016.

Parks were invited to submit candidates that showed potential for development. The programme is open to staff in positions in our parks such as field/park/section ranger, game scout/warden, wildlife police officer, sergeant, and reserve manager.

From the applications submitted, the selection was jointly undertaken by the Programme Co-ordinator, Principle Investigator, Operation Directors of African Parks, and the Southern African Wildlife College. The selection was done with consideration not only of the strength of the individual applicant but also the fair representation of candidates across our parks.

The following candidates were selected for the 2016 programme:

Name of candidate	Park	Country	Current position	Course attending
Nicaise Ngoulou	Odzala NP	Congo	Co-ordinator of Investigations	Advanced Certificate in Conservation
Charles Chihana	Lake Malawi NP	Malawi	Assistant Parks and Wildlife Officer	Advanced Certificate in Conservation
Kennedy Chipepa	Bangweulu Wetlands NP	Zambia	Wildlife Police Officer	Advanced Certificate in Conservation
Armstrong Chinga	Liuwa Plains NP	Zambia	Senior Wildlife Police Officer	Higher Certificate in Conservation
Voster Mweene	Liuwa Plains NP	Zambia	Park Ranger	Specialized short course training in Management Development. (Amended during the year to 2017)

As indicated in the above table, only 5 of the original 6 places that were earmarked for this programme in 2016 were able to be filled

A candidate from Ethiopia (Gambella NP) was selected but experienced ongoing restrictions and delays obtaining a South African study visa. Despite timeous submission of all requirements, internal delays within the Wildlife department and the South African High Commission caused us to withdraw his application at the start of the year.

The four trainees in the programme who studied through the Southern African Wildlife College have completed their qualification and have now graduated.

#### Overview of the Training Programme:

The Higher and Advanced Certificate Courses are comprised of two training semesters at the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) in the first and last quarter of the academic year.

During their time at SAWC the trainees were provided with formal lectures and a range of practical activities. The SAWC is ideally located within Greater Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa, which afforded the students hands-on exposure to current and practical conservation activities. The Higher Certificate students were able to gain extensive field skills by conducting law enforcement patrols and wildlife and vegetation monitoring activities within the park. They were also exposed to practical park

infrastructure tasks such as erosion control, fence maintenance, and control of veld burning. Additionally, the students were able to see how education programmes are conducted by the national park, and extensively explore the community involvement programmes conducted by the KNP and surrounding parks.

The Advanced Certificate students were exposed to more of the management and planning aspects of a conservation area. During the training programme they spent a large amount of time exploring the issues of parks and communities, land use planning, environmental development planning, tourism development, research and monitoring, and practical management plan develop for their respective parks. The well-equipped SAWC conservation lab also allowed them good exposure to the use of GIS.

Students from 6 different African countries were represented at this year's training programme. For those students coming from outside South Africa, such as the AP candidates funded in this programme, the programme offered an opportunity to be exposed to other conservation issues and management practices, and to be able to compare them to their respective areas.

The midyear (May to August) was allocated to experiential workplace learning whereby the trainees were required to work in a park and fulfil a variety of practical tasks and assignments.

All four trainees were accommodated at Majete Wildlife Reserve in Malawi, an African Parks managed park. The trainees were lodged in a newly constructed student camp, participated in all management and operational departments of the park, and were given first-hand experience on the daily duties and activities within the park. This included law enforcement activities, wildlife management, infrastructure maintenance (including fence and roads), tourism, administration, and work with the communities on the border of the park.

The park has a large population of elephants and the students were given comprehensive exposure to the law enforcement practices that protect this population.

An added activity that took place during June was student participation in a 2-week, specialized law enforcement and investigations course. The course was designed to provide targeted skills in combatting the poaching activities faced in our parks, and was attended by several AP employees from numerous parks.

On return to their second training semester at the SAWC, the trainees completed the remaining programme modules and then wrote a final exam on each one.

The graduation ceremony was conducted soon after and all four students successfully completed their respective courses.

The sixth candidate on the programme is a more senior staff member and has completed both levels of training at the Southern African Wildlife College. An assessment was done by both his immediate manager and the Operations Director of African Parks with regard to the specific training interventions that are required for his specific role and skill level. He was scheduled to partake in a short course training in targeted management and leadership skills, but due to a new requirement for staff of his level and position within the Wildlife Department in Zambia, he instead commenced with a degree level programme in early 2017.

## **5. NA**

## **6. Conservation outcomes addressed**

The five candidates that participated in this programme were from parks that are experiencing the similar challenges of poaching, competing demands on natural resources by wildlife and communities neighbouring or within the parks, and maintaining the integrity of current wildlife populations.

The content of the training programmes addressed all aspects of park management, and permitted these staff members to gain important knowledge and experience, not only in the subjects that correspond with their current park duties, but also other aspects of managing a wildlife area such as GIS and Trans-frontier Conservation Area management. It allowed the trainees to develop skills that will enable them to operate at a broader level and with a deeper understanding of how to integrate all the functions of a park towards a common goal.

Elephants are under threat in many of the parks within the AP portfolio, and the law enforcement and investigation skills the programme trainees gained in the past year will enable them to successfully conduct management operations in their respective parks. They have also gained exposure to data gathering and research skills which will allow them to more effectively analyse information on all ecological aspects within their parks such as vegetation changes, wildlife population trends, and GIS mapping.

As the trainees represent a diverse range of parks, the opportunity for information sharing was one of the key benefits of this programme. The trainees were able to share ideas on how poaching is addressed within their respective parks, community engagement and mitigation of human wildlife conflict, and individual approaches and lessons learned in all aspects of protected area management.

## **7. Problems discovered or occurring during grant period**

As mentioned above in section 3 of this report, a candidate from Ethiopia (Gambella NP) experienced ongoing restrictions and delays obtaining a South African study visa. Despite timeous submission of all requirements, internal delays within the Wildlife department and the South African High Commission caused us to withdraw his application at the start of the year.

## **8. Determination of the success of the project**

In line with the objectives of the programme to build the capacity of staff members of key conservation areas, the success of the programme can be measured by the completion and graduation of the participating trainees, as well as the effectiveness of their operations upon returning to their parks.

Individual feedback sessions were held with each candidate upon completion of the programme to ascertain their own experience and what they felt they had gained from the programme.

All four trainees were visibly excited and motivated to relay all that they had learned over the year, and were clearly enthusiastic to put into practice the new skills they had gained. The dominant issues that face them in their respective parks are most often poaching, land use, and the conflict between parks and communities on the park borders. The students all felt they had benefitted most from the training they had received in methods to effectively combat poaching, as well as establish sustainable and constructive community relationships and programmes. In addition to these strong conservation focus areas, the trainees also felt they had been equipped with myriad new skills, such as GIS, research and monitoring, communication and presentation, and conflict resolution and human resource management skills, all of which will enable them to have a significant positive impact in their workplace, both as conservationists and leaders.

Supervisors or Park Managers involved in submitting candidates for this programme will provide mentoring and support now that the trainees have returned, and record their progress and activities in achieving the park's conservation objectives. This feedback will allow us to identify whether the programme has adequately addressed the skills needed in the parks and to identify any skill gaps that need to be addressed by future programmes. This feedback is also requested by the Southern African Wildlife College in order to enable them to update their curriculum to address current conservation needs.

## **9. Next step**

The Leadership Programme was designed as an annual training intervention, both as an opportunity for current trainees to progress to higher levels within the programme, and to allow new candidates to enter the programme each year. This tiered approach will allow for training to have a more lasting impact on the individuals and the annual benefit to the parks.

The process of calling for new candidates for 2017 has been completed. Two new field rangers, one from Liuwa Plains in Zambia and the other from the newly acquired AP park "Nkhotakota" in Malawi, have been selected to participate in the SAWC training programmes. One of the current candidates of the 2016 SAWC course, Nicaise Ngoulou from the Republic of Congo, and Voster Mweene from Zambia have been selected for higher level study.

The Leadership programme has proved to date to be a positive and successful intervention in building the capacity within the AP parks and developing strong motivated staff members capable of fulfilling the vision of protecting Africa's wild areas.

## **10. Human interest story**

### Friendly Leopard

By Armstrong Chinga, Senior Wildlife Police Officer, Liuwa Plains NP, Zambia

Whilst at the Southern African at Wildlife College in August 2016, a Leopard managed to stalk inside the College campus through a dry narrow stream West of the College. There it stayed for 7 days without causing any harm or threat to the students who were moving between their rooms and the class rooms during the day and night. College employees were also carrying their normal duties without the Leopard posing a threat to them. I never expected such a good friendly interaction could prevail, as the Leopard is a cat known to be a dangerous animal among the "Big Five in Africa." A caution was given to both students and staff, but still nothing bad happened up to the time we were told that the animal was safely out of the College. It made me think, if we become better stewards of conservation then we can restore the lost relationship between man and wild animals.

## **11. 500 word or less media summary**

In an effort to address the growing need for additional well-qualified field and management staff within our parks portfolio, African Parks (AP) launched the African Parks Conservation Training Program. With generous support from the International Elephant Foundation (IEF) and other organizations, African Parks and partners from the Southern African Wildlife College selected 5 students to participate in a year-long educational program that provides essential training in law enforcement and conservation management. While the program addressed all aspects of conservation management across species, the main goal of the initiative was to provide students with the diverse skills necessary to increase the effectiveness of elephant management in their respective parks. Elephants are central to the conservation mission of African Parks, and serve as a symbol of both the beauty of African wildlife and the threats they face continent-wide. Furthermore, elephants

are a keystone species, providing not only ecological health and resiliency, but also tourist revenue — both drivers of park sustainability. The African Parks Conservation Training Program has a direct impact on efforts to rebuild, maintain, and grow elephant populations in our parks through effective conservation management and poaching prevention. To date, the four trainees in the programme who studied through the Southern African Wildlife College have completed their qualification and the experiential training component of the program in Majete Wildlife Reserve in Malawi, and have now graduated. The fifth student that participated in the program was a more senior staff member of one of our parks and completed both levels of training at the Southern African Wildlife College. He also completed short course training in advanced weapons handling and investigations, and targeted management and leadership skills. The content of the training programs addressed all aspects of park management, which allowed these staff members to gain knowledge and experience, not only in the subjects that correspond to the current duties in their workplace, but in myriad other aspects of conservation management, such as GIS technology and Trans-Frontier Conservation Area management. It allowed the trainees to develop skills that will enable them to operate at a broader level and with a deeper understanding of how to integrate all park functions toward a common goal.

#### **12. 50 word or less media summary**

5 students successfully complete law enforcement and conservation management training with an emphasis on elephant conservation, and graduate from the African Parks Conservation Training Program, a joint effort launched by African Parks with support from the International Elephant Foundation.

#### **13. Organization associations and roles**

African Parks (AP)—a non-profit conservation organization founded in 2000 and headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa—will operate the Conservation Training Program in partnership with the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC), an accredited non-profit college established in 1996 inside Kruger National Park, South Africa. Ms. Theresa Sowry is the project representative for SAWC. Mr. Andrew Parker is the project representative for AP. Mrs. Kathleen Hay is the Program Coordinator, appointed by AP, to oversee program standardization and the MWR practical training.

#### **14. Financial Report**

See accompanying excel spreadsheet titled 'IEF Final Report Financials'.

#### **15. High resolution Digital Images**

See accompanying jpeg files.

#### **16. Video Clip**

See accompanying MOV file (GOPRO0174), as well as the transcript provided below:

Nicaise: I am Nicaise Ngoulou from Congo Brazzaville. I have been working in Odzala Kokoua National Park, managed by African Parks. I've been the coordinator of investigation and intelligence, have been fighting against gun-running around the Odzala Kokoua National Park since 2015. I have been sent by African Parks to learn more, to get more knowledge about wildlife at Southern African Wildlife College in South Africa. There, last year, I completed my first year with high certificate. So now I'm learning, I'm in advanced certificate course. I'm learning trans-frontier conservation.

Interviewer: And Nicaise, could you tell us what are the main conservation challenges facing Odzala at the moment.

Nicaise: The main problem in Odzala is the level of reporting is very high. The first, in my understanding because I have been working there more than five years so I get more experience about law enforcement, so the problem is that poaching is done with, I will say that poachers they use rifle, military AKA firearms. So you know that AK47s that they use are not found easily in the market and not sold in the shops, so it comes through soldiers. We are surrounded by two headquarters of army, so, I'm not telling that it comes from that headquarters of army, but if the military lends those firearms to poachers, so some high people are involved in poaching in our country because they need ivory so it's not easy for the hunter because when he is at home he is a simple hunter but when he started to kill elephants for tusks he is not a hunter he is now a high poacher. So, the villagers, he can't sell that ivory. That ivory is sold in high levels. So, the problem, the main problem, the main issue, the main challenge in Odzala is poaching.

**17. NA**

**18. Relevant websites**

African Parks - <https://www.african-parks.org/>

South African Wildlife College - <http://www.wildlifecollege.org.za/>