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THE WILDLIFE RANGER CHALLENGE RETURNS FOR 2023

88.6%^{1*} of rangers surveyed across Africa have faced a life-threatening situation. *The Wildlife Ranger Challenge aims to raise funds for frontline conservation efforts across Africa, whilst generating awareness of the challenging and increasingly diverse role of wildlife rangers and their vital role in achieving global biodiversity targets*



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Ahead of World Ranger Day on Monday 31st July 2023, more than 100 teams of rangers across Africa are gearing up for the fourth annual Wildlife Ranger Challenge. Coordinated by African conservation charity Tusk and the Game Rangers Association of Africa, the multi-million fundraising initiative features a series of fitness challenges and culminates with a 21km half-marathon race on 16th September 2023.

Find out more, donate to the cause or sign up to run in solidarity with Africa's conservation heroes on 16th September 2023 at [**WildlifeRangerChallenge.org**](https://WildlifeRangerChallenge.org). Whether covering 5km, 10km or 21km, Wildlife Ranger Challenge supporters from all over the world have made a huge difference to those on the front line of conservation in Africa. Previous campaign supporters include names such as Leonardo DiCaprio, HRH The Prince of Wales, Eliud Kipchoge, Bear Grylls, Naomi Campbell and Behati Prinsloo. The Scheinberg Relief Fund has generously committed \$1million in matched funds in support of rangers most in need.

Launched in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 with the goal of keeping wildlife rangers employed through the crisis, the Wildlife Ranger Challenge has grown into an annual celebration of solidarity, connection and camaraderie for the ranger profession. The campaign joins thousands of rangers from 24 African nations with supporters from over 90 countries across the world - uniting the global north and the global south for a common goal: to raise money to boost thousands of rangers and ensure a future for Africa's biodiversity.

¹ IUCN WCPA (2020). PARKS. The International Journal of Protected Areas and Conservation, Volume 26.1, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.



Bear Grylls, Adventurer and Tusk Ambassador, says: *'As the threats facing wildlife and the natural world continue to grow, wildlife rangers face mounting pressures and dangerous working conditions. I strongly encourage anyone who can, to support the amazing and important work of rangers. Join us to raise vital funds for the frontline conservation efforts, which too often go unappreciated.'*

Wildlife rangers play a critical role in the conservation of protected and conserved areas. As biodiversity guardians they are responsible for safeguarding nature, and cultural and historical heritage, as well as protecting the rights and wellbeing of present and future generations. However, as it stands, the proposed increases in coverage of protected and conserved areas to 30% of the planet would require an increase of around 2000% in the number of rangers employed in Africa² – if the IUCN's guideline of ranger coverage by area were to be followed.

A more effective way of increasing the efficiency of the management of protected and conserved areas is to boost the support provided to ranger teams and to catalyse the development of the ranger profession as a whole. This can only happen with increased recognition of the fundamental contribution rangers make to conservation.

Rangers often operate under poor and dangerous working environments with inadequate employment conditions. Threats, violence, injury, disease and death are not uncommon, as reflected in the annual Roll of Honour data, released by the International Ranger Federation.

A global survey conducted by WWF in 2019 further signifies how rangers are commonly under-resourced, under-appreciated and unrecognised, with almost 70% of rangers surveyed contracting malaria within a 12-month period³. The average ranger works almost 90 hours a week under extremely tough conditions: whilst on patrol, over 40% of rangers have no access to shelter at night, and over 60% of rangers have no access to drinking clean water. On top of this, over 40% of rangers have received threats from community members and 14% have even experienced physical violence. With the Wildlife Ranger Challenge, Tusk aims to highlight the immense challenges the rangers continue to face, and the incredible diversity of their work, whilst raising funds to help them continue safeguarding Africa's wildlife.

Joseph Piroris, 3rd In-Charge of Armed Security and Head of the Canine unit at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy comments: *"For many years, wildlife rangers have been on the frontlines of conservation, risking their lives to protect our planet's endangered species and ecosystems. They work tirelessly to preserve nature and safeguard against poaching, illegal logging, and other human activities that harm the environment. Without their dedication and commitment, the world's wildlife populations and fragile ecosystems could be lost forever. By supporting wildlife rangers, we can help protect these endangered species and preserve the natural world for future generations. It is our*

² [Reference](#)

³ Belecky, M., Singh, R. and Moreto, W. (2019). Life on the Frontline 2019: A Global Survey of the Working Conditions of Rangers. WWF.



responsibility to show our gratitude and respect for the critical work that they do by providing them with the necessary resources, tools, and funding to continue their work."

TRAINING CHALLENGES AND THE RACE

Rangers can spend hours a day in challenging terrain, and for their safety and wellbeing rangers train to keep in peak physical shape. In the lead up to race day, ranger teams prepare by taking part in a targeted training programme designed to improve their physical fitness. They will test their abilities with a series of training mini challenges, including push-up and sit-up challenges, and a specialist quiz testing their wildlife knowledge. The Wildlife Ranger Challenge also features a canine challenge for protected areas with dog units, in which dogs and handlers will compete to demonstrate their tracking skills, using scent to identify an object across a pre-defined competition space. On 16th September 2023, more than 100 ranger teams will compete in a coordinated 21km race across their respective landscapes carrying 22kg of kit. They will be joined by supporters across the globe, running in solidarity #ForWildlifeRangers.

THE RANGER FUND

With over \$16 million raised to date, the Wildlife Ranger Challenge seeks to increase the support for the ranger workforce by widening access to essential equipment, enhanced training and protective measures. Founding donor, the Scheinberg Relief Fund, has generously committed \$1 million in matched funds in support of rangers most in need in 2023. A global, collaborative public fundraising campaign for the Wildlife Ranger Challenge has the additional goal of raising \$3 million to support thousands of rangers in the field.

The Wildlife Ranger Challenge 2023 will spotlight the ever-diversifying role of rangers to demonstrate their wider roles as conservationists, teachers, community support workers and leaders, contributing not just to their immediate communities but to global UN Sustainable Development Goals.

As the challenge develops, it aims to become a movement amongst rangers and their colleagues across borders – driving global recognition and support, along with improvements for the welfare of rangers in the field across Africa.

-ENDS-

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Join in with #ForWildlifeRangers

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ABOUT TUSK

For more than 30 years, Tusk has worked to accelerate the impact of African-driven conservation. Since its formation, Tusk has boosted an impressive range of successful conservation projects across more than 20 countries. These initiatives have not only increased vital protection for more than 40 different threatened species, but have also contributed to poverty reduction through sustainable development and education amongst rural communities living alongside wildlife. Tusk partners with the most effective local organisations, investing in their in-depth knowledge and expertise. By supporting and nurturing their conservation programmes, Tusk helps to accelerate growth from an innovative idea to a scalable solution. The charity, which has Prince William as its Royal Patron, has invested over \$100m into African conservation since its founding in 1990.

ABOUT GAME RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA (GRAA)

Founded in 1970, the GRAA is a non-profit organisation and the oldest, largest and most representative ranger association in Africa. As an organisational partner of the Wildlife Ranger Challenge, the GRAA plays a critical role in building networks of wildlife rangers, advocating for their interests, and providing expert guidance on ranger-related issues.

ABOUT THE SCHEINBERG RELIEF FUND

The Scheinberg Relief Fund is the founding donor of the Wildlife Ranger Challenge. It was established by businessman and philanthropist Mark Scheinberg, and his family, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Its mission is to provide meaningful difference with strategic, high impact relief for individuals and communities in locations where the family has a personal or business presence. The fund works closely with a network of trusted partners in key locations across the globe to identify local organisations, social benefit projects, charities, and communities on the ground that have limited visibility.