

Recovery of Murchison Falls

UWA: Quick Reaction Force / Operations Car



Final Report: March 2021



Introduction

The past 18 months has been horrific and challenging for everyone, worldwide. Murchison Falls, UWA, UCF and the local communities have also all been impacted. Covid, the lockdown, horrific elections, anthrax, the plague of locusts, the River Nile flooding (still is) the collapse of tourism resulting in UWA losing 95% of its revenue base and operational budgets, and of course, the surge in poaching.

Despite the challenges and negative impacts, we have still achieved everything we set out to do, and thanks to the family of donors and partners within the Recovery of Murchison Falls programme, we have been able to respond to nearly all critical problems and continue to drive considerable progress. The programme has provided stability, continuity and with UWA, leadership when it was absolutely necessary. Everyone involved in the programme should be incredibly proud.

The Recovery of Murchison Falls programme has been running for eight years, and has focused on establishing the foundations of protected area management to allow for successful management for the short, medium and long term. Management control has expanded from 5% of the park in 2012, to 70% today. This in turn has enabled considerable success in wildlife number recoveries, not least the Rothschild giraffe recovering from 400 to 2000 animals. The potential for wildlife recoveries is now very real and must be realized.

UWA has become far more professional in protected area management over the past decade, and now the focus comes to real time management and adapting management strategies to be more successful than ever before. Whilst not everything is in place, most of the capabilities are, or are nearly there. After years of establishing capabilities, such as a Marine Ranger Unit and a Vet Response Unit, and installing critical infrastructure such as the ranger post network (aligned to the threats and recovery strategy) and Law Enforcement & Operations Centre, UWA can now leverage it all and start to generate the value from it all.

This report focuses on the generous support given by The Berry Family Trust, specifically towards helping UWA's operational teams being mobile and responding to real time problems as they happen. Vehicles have for a long time been one of the main limiting factors to UWA's success in the park, and this car will help immeasurably.

The Toyota Land Cruiser was handed over to UWA's Executive Director, Sam Mwandha in Kampala on Friday 12th March, 2021. UCF extended an invite to the new British High Commissioner, Kate Airey to handover the keys to UWA on behalf of UCF, The Berry family Trust, IEF and Global Conservation.

The car is now in Murchison Falls, and fully operational.



The Car:

The car is a Toyota Land Cruiser, single cabin, was purchased from Toyota Gibraltar. The modifications were carried out in Kampala to a design agreed upon with UWA, including:

- Bull bar, winch, protective bars around the car and roll bars.
- Seating (3x3 on each side) specifically put in following the tragic death of Sgt Albert Odar in MFPA in Feb, 2020 when he fell from the back of a car. It is now mandated that all UWA cars should have such seating.
- Storage boxes under the seats for tools, supplies, confiscated items
- X2 spare tyre mount blocks
- X 1 high lift jack mounting
- Replaced road tyres and rims for 4x4 mud tyres, with one spare
- Rear bumper replaced to provide jacking points and solid state bumper.
- Underneath sump / gear box plate protection



The completed car, ready for a decade or more of operations.



The Handover:

We were delighted to have the Executive Director of UWA, and his top management team receive the car. On behalf of the Uganda Conservation Foundation, IEF and GC, the new British High Commissioner, Kate Airey, handed, over the keys to UWA. The High Commissioner in her speech thanked The Berry Family Trust, IEF and GC for their tangible commitment to Ugandan conservation, regional development and the future re-emergence of the tourism sector.



Field update!

On the cars first patrol over the 20th / 21st March, 2021 – an armed poacher group was encountered, and an AK47 recovered in NE MFPA. The car is already expanding UWAs immediate impact.





Acknowledgements:

The support shown by The Berry Family Trust, IEF and Global Conservation has once again enabled Murchison Falls to unlock more potential to help counter poaching, enforce the wildlife recovery and help UWA support local communities with problem animal control.

Having seen the original Vet Response Unit car go over 1million km on the clock, it goes without saying that this car will be no different and will help sustain UWA field efforts.

Following the tragic death of Sgt Odar, friend and incredible ranger, falling from a Land Cruiser returning from NE MFPA this time last year, all cars now have to have seating in the back. We have made every effort, within the budget available to ensure this car provides for the safety required, whilst also provides the practical modifications needed for off road work.

UWA and UCF would like to thank you for your unfaltering support. The Recovery of Murchison Falls programme continues to be one of Africa's greatest park recovery programmes. UWA and Uganda is extremely proud of its achievements in Murchison so far, and undoubtedly there is a considerable culture change happening within UWA. There remains a long way to go, but solid and tangible progress is being made on a daily basis.

Thank you all.

