



WILDLIFE PROTECTORS ACROSS AFRICA UNITE TO DEFEND DECADES OF CONSERVATION PROGRESS

**RANGER TEAMS SPANNING THE CONTINENT JOIN FORCES IN THE WILDLIFE
RANGER CHALLENGE TO BRING THOUSANDS OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS
BACK TO THE FIELD**

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31 July 2020; Today, on World Ranger Day, more than 50 ranger teams across Africa, along with NGOs Tusk and NATURAL STATE are launching **The Wildlife Ranger Challenge**, a multi-million-pound fundraising initiative to support the men and women across Africa's protected areas who are enduring drastic cuts in salaries and resources due to the devastating economic impact of Covid-19 and yet are still working tirelessly to safeguard the continent's iconic wildlife. [View the campaign film](#)

World Ranger Day commemorates the rangers all over the world who have died in the course of their duties and those who risk their lives every day at the forefront of conservation.

THE CHALLENGE - On 3rd October 2020 up to 50 ranger teams spanning the African continent will unite to compete in a half marathon race carrying their typical 25kg backpack and equipment - building comradery and raising awareness of the hardship currently faced by those in their profession.

Supporters around the world will also be encouraged to bolster efforts and to **'Run with Rangers'** by taking part in a virtual 5, 10 or 21km run and donating or raising sponsorship. See WildlifeRangerChallenge.org

The continental-wide collapse of wildlife tourism caused by the Covid-19 crisis has eliminated essential funding for wildlife protection. This threatens to undo years of rangers' conservation gains, compromising decades of development and conservation work across Africa.

The recent [prosecution of Southern Africa's most prolific wildlife trafficking gang](#) by Malawian authorities has shown the impact successful anti-poaching operations can yield.



Due to the devastating economic impact of the pandemic, rangers across Africa have had their salaries significantly cut, and many have been furloughed - leaving families destitute and wildlife vulnerable and unprotected. With many rangers stretched to capacity and international and national borders re-opening, it is feared that protected areas across Africa will experience a rapid increase in illegal poaching as well as a decline in wellbeing and economic security for the communities to whom this wildlife belongs.

- The African Union has suggested that the cost of Covid-19 on the African travel sector may be \$50 billion¹, with calamitous impacts on livelihoods.
- The [Game Ranger Association of Africa](#) estimates that there are between 40,000 and 50,000 rangers in Africa and that the vast majority have had their salary reduced by 50 to 80%.
- A recent IUCN commissioned report² stated that; “urgent support should be provided to [protected area] agencies and other actors to help reduce poaching, eliminate illegal wildlife trade ... and support the livelihoods of local communities.”

The Wildlife Ranger Challenge has mobilised to tackle this crisis. Funds raised will cover salaries for at least 5,000 rangers, enabling them to provide for their families, protect communities and defend endangered wildlife - including elephant, pangolin, rhino and lion - in some of the continent’s most vulnerable areas.

THE RANGER FUND - To mark World Ranger Day, NGOs Tusk, NATURAL STATE and Global Wildlife Conservation have partnered with over 50 ranger units, the Game Rangers Association of Africa, The Thin Green Line, For Rangers, and the International Ranger Federation to launch the pan-African challenge. The [Scheinberg Relief Fund](#), the Challenge’s founding donor, has generously committed \$5million of matching funds in support of rangers, with the goal of raising a total of \$10 million and getting thousands of rangers back to full capacity. The Scheinberg Relief Fund was established in March 2020 by businessman and philanthropist, Mark Scheinberg, together with his family, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ African Union Study - [LINK HERE](#)

² The Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Africa’s Protected Areas’ operations and programmes – [LINK HERE](#)



Benson Kanyembo, Law Enforcement Advisor from Conservation South Luangwa, Zambia states; *“I have pledged and dedicated my whole life to nature protection. I have carried rations and equipment like a donkey during operations on the frontline. I have slept on hard ground and rock stone as my pillow. Now, through the Wildlife Ranger Challenge, I am joining my counterparts across Africa who have experienced the same to show that we are all in this fight together. We need to push even more, work hard, educate more, delegate more, we need to groom a future generation so other people will continue to help save Mother Nature.”* View Benson Kanyembo in video [here](#).

Brighton Kumchedwa, Director, Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Malawi comments; *“I have spent my entire career working for Malawi’s people and wildlife. I have worked with and alongside wildlife rangers, and even as one myself, and I know they are the lifeblood of the conservation sector in Africa.*

“I have seen us move from a period of plenty in terms of wildlife to a period of huge losses. We must support rangers to work every day to ensure that our wildlife [is] not lost. The wildlife crisis we are facing is terrifying, but by supporting rangers we are in a position to make a difference, before it is too late. That’s what I remind myself every day.” View Brighton Kumchedwa in video [here](#).

Tusk’s Royal Patron, HRH The Duke of Cambridge said; *“The wildlife rangers of Africa’s protected areas are the unsung heroes of conservation, achieving so much, against the odds. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means that many rangers are working even harder, with increasingly depleted funds. It is more important than ever that rangers across Africa have the support they need to carry on their vital work. I am therefore delighted that this new Ranger Fund will help the protected areas that need it the most and keep rangers deployed in the field.”*

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Download images and videos [here](#)

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Notes to editors:

In 2018, the global wildlife tourism economy generated over \$100bn and provided 9 million jobs, worldwide. But Covid-19 has resulted in an almost complete end to cross-border travel, severely affecting countries dependent on tourism revenue as a significant part of their GDP. The African Union has suggested that the cost of covid-19 on the African travel sector may be \$50 billion.

The Game Ranger Association of Africa estimates that there are between 40,000 and 50,000 rangers in Africa and that the vast majority of rangers have either been furloughed or had their salary reduced 50 to 80% (Rangers average salary ranges from \$50 to \$750 per month).

The Wildlife Ranger Challenge was formed at the start of the Covid-19 global pandemic, following several conversations between Jonathan Baillie, a global leader in conservation biology, and Mark Scheinberg, a businessman and philanthropist with a keen interest in conservation and animal welfare. Mark was concerned with the devastating effect that the virus was having on the livelihoods of Wildlife Rangers throughout Africa and the animals they were responsible for protecting. After consulting with strategic partners, they created this exciting campaign and fundraising initiative – The Wildlife Ranger Challenge – to restore thousands of ranger jobs, support communities and protect wildlife.

The Challenge is being coordinated by Tusk and NATURAL STATE in collaboration with leading Ranger Associations and an independent Steering Committee. The initiative's founding donor, the [Scheinberg Relief Fund](#), which will match donations from the public, enabling at least 5,000 rangers to get back in the field in at least 30 protected areas.

ABOUT TUSK

Tusk's mission is to amplify the impact of progressive conservation initiatives across Africa.

The charity has earned a reputation for providing a highly efficient solution for funding wildlife conservation programmes. Tusk partners with the most effective local organisations, investing in their in-depth knowledge and expertise. By supporting and nurturing their conservation programmes, it helps accelerate growth from an innovative idea to a scalable solution.

For more than 30 years, Tusk has helped pioneer an impressive range of successful conservation initiatives across more than 20 countries, increasing vital protection for over 70 million hectares of land and more than 40 different threatened species. But the threat to Africa's unique natural heritage remains real and more urgent than ever.



ABOUT NATURAL STATE

The mission of NATURAL STATE is landscape restoration at scale. Through large-scale restoration projects our objective is to sequester and store carbon, secure biodiversity and make measurable advances towards the sustainable development goals. In addition to implementing large scale restoration projects, NATURAL STATE develops innovative technology and financial mechanisms to unlock private sector capital, thereby accelerating restoration efforts globally.

ABOUT THE SCHEINBERG RELIEF FUND

The Scheinberg Relief Fund was established by businessman and philanthropist, Mark Scheinberg, together with his family, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Its mission is to provide strategic, high impact relief for individuals and communities. As well as reducing the short-term impact of the virus, the Fund also seeks to build a legacy in the communities and initiatives that it gives to, by providing funding for projects that secure a longer-term impact. More information available at www.scheinbergfund.org