dwb ecology

2024 Annual report

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dob ecology

Welcome

2024 was the first year of our new funding strategy. We were delighted to see the many important results achieved by our partners in forest and wetland conservation and in developing knowledge that strengthens and accelerates this type of work.

Overall the context for nature conservation was challenging throughout the year. WWF's Living Planet Report 2024 highlighted the continuing decline over the past 50 years in monitored wildlife populations in Latin America and the Caribbean (by 95%), Africa (76%) and in freshwater ecosystems (85%). Fires continued at an alarming rate in South America and Africa, with the Brazilian Amazon and Congo forests suffering the highest impact of fires, along with Indonesia. Bolivia alone has lost up to 10 million Ha to fires in 2024 with many set to claim land.

On the positive side, the Mangrove Breakthrough project, an ambitious multi-stakeholder initiative, was officially presented in New York City in September, marking a pivotal step toward protecting 15 million hectares of mangrove forests by 2030. Also, meeting in Colombia, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed that Indigenous peoples' representatives should have a permanent seat recognizing their role as forest stewards.

We were happy to award two new grants in the first half of the year: to Jocotoco for their programme in Ecuador and to Manomet Conservation Sciences for work in the Guianas. In December the Board awarded a further three new programme grants to: Rewilding Chile for 'Conserving Cerro Castillo National Park', African Nature Investors (ANI) for 'Conserving the Gashaka Gumti National Park in Nigeria'; and, Noloramata (Tanzania) for 'Enkima Enkishui: Bringing back fire to rangeland management in North-Loliondo'. Although each programme has its own specific characteristics, they all are part of important landscapes and aim to build the support of local people for long-term conservation of their ecological values.

The DOB Ecology Board provided oversight and guidance to the DOB Ecology team. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Professor Louise Vet, who retired from the Board in December. We are delighted that Paul Verheul has accepted the role of Chair and that Professor Marielos Peña Claros joined as a member.

We would like to thank our partners for the inspiration they give us every day as they strive to conserve nature in a way that benefits local people and leaves a positive legacy for future generations.

With warm greetings,
From the team at DOB Ecology

Achievements to date

Cumulative results up to 2024

Forests

Area restored (ha)

27,143

Area protected (ha)

7,747,244

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)

170,630

Area protected (ha)

3,278,708

Other ecosystems

Area restored (ha)

28,955

Area protected (ha)

441,445

Beneficiaries

Number of people

241,095

Knowledge

Number of knowledge products

477

dob ecology

At a glance

DOB Ecology is a non-profit foundation set-up by a Dutch entrepreneurial family. We provide grants to NGOs that work with communities to protect, manage and restore wetlands and forests in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America. We also fund research that supports conservation practice.

In 2024, DOB Ecology's portfolio comprised 16 programmes implemented by NGOs. Our funding support was allocated nearly equally between forests and wetlands in Africa and South America. We supported two research programmes in addition to knowledge development that is integral in most other programmes. A summary of the achievements of each programme is presented in the following sections.

To promote interaction between partners, we hosted an online partner meeting in which several programmes shared key lessons from their work.

We look forward to working with all our partners in 2025 as they strive to make contributions to the global and national conservation goals agreed in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Strategy

2024 was the first year of our new strategy 2024-2028.
In short, our priorities for funding are:

- Conservation and restoration of forest and wetland landscapes in South America and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Programmes that achieve tangible results on the ground, carried-out in a way that benefits and builds support of local people for conservation.
- Research that addresses challenges faced in conservation management and builds capacity in the countries where the research takes place.

We only fund registered (non-profit) NGOs and CSOs and within this we prioritize organizations that focus on nature conservation and that have local legitimacy in the landscapes where they work.

Other characteristics that we look for in programmes include interventions that protect, manage, restore or connect areas of high biodiversity importance, that contribute to a landscape perspective, and build capacity of conservation organizations.

Although we aim to be long-term oriented, we expect programme interventions to be designed to become (largely) self-sustaining once the grant period has been completed.

We consider it a pre-condition that our partners respect and actively safeguard the rights, needs, traditional knowledge and practices of Indigenous people and local communities.

Vision

A healthy planet where biodiversity, ecosystems and people thrive.

Mission

To support partners and projects that protect and restore threatened ecosystems and biodiversity in a way that (re)builds the conditions for resilient livelihoods of local communities.

Goal

To increase nature protection and restoration substantially in more than 10 landscapes that are internationally recognized for their forest or wetland biodiversity.

How we work

DOB Ecology provides grants to non-profit NGOs and CSOs. We aim to maintain a portfolio of about 20-25 programmes and accept proposals by invitation only.

We strive to provide funding for periods of up to 10 years, with formal commitments made in phases of several years. The size of grants we provide depend on the programme and the capacity of the recipient organization. We aim to offer flexibility in the grants we provide and support the organizational development of our partners, as well as tangible nature conservation action.

Co-funding of a programme with other private or public funds is desirable, but not a condition.

Funding decisions are taken by our (volunteer) Board on behalf of the foundation. The preparation of new programmes and the follow-up with partners is carried out by the DOB Ecology staff led by its Director. A due diligence process of new organizations is undertaken before a funding proposal is considered by our Board for approval.

We endeavour to keep the reporting burden on grant recipients as light as possible, but expect reports to be transparent, timely and accurate. We have no set formats for proposals or narrative reports.

Programmes Africa

Both ENDS

Communities regreen the **Sahel**

Work towards large-scale land restoration in three countries (80,000 hectares in Niger and 60,000 hectares each in Senegal and Burkina Faso) through Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) by and for communities.

PRCM

Communities saving mangroves on **Tristao and Kapatchez**

Safeguard and expand the mangroves area so that they have a broad vegetation cover and enable the local communities to reduce the use of mangrove wood by

African Parks

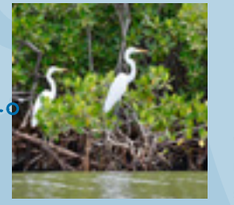
Embedding intelligence-based conservation in **Odzala-Kokoua**

Generate knowledge that improves conservation success in Odzala-Kokoua and helps park managers make well-in-formed decisions about which interventions to start, adjust, scale-up or down.

Wetlands International

Safeguarding mangroves along the **West and East African coasts**

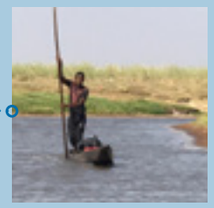
Help protect and restore valuable mangroves, empower local communities to manage their natural mangrove resources more sustainably, and improve their livelihoods through new, sustainable sources of income.



WWF Zambia

A resilient **Zambezi river basin** for people and nature

Support strengthening of the protected area network to secure ecological integrity of the Zambezi headwaters which are key to the provision of downstream ecosystem goods



Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve

Restoring the **Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve**

Increase the resilience and sustainability of the Gouritz biosphere reserve, by supporting the creation of a 100,000 ha ecological corridor and restoration of 10.000 ha by planting the indigenous spekboom and removing invasive species.

Restoring the **Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve**

Partner
Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve

Location
Southern part of South Africa where three global biodiversity hotspots converge: the Cape Floristic Region, Succulent Karoo and Maputoland-Pondoland-Albany hotspots

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
1,498

Other ecosystems

Area restored (ha)
79,370

Area protected (ha)
1,500

Cumulative results up to 2024

Beneficiaries

Number of people
5,148

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© GOURITZ CLUSTER BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR) is a unique region where three global biodiversity hotspots converge. Large-scale land clearance over several centuries has left nature areas isolated and limits the movement of species. Current threats stem from poor agricultural practices, erosion, invasive alien vegetation and frequent fires. The region also suffers from poverty and social exclusion. The GCBR is dedicated to conserving and restoring the region's endemic biodiversity while increasing the well-being of people living in the region.

What happened in 2024?

The GCBR continued to make strong progress in building socio-economic and ecological resilience across the region. With a focus on building 'corridors' of land with improved ecological functions, significant milestones were reached:

- 71,222 ha under improved land management and ecological functioning, of which 50,980 ha have reached the highest level of commitment by landowners.
- 8,148 ha of degraded natural ecosystems have been restored.

The number of landowners participating in these programmes increased by nearly 50% thanks to 2 new extension officers joining the GCBR team. Farm visits by extension officers focused on plant identification (top grazing plants and poisonous plants occurring in pastures), veld evaluation, management, conservation and rehabilitation, erosion control interventions on farm roads, soil rehabilitation due to overgrazing, and invasive plant clearing and control.

Ecosystem restoration through erosion control, ponding and spekboom planting continued well, led by the Jobs for Carbon team. Follow-up work was done at Rietkraal Nature Reserve and subsequent inspections concluded that soil erosion has been successfully reduced. Also at the Rietkraal an automated, research-grade weather station was installed to collect data for monitoring and research purposes. It is the only weather station of its kind in the area.

Good progress was made on ecological monitoring with surveys carried out on vegetation, carbon and aquatic ecology in the Witels and Broomvlei wetlands. This work was undertaken by interns under the guidance of scientific experts.

The GCBR Man and Biosphere Youth Forum continued to advance towards its purpose of empowering young people in the region to become agents of change in environmental conservation, sustainable development and community engagement. Many events were organized including a Job Development Day, workshops on Traditional Plant Medicine, vegetable gardening techniques, community business development, and preparation of plant-based, essential oils.

Safeguarding mangroves along the **West and East African coasts**

Partner
Wetlands International Africa

Location
The Grand Saloum and Casamance in Senegal, Cacheu NP and Cantanhez NP in Guinea-Bissau, Lamu and Tana Delta in Kenya, the Rufiji Delta in Tanzania

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
3,723

Area protected (ha)
301,257

Forests

Area protected (ha)
11,122

Cumulative results up to 2024

Beneficiaries

Number of people
93,099

The mangroves on the East and West African coasts, which constitute 19% of global mangrove coverage, provide millions of people with food, clean water and raw materials and act as buffers against storms, tsunamis and sea-level rise. Mangrove Capital Africa protects and restores these mangroves for the benefit of nature and people.

What happened in 2024?

Senegal

In Casamance, staff of the Marine Protected Areas were trained on the use of the Global Mangrove Watch platform and are now better equipped to identify and respond to threats in real time. Eleven patrol missions were conducted, leading to 124 individuals receiving warnings for non-compliance, three official reports documenting violations, five fishing licenses being revoked, and 610 illegal-mesh-size prawn nets being confiscated.

An impact assessment of the savings and loan groups confirmed their effectiveness and scalability. Since their introduction in 2018 under the programme, the number of such groups has grown to over 178 in the Saloum Delta, with 70 groups established by the programme and the rest formed spontaneously by communities. Besides having a positive effects on mangroves by reducing resource pressure, these savings and loan groups have empowered women by diversifying their income, reducing family conflicts, and enhancing their status in the community.

Guinea-Bissau

Work has progressed on the update of the Cantanhez National Park management plan with wide stakeholder engagement. The environmental education programme on mangrove conservation, in collaboration with ODZH, a local NGO partner, also made progress. An action plan designed to enhance teachers' skills and raise students' awareness about the significance of mangrove conservation was implemented.

The programme kept a strong focus on mobilizing local partners to apply the Community-Based Ecological Mangrove Restoration (CBEMR) method. Support provided covered operations on restoration sites and monitoring. The Wetlands team observed that the partners have increasingly used the assisted natural regeneration method for restoration.

To support local rice farmers and enhance food security, degraded dikes around rice fields in six villages across Cacheu and Cantanhez were rehabilitated. A total of 783 hectares of rice fields were restored, with 544 hectares cultivated this year benefiting 236 households.

Tanzania

The draft Rufiji Landscape Strategy 2025-2050 was finalized. The final version includes a comprehensive ecosystem approach, integrating mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and floodplains. It addresses key environmental and governance challenges and it has been endorsed by the relevant district authorities.

The Wetlands team opened the Nyamisati field office which also functions as the Rufiji Delta Resource Centre in the Kibiti District. It serves as an education hub, promoting sustainable resource use, a research and training facility, an information centre, and a collaboration space for conservation NGOs and local authorities.

Kenya

Building on the Global Mangrove Watch data, an Alert Centre in Lamu has been established in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS). This strengthens mangrove conservation by providing real-time alerts on disturbances, enabling swift enforcement action. KFS officials, rangers, and community scouts have been trained to use the system, leading to more targeted patrols and improved protection of mangrove forests.

A degradation mapping exercise undertaken with the Kenya Forest Service and local Community Forest Associations guided the creation of a five-year mangrove restoration plan. This provides the strategic framework for restoring key ecological functions and ensuring the long-term conservation of mangrove ecosystems.

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Communities regreen **the Sahel**

Partner
Both ENDS

Location
Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso. The semi-arid Sahel drylands, a combination of grassland and savanna, with areas of wood- and shrubland

Duration
Since 2017

Other ecosystems

Area restored (ha)
139,297

Beneficiaries

Number of people
109,414

Cumulative results up to 2024

Land degradation in the Sahel is a major threat to the traditional livelihoods of millions of people. Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal are also countries highly affected by droughts, food insecurity and political instability. This programme supports local communities with a sustainable and low-cost method of farming known as Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Through FMNR, farmers learn how to regreen their land by allowing the dormant but still viable roots and seeds to sprout spontaneously. They also receive support to organize themselves locally in village committees and to market their products better and obtain more value from farming.

What happened in 2024?

The political context in all three countries remained challenging for the implementation of the programme. Despite this, the results in terms of regreening remain encouraging with more than 23,000 ha of FMNR completed in 2024 benefiting about 20,000 people. Importantly, more than 70% of the farmers that were trained have continued to use the FMNR practices and there is also evidence of these practices spreading to other farmers that have not been trained. Such progress testifies to the effectiveness of FNMR and the resilience and commitment of local communities. At the international level, partner staff participated in the UNFCCC COP29 in Baku and UNCCD COP16 in Riyad to highlight the achievements and strategy of the programme.

Niger

Nine new villages were reached within the existing municipalities, bringing the total to 180 villages. Awareness raising campaigns were organized with local leaders such as village chiefs, Village Committee members and school teachers to introduce them to FMNR. Monitoring by the Departmental Directors of the Environment (regional representatives of the Ministry) and programme partners showed improvements in soil fertility, reforestation, and wildlife populations, while in other areas with low adoption of FMNR soil degradation continued.

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Senegal

Excellent progress was achieved in Senegal with targets for regreening exceeded. Awareness raising on FNMR was effective with the use of village sessions, and radio broadcasts in local languages that are estimated to have reached an audience of 120,000 people. At the national level, the government started revising the Agro-Silvo-Pastoral Orientation Law (LOASP) to recognize agroforestry and FMNR as a key approach to improving productivity and resilience.

Burkina Faso

Due to security issues some villages remain inaccessible, making it difficult for the technical teams to expand and monitor the program on a regular basis. Still the programme managed to reach its targets for regreening and farmer outreach. A series of exchange visits were organized for farmers to share experiences among themselves and with students and teachers.

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A resilient Zambezi river
for people and nature

Partner
WWF Zambia

Location
From North-Western Zambia where the Zambezi River begins, to where it re-enters Zambia from Angola through its confluences with the Kabompo and Lungwubungu Rivers then the vast floodplains of the Barotse to the head of Sioma Waterfalls southwards

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
10

Area protected (ha)
412,500

Other ecosystems

Area protected (ha)
434,400

Cumulative results up to 2024

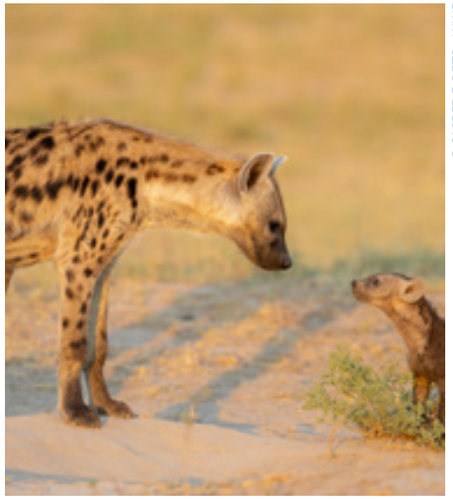
Forests

Area restored (ha)
3

Area protected (ha)
220,400

Beneficiaries

Number of people
4,033



The Zambezi River above the Victoria Falls is free-flowing and supports a vast wetland ecosystem. It holds huge amounts of water for many months which makes it possible for people to live there even during periods of drought. Large-scale mining and energy developments are now emerging which threaten ecosystem integrity, wildlife populations, and the livelihoods of millions of people who rely on the goods and services provided by the river and its wetlands.

What happened in 2024?

The Game Management Plan (GMP) for West Lunga National Park in the Kabompo sub-landscape was developed with the participation of a full range of stakeholders. The GMP defines among others where core breeding areas, hunting, safaris, fisheries areas, heritage zones, and other touristic infrastructure should be located in and around the Park.

In Kabompo, a late dry-season ground-count survey was successfully conducted covering 175 km with 48 transects therefore ensuring extensive spatial coverage. The survey recorded a rich diversity of wildlife through live and indirect sightings.

Unfortunately, the West Lunga landscape suffered significant damage from multiple, unprescribed fires in August and September which made 2024 one of the worst fire seasons in years.

In the Barotse Floodplains sub-landscape, habitat assessment and water birds surveys were carried out by BirdWatch Zambia and more than 6,500 birds comprising 57 species were recorded. Work on the development of a Tourism strategic plan for the Barotse Plains Cultural Landscape commenced with participation of regional leaders and communities.

In the Greater Liuwa Ecosystem, field activities were undertaken to generate high-quality scientific data to underpin conservation efforts. A de-snaring campaign focused on carnivores was undertaken and seven hyenas released from snares.

The initiative “Let’s Secure Zambezi source” was highly successful this year with a record-breaking 13,000 indigenous trees planted by communities during the 2024 Tree Planting Ceremony. To complement this, 130 beehives were donated to community members of the Kelondu and Mukangala communities in Ikelenge as a livelihood component aimed at promoting community development alongside conservation.

Saving mangroves on **Tristao and Kapatchez**

Partner
PRCM

Location
Located in Guinea, along the border with Guinea-Bissau, the Tristao Islands and Kapatchez Delta are characterized by sandbanks, mud, rocks, estuaries and mangrove forests

Duration
Since 2019

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
1,652

Beneficiaries

Number of people
2,025

Cumulative results up to 2024

The mangrove forests on the Tristao Islands and in Kapatchez Delta in northern Guinea are a valuable ecosystem and a key habitat for wildlife and fishery resources. The mangroves are under pressure from a range of activities. This is because inhabitants live mainly from the exploitation of natural resources and mangrove wood is intensively used for cooking and income generating activities, such as fish smoking. Mangroves are also cleared to make space for rice fields. The interventions of PRCM aim to reverse this trend.

What happened in 2024?

A successful reforestation campaign was carried-out over 126 hectares in Kapatchez. Around 380 communities members participated including volunteers, students, and local authorities. Another 75 volunteers from Kapatchez removed 11,452 linear meters of dikes on the abandoned agricultural rice fields in order to promote the natural circulation of seawater driven by the tide. This should lead to the natural dissemination of propagules and Avicennia seeds and create favorable conditions for the natural regeneration of 245 hectares of mangrove.

Working groups in Kouffin, Binari, and Mbotin received three mechanical palm oil presses to support palm oil production and three tricycle motorcycles to address the difficulty of transportation. Management committees have been established for each group and were trained in group management and entrepreneurship. In the villages of Bigori, Kouffin, and Yongonsale, 135 domestic cooking hearths and 35 improved fish-smoking ovens were built. Women volunteers from the reforestation working groups benefit from this equipment. They have also been trained in the maintenance of the ovens and hearths to ensure longer-term sustainability.

As part of efforts to develop more income-generating activities, two beekeeping parks with a total of 50 hives were provided and set-up, along with small-scale harvesting equipment. Initially, these areas serve as bee capture zones and will transition into beekeeping parks once the hives have been inhabited.

In Tristao, 6 newly-formed women's economic groups were created and received work kits containing registers and secure handicraft boxes for cash management. A session was held to formalize these groups into cooperatives and training was provided in entrepreneurship.

Embedding intelligence-based conservation in **Odzala-Kokoua National Park**

Partner
African Parks

Location
Odzala-Kokoua National Park in Congo-Brazzaville, tropical rainforest that includes a special type of "bais" wetlands

Duration
2021 - 2024

Forests

Area protected (ha)
2,516,300

Beneficiaries

Number of people
1,784

Cumulative results up to 2024

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Odzala-Kokoua National Park is home to over 4,400 plant species and 106 different mammal species. The partnership between DOB Ecology and African Parks consists of two parts: the development and protection of Odzala-Kokoua National Park; and an innovation in park management and nature conservation that will be used throughout African Parks and made available to the wider conservation community.

What happened in 2024?

In 2024, a tripartite agreement was signed between the Government, UFA IFO-Ngombé Forest Concession and African Parks. This agreement enables the implementation of a law enforcement and surveillance unit in the IFO-Ngombé forest concession. It marks the official start by African Parks of anti-poaching activities across the extended Odzala landscape which contributes to the vision of sustainable natural resource conservation. Odzala-Kokoua National Park also deployed satellite collars on spotted hyenas which is a first for a tropical rainforest in Africa.

African Parks is now able to develop dashboards based on data collected in the field across all the parks it manages. These dashboards provide a quantitative basis upon which to review the management plan and long-term strategy of each park, making African Parks much more able to manage these parks adaptively. Capacity and funding to monitor all of the metrics required remains a challenge, but research and monitoring partnerships are being leveraged wherever possible to bolster this capacity.

The independent investigation into the alleged human rights abuses by park rangers against local community members continued throughout 2024. African Parks has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of human rights abuse and is reviewing and refining their strategies across the portfolio to incorporate the lessons from this situation. All law enforcement staff have followed a new more detailed and improved human rights training curriculum. A human rights focal point was appointed in Odzala. DOB Ecology condemns unreservedly any violations of human rights or other abuses.

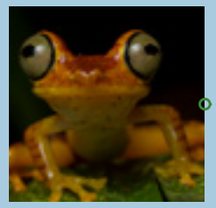
This programme ended successfully in 2024.

Programmes South America

Fundación Jocotoco

Improving **Conservation Measures**

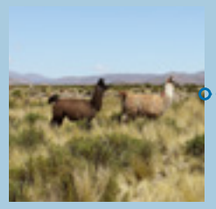
Sustain long-term conservation success by Jocotoco through quantification of the impact on biodiversity of different categories of protected areas management, support to local communities and government, improved reserve management and institutional strengthening.



Wetlands International

Saving High Andean Wetlands for people and nature

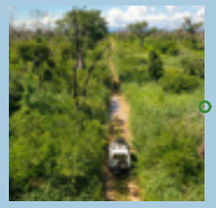
Demonstrate and field-test innovative approaches to improve livestock grazing practices, wetland management and restoration at high altitude, in collaboration with local authorities and communities.



Nativa Bolivia ansd IUCN NL

Conservation of the **Ñembi Guasu** indigenous reserve

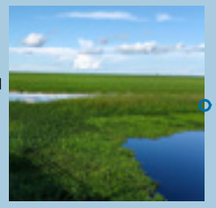
Support better management of the Ñembi Guasu reserve based on local indigenous values and help provide connectivity in the Chaco-Pantanal conservation landscape.

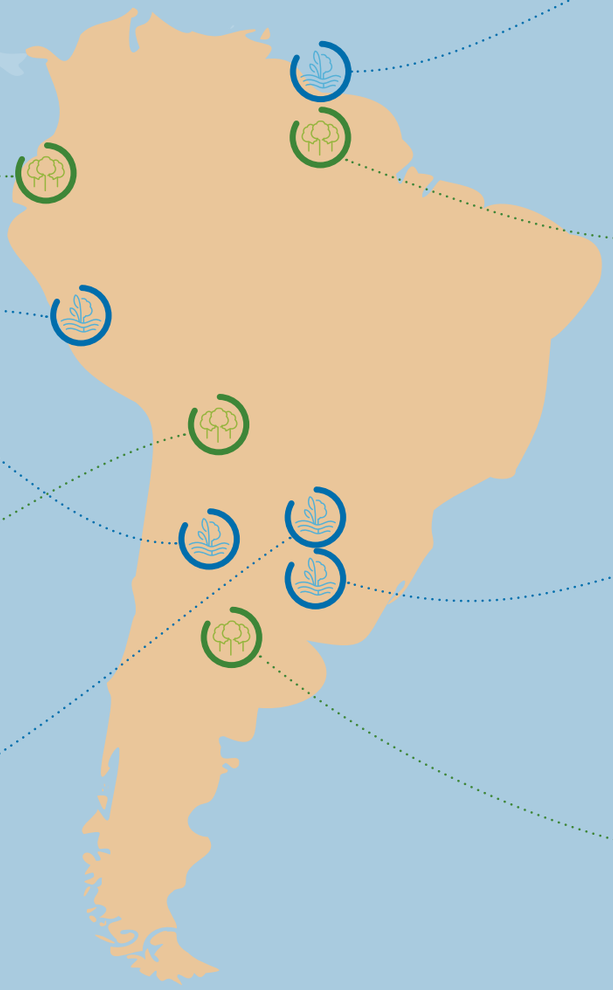


Both ENDS

Wetlands without Borders

Support civil society to play a stronger role in governance and planning for the restoration, conservation, and sustainable development of the La Plata Basin.

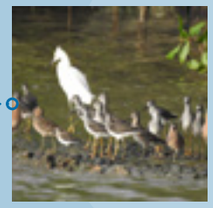




Manomet

A regional conservation plan for **the Guianas Green Coast**

Prepare a conservation plan for the Guianas coastline to coordinate action among the three countries to safeguard the natural resources of the Guiana Bight.



Amazon Conservation Team

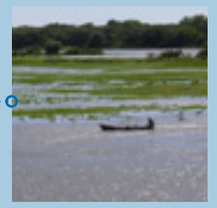
Guardians of **the Amazon forest**

Work towards a biocultural corridor of 30 million hectares across the eastern Guiana Shield, managed by indigenous people in collaboration with the respective governments.

Wetlands International

Saving **the Corredor Azul**

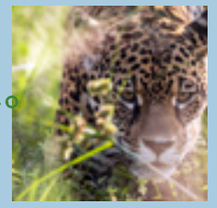
Conserve 1 million hectares of wetlands, promote the sustainable use of 300,000 hectares and protect three iconic wetlands: the Pantanal, Iberá Marshes and Paraná Delta in the Paraná-Paraguay river basin.



Rewilding Argentina

Rewilding **the Gran Chaco**

Guarantee the long-term conservation of El Impenetrable National Park through the reintroduction of locally extinct species, the restoration of degraded habitat and the creation of a local nature-based economy for local communities.



Saving the High Andean **Wetlands** for people and nature

Partner
Wetlands International
Latin America

Location
Argentina, Peru
High Andean wetlands
above 3200m

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
25,471

Area protected (ha)
430,841

Beneficiaries

Number of people
1,973

Cumulative results up to 2024

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Wetlands are an oasis for biodiversity and people in the dry High Andean Plateau of northwestern Argentina and wet High Andean Plateau of central Peru. Their economic value is also significant: they supply pasture for llamas and alpacas and provide fuel and food resources to local communities. In addition, they provide an essential source of drinking water and store substantial amounts of CO2. However, a century of human activities has degraded these wetlands and the ever-increasing global demand for lithium (for batteries) threatens the region further. In 2024, the programme focused on five important wetland locations: Pozuelos Lagoon, Salinas Grandes, the Vilama Lagoons (Argentina), Junín Lake and Carampoma-Marcapomacocha (Peru).

What happened in 2024?

By December 2024, a total of 860 families were involved in the programme and are implementing improved livestock grazing management practices across 25,087 ha. The programme is also restoring 384 ha of wetlands with simple technological solutions, such as placing small dikes in streams to stop erosion and retain water within the wetland system longer; this increases the production capacity of natural pastures and preserves essential ecosystem services.

The programme is developing a GeoPortal to facilitate access to key information on the Puna wetlands system. In parallel, knowledge is collected on 20 key wetlands sites across the Puna region. Wetlands International is also approaching other partner organizations in the region to upscale the programme to the entire Puna region (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile & Peru).

The programme completed its activities in the Altiplano de Catamarca area in 2024. A new site was incorporated: the Vilama Lagoons Ramsar site which comprises more than 10 Andean highland lagoons in northwestern Argentina. The programme is supporting the development of a management plan for this site.

Wetlands without Borders

Partner
Both ENDS

Location
Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay.
Wetlands system of the Paraguay and Paraná rivers – La Plata Basin – one of the largest free-flowing rivers in the world

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
1,216

Area protected (ha)
2,120

Beneficiaries

Number of people
> 4,000

Cumulative results up to 2024

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Large infrastructure projects, such as hydropower dams, highways and harbour development, together with deforestation for agriculture, threaten the unique ecosystem and livelihoods of small-scale farmers and fishermen who depend on the forests and rivers of the La Plata Basin. Too often, local communities are neither informed nor consulted in the planning of such projects in their region. The programme aims to inform communities about their rights and, through campaigns and advocacy efforts, to ensure that their views are heard and their rights respected by decision-makers. The programme also promotes sustainable alternatives for local livelihoods such as the uptake and expansion of agroecology.

What happened in 2024?

Since the start of the programme the partners have managed to halt the licensing of 16 small hydropower dams in the Brazilian Pantanal. In 2024 this momentum was strengthened further when the Secretary for the Environment and Infrastructure (SEMA) rejected the authorization of 6 additional small hydropower dams in the Cabaçal river.

Significant progress was made in managing three protected areas in Argentina. In Isla de los Mástiles, a management plan is currently being developed, while in Los Tres Cerros, the plan has already been approved. Additionally, the Rosario municipality won a Supreme Court ruling to reclaim lands that were illegally occupied by a private businessman in Los Tres Cerros.
The programme managed to stop large-scale events taking place within the Victoria Municipal Reserve.

The programme is working to get the concept of ‘Biocultural Corridors’ included in Argentina’s National Biodiversity Strategy as an approach to territorial planning and biodiversity conservation that is aligned with the 2030 global biodiversity goals.

Finally, the programme supported farmers to transform farmland to agroecological agriculture and set-up new school or community gardens. The agroecological “Seal of identity” continued to grow and has certified over 200 farmers by the end of 2024.

Saving **the Corredor Azul**

Partner
Wetlands International Latin America

Location
Argentina, Brazil Paraná-Paraguay wetland system

Duration
Since 2017

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
132,060

Area protected (ha)
1,501,179

Beneficiaries

Number of people
4,785

Cumulative results up to 2024

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The 3,400 km long Paraná-Paraguay river system is one of the world's last remaining large, free-flowing rivers. This Corredor Azul ('Blue Corridor') is a system of amazing natural beauty and biodiversity and a unique myriad of land and water habitats. This program aims to safeguard the health and connectivity of the river system and its iconic wetlands – the Iberá Marshes and the Paraná Delta in Argentina, and the Pantanal in Brazil.

What happened in 2024?

The programme expanded its cooperation with cattle ranchers and the forestry sector to improve their management of wetlands. By the end of 2024, a total of 132,060 ha in the Paraná Delta and Pantanal are being managed more sustainably by their landowners.

In Brazil, the programme started support to the update of the Management Plan, and the creation of an Integrated Fire Management Plan for the Rio Negro State Park in Mato Grosso do Sul (77,906 ha). The Kadiwéu Indigenous Territory and Serra do Amolar Network of Protected Areas were severely affected by wildfires and received support in firefighting training. The Terena and Kadiweu women's association (AMITK) opened a small shop to produce and sell crafts at São João village.

In Argentina, the Wetlands Schools initiative started. This initiative helps community organizations in the Paraná Delta Ramsar Site to strengthen their capacities in nature interpretation and to facilitate access to the ecotourism market in support to the implementation of the Ramsar site management plan. In this way the programme aims to provide alternative livelihoods and diversify job opportunities as an adaptation measure to climate change in the Paraná Delta. A training course was organized to prevent and fight fires in the island sectors of Victoria (Victoria Multiple Use Reserve), together with the Fire Brigade of Entre Ríos.

Improving **conservation measures**

Partner
Fundación Jocotoco

Location
Ecuador
Multiple ecosystems in Ecuador: rainforests in the Chocó and the Amazon, Andean subtropical, cloud, and elfin forests and páramo grasslands and wetlands

Duration
Since 2024

Forests
Area protected (ha)
663,079

Other ecosystems
Area protected (ha)
5,545

Beneficiaries
Number of people
216

Cumulative results up to 2024

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Relative to its size Ecuador is the most biodiverse country on Earth, however, its exuberant vegetation is declining rapidly. Fundación Jocotoco protects nature in Ecuador by owning, managing, or co-managing private, communal, and municipal reserves. They also support neighbouring communities and authorities to manage their land. In this way, Jocotoco is building a ring of defence around the most important national parks to ensure they remain remote and retain their forests.

Each category of protected areas differs in their effectiveness, the use of natural resources, and the costs of maintenance. To be more successful, Jocotoco wants to strengthen its ability to monitor and quantify the impact of different conservation interventions. Such quantification will enable Jocotoco to improve its conservation work as well as that of its partners. The programme focuses on work in and around eight of their reserves (Canandé, Yanacocha, Chakana, Narupa, Copalinga, Tapichalaca, Buenaventura, Cerro de Arcos) in four regional programmes that Jocotoco is implementing.

What happened in 2024?

Jocotoco conducted bioacoustic monitoring and used camera traps to quantify biodiversity in four regions (Chocó, Andes-Amazon, Chocó-Tumbes, and Podocarpus-El Cóndor), including in private and community reserves and in state-protected areas. AI models were trained in species identification and human-related sound detection to scale-up monitoring in the short term; this provides a cost-effective and efficient tool for biodiversity quantification. In addition, an assessment of the population of priority species was made, including for large mammals (jaguar) and threatened species (El Oro parakeet and lilacine amazon).

Jocotoco reinforced patrolling in their own reserves and collaborated with local partners from the national park service as well as from local communities to improve regional threat identification and mitigation. Field staff and communities received training in monitoring techniques, leadership, and management skills.

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Guardians of **the Amazon forest**

Partner
Amazon Conservation Team

Location
Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, French-Guiana
The eastern Guiana Shield, a region of more than 30 million hectares of pristine rainforest and home to four indigenous tribes

Duration
Since 2019

Forests
Area protected (ha)
>3,000,000

Beneficiaries
Number of people
1,074

Cumulative results up to 2024

The Guiana Shield is one of the few remaining unspoiled wild places on earth with vast expanses of forest which is home to tribes of indigenous peoples. The forest and the traditional way of life in this region is increasingly threatened by mining, illegal logging and infrastructure projects. The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) partners with indigenous and maroon communities to protect tropical forests, building on their traditional culture and practices.

What happened in 2024?

In Suriname, Sipaliwini's Life Plan was finalized which brings the total to 3 life plans now being implemented. A life plan is a document in which indigenous people capture their development vision of the present and future, based on their traditional knowledge systems and cultural principles.

ACT trains and equips indigenous and maroon community members to become Amazon Conservation Rangers (ACRs) to protect their territory and natural resources. Official course material for ranger training and becoming a Special Police Officer was adapted to the education level of rangers, after years of advocacy by ACT. This adjustment by the Suriname government is considered an important step towards government recognition of ACRs as community monitors and as supporting law enforcement officers to the police. This will enable ACRs that pass these training courses to enforce the law regarding nature conservation and act against offenders who are caught red-handed e.g. in case of illegal activities such as mining, logging, wildlife trade, and poaching. A new ranger post along the Luci River in West Suriname was completed, in close collaboration with the Nature Conservation Division of Suriname's State Forest Management Service.

In Guyana, ancestral mapping was carried out in 4 Macushi communities, resulting in territorial and village maps with more than 1000 data points, indicating ancestral features in the landscape and demographic data. Also, a bio-cultural publication on plant diversity in the Rupununi region that includes Wapishana knowledge was largely completed in draft.

In French Guiana, the Wayana and Aluku communities independently recorded oral histories on their cultural history bringing the total number of villages involved to 9.

An Intercultural Health Center in the Urunai village in northwest Brazil near the border with Suriname was formally opened in October 2024. The opening was attended by representatives of the Suriname public health organization, Medische Zending (Medical Mission), the OTIMSI group of Suriname, and the Brazilian Ministry of Health. The centre with western and indigenous medicine treatment wings will serve 7 communities living along the Marapi River and will also enable about 40 intercultural health apprentices to be trained.

Rewilding **the Gran Chaco**

Partner
Rewilding Argentina

Location
The Gran Chaco is a vast lowland area with dense dry forests in Chaco Province in Northern Argentina

Duration
Since 2019

Forests

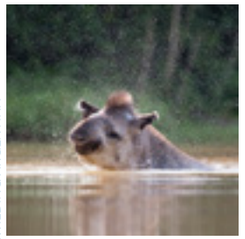
Area restored (ha)
270

Area protected (ha)
128,000

Beneficiaries

Number of people
347

Cumulative results up to 2024



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MATÍAS REBAK-FUNDACIÓN REWILDING ARGENTINA

The Gran Chaco is the largest dry forest in South America and the continent's most extensive forest region after the Amazon rainforest. It is threatened by high deforestation rates and degradation due to years of conversion and overgrazing. Rewilding Argentina is restoring the El Impenetrable National Park towards a fully functioning ecosystem with native species that support economic development and provide a sense of pride to local communities.

What happened in 2024?

Significant progress was made in species reintroduction. A highlight in the jaguar project was the reintroduction of two females and the world's first wild capture and translocation between national parks for conservation purposes. This helps increase the species' population and diversify its genetic pool in the region. To prevent human-wildlife conflict and foster coexistence with the free-roaming jaguars, team members visited local cattle-ranchers living nearby to educate them about the jaguars in the region. The goal is to transform their perception of the species which to date has been largely based on fear. So far, the approach seems to be working as there has been no identified persecution of jaguars.

A new group of 14 guanacos were herded and placed in an enclosure within Patagonia Park, where they have been supplemented with food to facilitate the release and to improve their overall body condition. Later they were transported to El Impenetrable region to a pre-release pen to gradually acclimate to the new environment and become accustomed to the wide variety of native plants. The translocation which spanned 3,200 kilometers and over 50 hours was the longest recorded for any species in the world. In addition, the released population of red-footed tortoises increased to 45 individuals, while permits were granted to reintroduce the giant otter into the Park from among individuals held in pre-release pens.

The focus on fostering a new economy that values standing forests and supports local communities resulted in initiatives centered around the carob tree to revive traditional knowledge and practices such as carob harvesting and production.

To improve the visitor experience at El Impenetrable, tourism offerings were further diversified with a continuing focus on improving quality, while 67 local entrepreneurs are in the process of consolidating their businesses. These allow tourists to explore more landscapes and activities, learn about the culture and traditions of El Impenetrable, and support the local economy. To facilitate this, the number of bed-spaces for tourists has increased to 138.

Conservation of the **Ñembi Guasu** indigenous reserve

Partner
Nativa Bolivia i.c.w. IUCN NL

Location
Bolivia
Indigenous Reserve Ñembi Guasu, Chaco Dry forest

Duration
Since 2022

Wetlands

Area protected (ha)
562,491

Forests

Area restored (ha)
11

Area protected (ha)
1,207,850

Cumulative results up to 2024

Beneficiaries

Number of people
1,410

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The Indigenous Reserve of Ñembi Guasu covers 1.2 million ha of largely intact Chaco dry forest. The area is home to the Guaraní population as well as the isolated Ayoreo indigenous community. The reserve is home to several species such as the chacoan peccary, jaguar, giant armadillo, chacoan titi monkey and giant anteater. It is the first protected area that was created by an autonomous indigenous government in Bolivia. The creation of the reserve is based on the world view of the Guaraní people called "Yaiko Kavi Pave" (to live well together), and also in the need to protect their territory. The Guaraní have a culture which considers nature vital for their survival, as it is their home and provides for their food and their refuge. Ñembi Guasu means "great refuge" in Guaraní.

What happened in 2024?

The management plan for Ñembi Guasu was approved formally by the Charagua authorities as well as the new protected areas law. An analysis of the land use registry took place that shows the different forms of land use currently registered within Ñembi Guasu, including the areas that are occupied illegally.

The Ñembi Misi operational centre was extended with a storage room, extra bedrooms for fire fighters and a multi-purpose cabin. A groundwater well has been installed to provide drinking water and solar panels have been installed for continued energy availability in case of emergencies or power cuts. An old park guards post within Kaaiya National Park, that is close to the border with Ñembi Guasu, is being renovated to function as a secondary base for rangers of both parks and will strengthen their cooperation.

Forest fires in Bolivia were at an all-time high in 2024. Studies show that more than 12 million hectares burned within the country. However, the fires in this part of Bolivia were largely contained through the efforts of the Ñembi Guasu rangers (Kaa iyaganrekoa reta in Guaraní), and the close cooperation between Nativa, various other organizations, the military, neighbouring national parks, and municipalities. The fire season requires a lot of physical effort from park rangers (more than 100 days without a break), so additional firefighters are hired to support them.

In addition to the ongoing risk of fires and illegal settlements, a new threat has emerged in the region: the potential construction of a paved road in north – south direction through Ñembi Guasu, driven by the desire to strengthen trade links. The Charagua government has formally communicated its objection to this road.

A regional conservation plan for the **Guianas Green Coast**

Partner
Manomet Conservation Sciences

Location
Guianas (Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana)
Extensive intact mudflats and mangroves along the Guianas Green Coast, one of the most important areas for migratory shorebirds in the Americas

Duration
Since 2024

Wetlands

Area restored (ha)
5,000

Area protected (ha)
68,320

Beneficiaries

Number of people
88

Cumulative results up to 2024

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The coastline of the Guianas provides essential habitat for millions of migratory shorebirds to rest and refuel on their long journeys north and southwards in the Americas. They share these habitats with local people who live along the coastal plain and depend on natural resources for their daily livelihoods (e.g. fishing, small-scale agriculture, ecotourism). The natural integrity of the coast and its resources are under increasing pressure due to poverty, unsustainable use of natural resources and, in recent years, the international interest in offshore oil reserves.

Safeguarding the natural resources of the Guiana Bight is dependent on coordinated action among the three countries to protect and safeguard the shared coastal zone as a functionally-intact ecosystem. Working with key stakeholders, the programme will prepare a conservation plan for the Guianas coastline, and will consolidate management action in the Bigi Pan wetlands in Suriname.

What happened in 2024?

The programme made good progress in the three countries. Teams were established with local experts in each country and they completed a stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment and started compiling a gap analysis of ecological knowledge through literature review and field work. These results will provide the basis for developing a regional conservation plan in 2025.

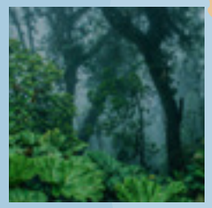
Management was improved of the Bigi Pan wetland MUMA (Multiple Use Management Area) through increased capacity to implement the management plan. Action was taken to restore the 8km access channel which is important for local fishers, tourism operators, and for rangers to control poaching. Check dams were also piloted along several (illegally made) creeks in the vicinity of Burnbush on the coast of Bigi Pan to reduce outflow and restore water levels within the main lagoon and surrounding wetlands. An evaluation in December 2024 revealed that the check dams effectively retained water within the wetlands.

Research programmes

Crowther Lab

Scientific research for better restoration

Enable restoration practioners worldwide to restore ecosystems more effectively using cutting edge scientific research, key ecological information and insight in carbon storage potential.



University of Groningen

A sustainable future for the **Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem**

Develop practical solutions for conservation and ecological restoration in the Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem in Kenya and Tanzania, by combining local knowledge with first-class academic research.

ETH zürich | CROWTHER LAB

Scientific research
for better restoration

Partner
Crowther Lab

Location
Global

Duration
Since 2018

Knowledge

Number of knowledge products
182

Cumulative results up to 2024

© CROWTHER LAB

The Crowther Lab was established at ETH Zurich in 2017 as an interdisciplinary team of scientists studying ecosystems at a global scale to understand the relationships between biodiversity and climate change. Led by Professor Tom Crowther the staff has more than 30 scientists focused on fundamental ecology, microbial ecology, global vegetation, restoration ecology, landscapes and data science.

What happened in 2024?

The paper 'Regional uniqueness of tree species composition and response to forest loss and climate change' was published in Nature Communications in May. This article shows that historical forest loss has significantly restricted the potential suitable range of tree species in all forest biomes. The paper highlights the need for preserving the remaining large forest biomes while regenerating degraded forests in a way that provides resilience against climate change. In addition, Lab staff had lead authorship on 13 additional publications, the majority published in high impact journals, including Science and Nature Communications.

The Lab engaged in many high-profile events, media features, and outreach. These included prominent presentations at the World Economic Forum, New York Climate Week, and Living Soils Forum. They were also showcased in Netflix's "Our Living World," and Tom Crowther was the focus of the feature documentary "The Forest." The Lab also launched the SEED Biocomplexity initiative at COP16 and participated in various science outreach activities.

Restor is a web-based, open-data platform that has been spun-off from the Lab. It is designed to support global efforts in nature restoration by connecting individuals and organizations engaged in restoration projects with the latest scientific insights. Among others, knowledge from Restor's database contributed to the 2024 Assessment of the New York Declaration on Forests. At the end of 2024 Restor had 213,000 nature sites, 23,000 users, 2,700 organisations and has been growing at about 600 new users each month.

In a set-back for the Lab, Tom Crowther was informed in late 2024 that he will not receive tenure status at ETH Zurich which means a new institutional home will be needed for the Lab's long-term research projects.

university of groningen

A sustainable future for the **Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem**

Partner
University of Groningen

Location
Kenya and Tanzania
Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem that comprises vast areas of savannah, wetlands and woodlands

Duration
Since 2022

Other ecosystems
Area restored (ha)
18

Beneficiaries
Number of people
265

Knowledge
Number of knowledge products
7

Cumulative results up to 2024

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The Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem is one of the largest and most important ecosystems for terrestrial mammal migrations and is one of the last relatively intact ecosystems in Africa. The different economic, political and land tenure systems in Kenya and Tanzania mean that transboundary management of the landscape scale is hard to accomplish. Research carried-out by locally-based PhD students in both countries is being used to provide an integrated view on the future of this ecosystem. The CoCost (Corridors, Coexistence, Synergies, Transitions and Training) research program offers knowledge and insights that can underpin a sustainable future for wildlife and people in the Greater Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem.

What happened in 2024?

Yustina Kiwango, who works for Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), defended her PhD thesis on the importance of ecologically reconnecting Lake Victoria and Serengeti National Park by adding the Speke-Gulf Game Controlled Area to Serengeti National Park. Recognising the value of her research work for conservation, she was promoted to Chief Park Warden of Lake Manyara National Park in 2024.

At the end of 2024 the government decided that the Speke Gulf area will become part of Serengeti National Park in 2025. A new PhD project started that will investigate how to restore ecological functions to this key connection between Lake Victoria and the Serengeti ecosystem. This is pioneering work as there is little experience of such ecological restoration after intense human use in Africa. The outcomes of this research will support TANAPA in their future management of the area.

In Narok, Kenya, 6 Rangeland Management Collectives were set up with 29 landowners in total to start large-scale rangeland management demonstration experiments. These experiments are based on rangeland management plans regarding shrub clearing, rotational grazing, and burning.

The programme also demonstrated that the fence along the border of the Ikorongo Game Reserve is successful in reducing human-wildlife conflict. Grumeti Reserves has therefore started the process of extending this fence further west along the northern border of Ikona Wildlife Management Area.

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