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### *Park trips engage local people in wildlife conservation*



*Photo: Idodi Secondary School students on an educational Park trip.  
Photo credit: Salum Kenya*

One of the most important ways of changing local attitudes long-term is by engaging young people. This is something we are highly committed to at RCP, so alongside other programmes such as our Simba Scholarships and school DVD nights, we regularly take local students into Ruaha National Park so they can experience local wildlife first-hand. This is an invaluable opportunity for them to learn more about their wildlife heritage, and to understand the role and importance of the National Park both to the region and the country. Many of these students might have learned about wildlife in the classroom, but nothing compares to the amazing experience of watching lions walk up to your car, or watching a newborn elephant learn to use its trunk and play with its herd.

These educational Park trips are hugely popular amongst local villagers, both old and young, and we regularly have a crowd of people vying to participate when we drive up to a village to collect people. Recently a group of Maasai vijana (youths) and mamas visited the park on one of RCP's park trips. Most of them had never been in the park before.



*Photo: Maasai vijana (youths) and mamas standing on the Great Ruaha River Bridge.  
Photo credit: Salum Kenya*

They were very excited to visit the area, and brought up some interesting points in conversation with the RCP team. Cattle are fundamentally important in Maasai society, so one of the questions was: 'can we bring our livestock into the park because there is enough grass for grazing our cattle?' We tell them that such grazing is strictly prohibited under government law, so they ideally need to work together with their wider village community to try to ensure that grasslands are conserved outside the Park, to enable livestock to graze without accessing protected areas. This can be contentious, as people feel wildlife are being prioritised over them and their livestock, but it is vital to directly discuss these issues with the local community. The trips allow us to talk directly with individuals about all the programmes that RCP is developing to provide benefits to local people and improve their livelihoods, as there is often a lack of awareness of such initiatives. Our aim is that wildlife eventually is seen as a true local asset, and that the Park is valued for its role in wildlife conservation, rather than being seen as valuable but off-limits grazing habitat.

To date, over 1100 people have visited the Park through RCP's trips, and we have found that the discussions, and the opportunity to learn about wildlife first-hand, markedly improve attitudes towards the Park, the project and towards wildlife, including even dangerous species like lions, so we will be continuing and expanding them in the future.

## ***Pride exchange visit between Niassa Lion Project and RCP***

The Ruaha Carnivore Project is one of the core projects within the [Pride Lion Conservation Alliance](#). This powerhouse of intellectual capital and field experience was founded by six women, including our Director Dr Amy Dickman, with a shared vision to conserve Africa's last remaining pockets of wild lions. The alliance projects are the [Ruaha Carnivore Project](#), [Ewaso Lions](#), [Lion Guardians](#), [Niassa Lion Project](#) and [Lion Landscapes](#).

One of the most important aims of Pride is information and knowledge sharing, which is done willingly and openly between the partner organisations. A vital part of this is conducting exchange visits between the different projects, so that our teams can learn first-hand about conservation challenges and ideas in different sites.



*Photo: Team work, as staff from Niassa Lion Project and RCP work together to build a livestock enclosure (boma) from wire-mesh and steel poles as part of the shared learning experience.  
Photo credit: Jacob David, Ruaha Carnivore Project*

Recently RCP was privileged to host field staff from Mozambique's Niassa Lion Project (NLP), part of the [Niassa Carnivore Project](#) at the camp. The Niassa Reserve in Mozambique is one of the largest and wildest protected areas in the world, and has a lot in common with the Ruaha landscape - both are part of the group of six remaining areas in Africa which still have at least 1000 lions. The Niassa Lion Project works in close collaboration with the Mozambican government and many conservation partners to ensure that NLP's efforts align with national and regional strategies for carnivore conservation. Their extensive conservation programmes employ more than 50 local Mozambicans and help protect more than 1,000 wild lions and other large carnivores in the Reserve, so we were thrilled to be able to work directly with them and learn from their invaluable experiences.

The trip was a precious time where the teams could exchange ideas, inspire one another, discuss challenges, and share protocols and experiences - all in the name of improving conservation methodology to minimize wildlife - human conflict, to protect carnivores and to work in harmony with local people.



*Photo: Despite a heavy schedule the teams were able to find some time to visit the Ruaha National Park and to attend one of the DVD Night's which RCP organises for villagers - this time the location was Kisilwa village.  
Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project*

Hillary Mrosso, one of RCP's research assistants who was part of the team, had this to say: 'They say your life will remain the same as you are today in five years to come, except for the people you meet and the books you read. A few days ago, we received our precious guests from the Niassa Lion Project in Mozambique. This group of five dedicated and passionate people are involved in conservation of wildlife, specifically carnivores in Mozambique. When they arrived at the RCP camp, they were delighted to find out about the great work that we at the Ruaha Carnivore Project are doing. During the time they spent at RCP, we shared our experiences, our strategies and the passion we have for our work. Both teams agreed it was one of the best experiences of our lives. The Niassa Lion Project team was very keen to learn everything about our community camera-trapping (CCT) programme. So, we settled down together and spent time to teach them every detail of the CCT programme - what needs to be done in the field, the data entry and how we analyse to determine the winner.'

The Niassa team have now returned to their camp and will be looking at how they could use what they have learned in Ruaha to adapt to their local conservation challenges. Later this year, we will have a team from Ruaha visit them in Niassa, and hopefully bring back new knowledge and inspiration about how we can further improve human-wildlife coexistence.

## ***RCP wins coveted Vice-Chancellor's award***

The Ruaha Carnivore Project has won one of the coveted Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research awards for our work in transforming lion killers into lion conservationists. This award is in line with University of Oxford's vision to embed high-quality and innovative public engagement as an integral part of research culture and practice at Oxford, enhancing its position as a world-leading research institution. Engaging the public in our research is clearly critical to RCP's work - unless we can communicate what we do to local people in Tanzania, and why we are doing it, then we will never be successful at changing attitudes and actions. A one-minute video summarising our public engagement and why we won an award can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITB85hDl1Hk&t=4s&list=PLjgO-QqeHQ3s-BaHLba-n4nLXtzGo0ji0&index=5>



*Photo: Dr Amy Dickman, Director of the Ruaha Carnivore Project, accepting a Vice-Chancellor's Public Engagement with Research Award.  
Photo credit: V-C Awards*

RCP was just one of the winners on the evening, with awards given to projects, early career researchers, and for people who were building capacity. We were amazed to see the diversity and strength of all the winning entries, and congratulate all of them on their success.

To see all the award winners, visit:

[http://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media\\_wysiwyg/VC%20PER%20Awards%202017.pdf](http://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/VC%20PER%20Awards%202017.pdf)

### ***Sadness over loss of guarding dog litter***

We were all thrilled recently, when we discovered that our intact Anatolian female at camp, Busara, had bred successfully with Poppy, a large local Sukuma dog. This breeding was intended to produce cross-breed Anatolian-village dog puppies, to test whether they would be effective guardians for local livestock, as sometimes the pedigree Anatolians prove too large for local families to feed easily.

However, our joy turned to sadness when Busara developed a temperature and showed signs of infection, and then was found to have miscarried the puppies at an early stage. This was disappointing for the whole team, but the positive side is that we know she can get pregnant, and she has recovered back to health. As long as she remains healthy, we will try again at her next season, and hopefully will hear the patter of tiny paws before too much longer!



*Photo: Busara, looking full of the joys of life, fully recovered from the infection.  
Photo credit: BenJee Cascio*

### ***Carnivores, communities and cholera: CCT programme thrives despite challenges***

Our Community Camera Trapping (CCT) programme - where villagers place camera-traps, and receive points for wildlife recorded on their land, which are then translated into additional community benefits - creates strong links between conservation and communities, and at the same time produces wonderful insights into the lives of local wildlife.

Camera-trapping can be extremely challenging on village land, particularly as people often destroy or steal camera-traps to avoid detection of activities such as bushmeat poaching. However, collecting data on wildlife presence outside protected areas is particularly valuable, and this programme allows us not only to provide benefits directly linked to wildlife presence, but also to gain information on the presence and ecology of carnivores on village land. Large carnivores rely quite heavily on village land in this area, but often move through undetected as they tend to be much quieter and more secretive outside the park, and often travel in smaller groups than are seen in the Park. Therefore, the camera-trapping provides invaluable data on how large carnivores really use this landscape, and how they interact not only with villagers and their livestock, but also with each other.



Photo: The community camera-trapping has revealed that lions often move through village land during the night. Here, at about 9:30 pm, a lioness and her cub were spotted by the CCT camera on Idodi village land.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: A beautiful image of a leopard walking through Idodi village land as dawn breaks.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: Two lionesses looking alert as they walk along a trail on Idodi village land.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: On the same night, just a couple of minutes later, this spotted hyaena was recorded by the same camera, telling a story of stealthy hyaenas staying close to the lions, probably hoping for a meal.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Photo: A lovely leopard seen on village land on a full-moon night.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: A nice image of the coat patterns on a hyaena caught through the CCT cameras: eventually we hope to be able to use pattern recognition software to analyse the number of individual carnivores seen.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: Communities receive points for all species captured, not only carnivores, and we collect data on all wildlife species recorded. Here, a curious baboon stops to give us a quizzical stare as he passes a CCT camera on Mahuninga village land.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photos (above and below): Where there are predators there must be prey. These eland were spotted on Mapogoro village land and remained there for at least several days.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project



Obviously, the main point of the community camera-trapping is to ensure that local people see real benefits from wildlife presence, and recognise they are coming as a direct result of them conserving wildlife on their land. Therefore, every 3 months, we have a large celebration in each of the groups (we currently have 3 groups of 4 villages), where we explain about the programme to everyone, show the images, explain which villages got which points, and then distribute the community benefits to each village.

Last month, all the benefits were purchased for Group 3 (Magombwe, Isele, Kinyika and Kisanga villages), and the celebration (known locally as a *sherehe*) would usually have been held in public in the winning village, which for this period was Kisanga. However, there was an outbreak of cholera across several villages, particularly in Kisanga, so the usual process had to be changed. Instead of holding a large public celebration, the team instead took the community benefits directly to their destinations: so educational benefits went to the schools, healthcare supplies were delivered to the clinics, and the veterinary medicines were delivered to the veterinary officers and pastoralist chairpersons. Although people were disappointed that we could not hold a *sherehe*, they understood this was done to protect everyone's health, and everyone was extremely pleased with the benefits, which reinforced the positive impacts of protecting wildlife on village land.



Photo: The RCP team handing out healthcare benefits from CCT to local leaders and medical staff in Isele village, which came second in this group.  
Photo credit: Hillary Mrosso, Ruaha Carnivore Project



Photo: Magombwe Primary school teachers and students celebrating after receiving school benefits through the CCT programme.  
Photo credit: Stanley Mveyange, Ruaha Carnivore Project

### Update on RCP's boma building

One of the most common reasons for carnivore killing in this area is after attacks on livestock, many of which occur in poorly constructed livestock enclosures (known locally as bomas). We work with local people to reinforce their bomas - this can be done either using wire, or done with thick thornbush by the Lion Defenders team.

Many people have taken us up on these offers to help them better protect their livestock, which are vital assets especially amongst traditional pastoralists such as the Barabaig. Mzee Kuwanga is one of the most famous and influential people among the Barabaig community in Kitisi village where he lives. He built his first *boma* with RCP in 2012, but sadly after lasting a good couple of seasons, it is no longer in a good condition. This year he decided to build a new metal and wire-mesh *boma*. He is building it bigger than the last one, because his livestock has been increasing day by day. When the RCP team asked him how many goats he has, he said: 'I don't know the exact number but I know them all by colour and there are more than 250 goats.'

He said that he really values his *boma*, as since he built it no depredation incidents have happened. 'Although hyaenas come right up to the *boma*, they fail to attack the livestock because they are safe in the strong enclosure. He said; I am old now, and I can't wake up to chase those dangerous animals away but I am sleeping comfortably because I know my livestock are in a safe place. Many thanks to the Ruaha Carnivore Project for helping us to protect our livestock.'



Photo: The boma building team takes a well-deserved rest after the job is successfully completed. Mzee Kuwanga is 5th from left, on crutches.  
Photo credit: Jacob David, Ruaha Carnivore Project



*Photo: This kind of wire-mesh boma with sturdy metal poles looks extremely simple and as if it might not deter predators, but we have found that even if they are not further reinforced with bushes, they reduce attacks on enclosed stock by over 90%.  
Photo credit: Jacob David, Ruaha Carnivore Project*

## ***Lion Defenders act to stop angry warriors from hunting lions***

When attacks on carnivores do occur, it often leads to traditional hunts, where large groups of young men decide to protect their community and go out and try to spear lions. This kind of traditional killing can have a devastating impact on lions, particularly as the animals involved are often pregnant females or young animals, and their removal is especially damaging from a population standpoint. To help reduce this threat, we have worked closely with [Lion Guardians](#) and [Panthera](#) to develop the Lion Guardians model in Ruaha - this is where young warriors (known locally as Lion Defenders) receive employment, training, status and wealth through lion conservation rather than lion killing. As these warriors live within their communities, they are often the first to hear of planned lion hunts, and they then do all they can to stop hunts and protect the lions.

This month, three cows were attacked in a traditional thornbush boma (which unfortunately are usually not secure and are easily penetrable by carnivores). The incident happened at night when the livestock keepers were asleep and no-one was aware of the lions approaching: this is something that can be improved by having guarding dogs with the livestock, as they warn people of approaching carnivores. However, here there were no guarding dogs, so one cow was killed in the boma and the rest stampeded out of it, leading to two more cows being killed outside. Cattle are extremely important in pastoralist societies, both in terms of economics and social status, so retaliation after such events is extremely common.

In this case, a group of angry young warriors amassed to go on a lion hunt, but the Lion Defenders heard of the plans, and were able to intervene and stop the hunt occurring. Having this kind of local presence and the ability to influence other warriors from going on lion hunts is a hugely valuable part of our conflict mitigation work, and shows the real value of the Lion Defenders.



*Photo: (from left) Lion Defender Bahati, Mathew, RCP's Lion Defender Coordinator, and Lion Defender Alex (in the blue-checked shuka), discussing the lion attack with other young warriors. They managed to stop other warriors from spearing any lions, which is a great success. When a cow is killed the Barabaig will typically cook it for consumption, and a positive sign of the real cooperation found here was that rather than being excluded, the Lion Defenders were invited to join in the feast!  
Photo credit: Musa Nanagi, Ruaha Carnivore Project*

June was a tough month for conflict, with two other incidents of cattle killings in bomas which would have probably led to multiple lion killings if it was not for the speedy intervention of RCP's Lion Defenders. It is a telling sign that the villagers now listen to the Lion Defenders much more than before, and are willing to try other methods to protect their livestock rather than just killing lions. One of the challenges will be to get the Barabaig to engage more with the wire bomas, so we will be working closely with them to encourage this in the future.



*Photos (above and below) Lion Defenders are taught scientific skills for recording the presence of lions and other carnivores on village land. Here Daudi and Lanjo use GPS and data sheets to collect information on lion spoor (footprints) that they have found.  
Photo credits: Musa Nanagi, Ruaha Carnivore Project*



### ***RCP Sightings Programme delivers real gems!***

The Sightings programme is an important part of our work, where we engage local Park drivers to record images of wildlife for us. We ask them to record all large carnivore sightings, so that we can build up a database of presence, but they also often record other good images of wildlife - which are always great to see! RCP provides the drivers with data collection devices and cameras, and after they record a certain number of sightings in a year, the drivers get a new camera and can either keep or sell their old one, as a reward for participating in the programme.



*Photo: The Ruaha landscape is rich in birdlife. Out on a game drive you may spot varieties of kingfishers. This pied kingfisher was spotted with prey in its beak after a successful fishing expedition. This neat black and white bird is the largest bird capable of a true hover in still air. If you are interested, the pied kingfisher call can be heard here:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajXa2oysJDC>

*Photo credit: Majuto Magellah, [Ruaha River Lodge](#)*



*Photo: From birth, up until the age of 3 months, lion cubs are in grave danger of being killed by adult lions, by other predators or from causes such as exposure. This lion cub was found on the river bank anxiously waiting for his mother to return with his next meal.*

*Photo credit: Vincent Kavaya, [Mwagusi Safari Camp](#)*



Photo: The Old Airstrip pride is well known in Ruaha, and is usually easily identifiable as one of the lionesses is blind in one eye. She was injured on a hunt when a buffalo kicked backwards - buffalos are notoriously ferocious fighters - and that kick blinded her for life.  
Photo credit: Vincent Kavaya, [Mwagusi Safari Camp](#)



Photo: This is the dry season in the Ruaha landscape, and the Great Ruaha River is now dry in many places. These lionesses were found in the Mwagusi River slaking their thirst. In very dry times lions will have to dig to find water. Most lions drink water daily if available, but can go four or five days without drinking.  
Photo credit: Vincent Kavaya, [Mwagusi Safari Camp](#)



Photo: Young lion cubs at play with their ever-watchful mother. Cubs use play to develop their hunting skills, and as they grow up it is the lioness who will be the one to show them the ropes, as the male lion doesn't get particularly involved in the raising of the cubs.  
Photo credit: Vincent Kavaya, [Mwagusi Safari Camp](#)



Photo: These lions are lounging on one of the main Park roads, providing great sightings for anyone driving to the Park headquarters. The adult male of the pride is at a distance at the back, taking a brief nap from looking after so many other lions!  
Photo credit: Majuto Magellah, [Ruaha River Lodge](#)



Photo: According to Vincent Kavaya from Mwangusi Safari Camp, despite Ruaha being home to one of the largest remaining wild dog populations, it can be difficult to spot them in the park due to the dense vegetation and their vast home ranges. Spotting wild dogs takes dedication, but if you're patient - and lucky - you can be rewarded by seeing a LOT of them as they move in large packs - there can be as many as 30 dogs in one pack.

Photo credit: Vincent Kavaya, [Mwangusi Safari Camp](#)

## Meet the Team: Mandela Dudiyeke

'Hi, my name is Mandela Dudiyeke and I am a Lion Defender.

I work as part of the Lion Defender team and operate in "Zone A- Kitisi". I am 24 years old and I started working for RCP in 2012. I am single and never married. I am one among of 10 children of Mzee (elder) Kaseri Dudiyeke and I have two brothers and seven sisters. None of us children attended school, because of our tradition. My father, like other Barabaig parents, believed that to send their children to school is to lose him/her as he will never come back to take care of the livestock, because they will abandon their traditional ways of life when they are educated.



Photo (left): Mandela (who always wears green) and his Zone-A partner Darem out looking for lion spoor (footprints) in Kitisi, accompanied by the Project Director, Dr Amy Dickman.

Photo credit: Penelope Rogers

Photo (right): Mandela, as with all the Lion Defenders, live within their communities in their villages, where they uphold RCP's values and work with the community to prevent lion hunts, and to retrieve lost livestock and even people. Here Mandela is seen performing another traditional task - a joyous one, but not without risk, as he must deliver this calabash to a wedding without spilling a drop, or he will be fined a cow!

Photo credit: Penelope Rogers

My father made a very difficult decision to move the whole family from Manyara to Iringa when I wanted to start Standard 1 (primary education) so I had no choice as I did not have anyone to stay with.

Now I am happy to say that I can read and write Swahili. After I joined RCP I was given the opportunity to improve myself, through literacy lessons conducted by the Lion Defender programme coordinator and other staff.

Like many other Lion Defenders, I have been part of lion hunts and I was even elected the head of *Dangasi* (the traditional youth leader) in 2014. Before I became a lion defender I lived traditionally and took part in hunts, not knowing about conservation. I love my job and I am proud to be a Lion Defender to help my community to change their minds toward lions and stop killing them.'

## RCP staff attend poisoning workshop

Poisoning is a major threat in the Ruaha landscape, as in other places in Africa - people use it to kill carnivores and reduce the threat of livestock loss, and also to kill fish within waterholes, and antelope for bushmeat. People often poison carcasses after a carnivore attack, so that any carnivores which return to scavenge can be killed. This can have a devastating impact of a wide variety of scavenging species, including not only carnivores, but also highly endangered vultures; we have had incidents of over 80 critically endangered vultures killed from ones poisoned carcass.

However, vultures can be saved with rapid treatment, and it is important to collect data on the frequency of these events and the poisons used. Some RCP staff attended a training in poisoning response workshop at Ruaha National Park earlier this year, but as RCP is often the first organisation responding to carcass poisonings, the [Wildlife Conservation Society](#) (WCS) kindly conducted an additional training session for our staff at our camp in June. This allowed 18 members of the RCP team, including nine Lion Defenders, to learn much more about poisonings and what they could do to help save affected wildlife.



Photo: Samora Tomas, a Zone-E Lion Defender, doing his test during the Wildlife Conservation Society's poisoning workshop, to see whether he is aware of how to handle or provide first aid to a poisoned vulture.

Julius Selendu, one of the Lion Defenders who attended, said: 'It was an interesting training to learn more about vultures and how they can be so important, as many people don't understand that. It is also important that we work together to stop poison incidents. I am happy to see so many organizations ready to act in case of a poison incident.'

### **Species Spotlight: Meet Tanzania's national animal, the stately giraffe**

The giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) is Tanzania's national animal and as such it is protected throughout the country, and is widespread across northern, central and western Tanzania. The population in Tanzania is thought to be approximately 25,000, representing roughly 25% of the global population. Between 5,000 and 7,000 giraffes are found in the Ruaha ecosystem, making it a globally important area for the species. Local people seem to have a particular affinity for the giraffe, and it is one of the species that people most want to see on our educational Park trips.

The giraffe is one of the world's most recognisable animals, as it is the tallest land mammal with the longest neck. Its closest relative is the equally odd-looking and equally fascinating okapi. For more information on the okapi, see:

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/news/160810-qaramba-giraffes-tails-poaching-vin?source=relatedvideo>

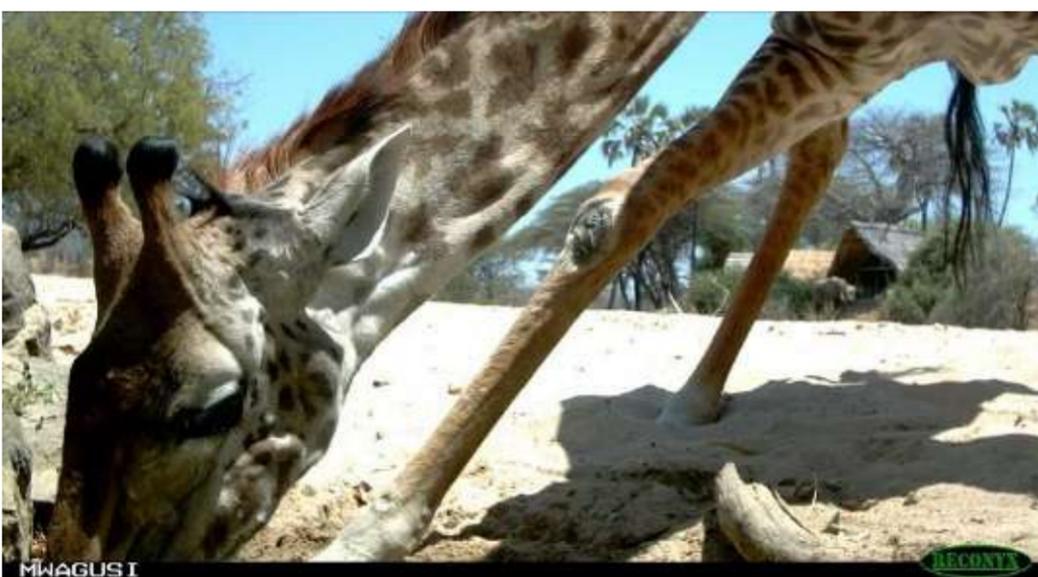


Photo: This camera-trap image shows how far down a giraffe needs to bend its neck to get a simple drink of water.

Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project

Contrary to popular belief, giraffe do not faint when they lower their heads, do not eat thorns and are not mute. In fact, recent research has shown that giraffes hum, using a low-frequency sound of about 92 hertz which contains a rich variety of notes. This is not infrasound (as used by elephants) and humans can still just about hear it unaided - so listen very closely the next time you are around giraffes!

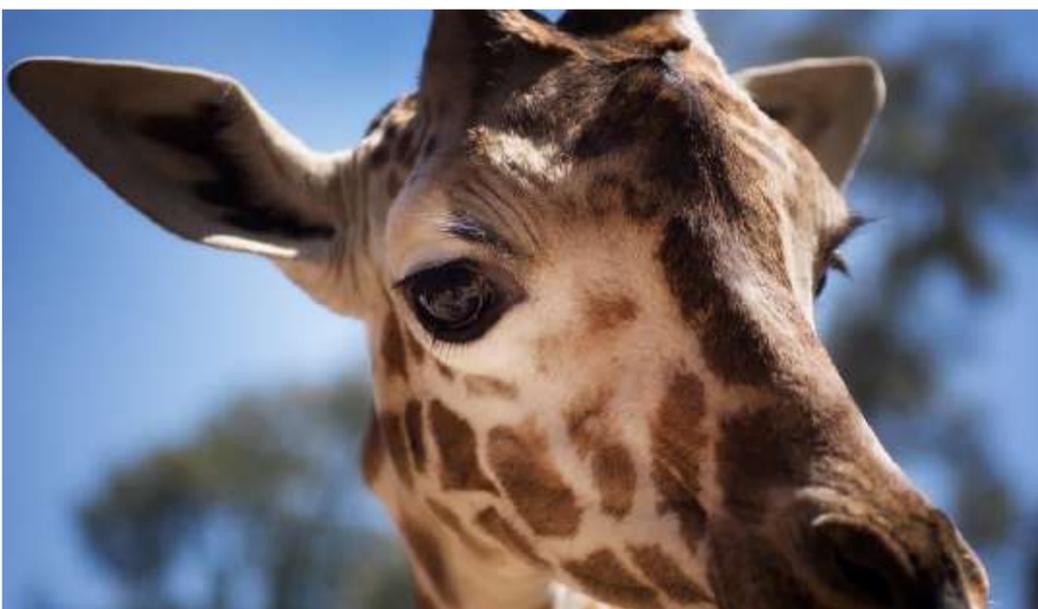


Photo: Listen to giraffes humming <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTIj-bxqODU>  
Photo credit: Billy Dobson

The name "giraffe" has its earliest known origins in the Arabic word zarāfah, translated as "fast-walker". Giraffe have a loping walk like a camel with all the weight supported alternatively on left and right with the neck moving to maintain balance. The other gait is a gallop on alternating hind and front legs (like a rabbit), and speeds of up to 60kph can be reached.

Non-territorial and gregarious, giraffe live in loose, constantly changing herds of 2-32 individuals with no leaders, specific ages or gender bias. Their size, excellent eyesight for spotting danger, and need to spend most of the time feeding, make it unnecessary to bunch together for mutual security and the group may be dispersed over a large area.

They have an average lifespan of 25 years in the wild and males can weigh up to 3,000lb and stand 5.9m (19ft) tall. The distinctive patterns vary between the nine 'races' or sub-species from the distinctive thin lines separating dark patches of the reticulated giraffe to the irregular spidery markings of the Maasai giraffe. The races can interbreed successfully.

The growing human population is having a negative impact on many giraffe sub-populations. Illegal hunting, habitat loss and changes through expanding agriculture and mining, increasing human-

wildlife conflict, and civil unrest are all pushing some giraffe sub-species towards extinction. Of the nine sub-species of giraffe, three have increasing populations, whilst five have decreasing populations and one is stable.

Reasons for their decline include an increase in bush meat trade which sells giraffe meat cheaply throughout Africa. Costs are as little as 30p per pound, and the method of killing is generally by snaring - a slow and cruel way to die.

Despite their impressive size, giraffes can be vulnerable to predation: more than half of giraffe infants born will be eaten by carnivores, despite their mother's fierce kicking to ward off predators. Lions will take down fully grown giraffes, although it is a formidable prey animal and usually requires particular skill. Some prides will learn to specialise on prey such as giraffes and elephants - in Ruaha, the Mdonya pride honed their giraffe (and elephant) hunting skills as the pride grew and their energetic requirements increased.



*Photo: This striking image shows that life can be challenging for both predators and prey in the vast Ruaha landscape.*

*Photo credit: Lorenzo Rossi*

Giraffes suffer from the imaginatively-named Giraffe Skin Disease, which manifests itself around the knee joints and can be highly debilitating for the animals. This disease is particularly prevalent in Ruaha, and RCP has worked with colleagues from Michigan State University to help assess this disease and whether it is leading to higher rates of predation amongst affected giraffes.



*Photo: This camera-trap footage clearly shows the knee joint of the giraffe which are most affected by the skin disease.*

*Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project*

## ***RCP Director takes part in National Geographic Explorers Festival and meets project partners***

In June our Director, Dr Amy Dickman, was invited to participate in the National Geographic Explorers' Festival. National Geographic, particularly their Big Cats Initiative, has long been one of our major supporters, so it was wonderful to attend, learn more about their activities, share experiences from RCP and learn from the many inspiring people who attended.

The US trip, although it was short, also allowed Amy to touch base with some of our key project partners, including Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Cincinnati Zoo and their Angel Fund, and the African Wildlife Foundation. It was a hectic few days but it is always wonderful to spend time with our supporters and share ideas about how we can develop the project more in the future.



*Photo: RCP Director Amy Dickman giving a brief overview of our work at the 2017 Explorers' festival in Washington DC.*

*Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project*

## Kids4Cats expansion increases capacity at local schools

Boosting local education development is one of the Ruaha Carnivore Project's objectives. Through the Kids4Cats programme the village schools bordering the park are twinned with international schools in the developed world, which provide funding for school books, other educational supplies and building material to support the schools. The impact of this assistance is enormous!

Recently RCP added an additional five schools, which means that now a total of 15 schools benefit from this programme. Teachers and principals agree that there are huge positive changes in the kids' behaviour, and their improved academic results are proof of the value of this support. The government is also hugely appreciative of the programme, which, covers gaps that they are unable to support.

Currently, around 5,000 students benefit from this international twinning programme, including both primary and secondary school students. The students all come from farming communities, with at least 30% coming from pastoralist families and the remainder from agro-pastoralist and pure farmers.



Photo: The Village Executive Officer (VEO) with the Head teacher from Isele School unpacking some of the benefits bought by RCP for their school.  
Photo credit: Fenrick Msigwa

One of the principles of the Kids4Cats programme is to instil a positive mind-set towards conservation in these young minds, backed by solid conservation programmes such as the community camera trapping programme, visits to the park and DVD showings about conservation and wildlife. As these kids grow up with these tangible benefits associated with the presence of carnivores and other wildlife it is hoped that they will grow up to become good ambassadors for conservation in their families and their communities. There is enormous scope for this project to expand, funding dependent. If you would like to learn more about how you could help twin a school, or support any of our other work, please visit our website [www.ruahacarnivoreproject.com](http://www.ruahacarnivoreproject.com)

## THANK YOU ~ ASANTE SANA

As always, we thank all our donors for their generous and committed support. To dedicate your support, click below and find out more about our programmes:



**Ecological research** - RCP provides vital data on Ruaha's little-known carnivore populations through camera-trapping and recording carnivore sightings. More than 10,000 carnivore sightings have been recorded to date. ([Read more...](#))



**Community camera-trapping** - RCP trains and employs local villagers to set up and manage camera-traps on village land in return for community benefits, directly linking conservation with development. ([Read more...](#))



**Protecting the livelihoods** of villagers living in proximity to carnivores reduces conflict. Fortifying livestock enclosures and placing guarding dogs are proving successful in minimizing conflict. ([Read more...](#))



**The RCP Lion Defenders** actively prevent and stop lion hunts. These Lion Defenders are chosen from amongst the bravest and most influential warriors. ([Read more...](#))



**Kids 4 Cats** is a school-twinning programme where local schools are 'adopted' by international schools who raise at least US\$500 annually for them, to buy essential education material and equipment. ([Read more...](#))



**Simba Scholars** receive full scholarships for all four years of their secondary school. The cost is US\$2,000 per student and RCP is keen to expand the programme to more students. ([Read more...](#))



**Porridge Project** - No one likes to go to school hungry, so RCP and our partners make sure that local scholars have full tummies when they're at school - this increases attendance and attainment, employs local women and is a major benefit in villages where there is very little food security. ([Read more...](#))



**DVD nights and Park trips** provide education about conservation and species in a fun, non-threatening environment. To date more than 30 000 attendees have enjoyed DVD nights and more than 1,000 people have been on Park trips. ([Read more...](#))

Should you wish to know more about individual programmes we will happily send you more information. Please contact our communications manager, Margaret Roestorf at [margaretroestorf.rcp@gmail.com](mailto:margaretroestorf.rcp@gmail.com). Should you wish to speak directly to the Director, Dr. Amy Dickman, please contact her at [amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk).

To support our work, you can use one of the following channels:

If you haven't yet browsed through the [RCP wish list on Amazon](#), it's a great way to get connected to the project and find needs that suit your pocket and your passion.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/registry/wishlist/?ie=UTF8&cid=AMZKTSB73EMFA>  
<https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1880XADYUZXWF?>

### Donating via EFT

Bank: Barclays Bank plc  
Account Name: University of Oxford Development trust  
Account Number: 40155586  
Sort Code: 20-65-20  
Swift Code: BARCGB22

IBAN Number: GB06BAR20652040155586

**UK Donors (online)**

[www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/report/ruaha-carnivore-project](http://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/report/ruaha-carnivore-project)

**US Donors (online)**

<http://www.houstonzoo.org/saving-wildlife/ruaha-carnivore-project/>

To pay via **cheque** please contact Amy Dickman at [amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk).

*Until next month - so long... tutaonana*



*The Development and Alumni Relations System (DARS) provides a common source of data on all alumni, donors, students, staff and friends of the collegiate University. Our long-term intention behind this shared resource is to improve mutual understanding, by enhancing the quality of our communication at all levels and developing a better appreciation of our relationship with alumni, donors and friends. Please see [www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/data\\_protection](http://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/data_protection) for information on the way in which your personal data are held and used in DARS. If you no longer wish to be contacted by the University, or wish to alter the way your data are held and used, please send a suitably worded email to [database@devoff.ox.ac.uk](mailto:database@devoff.ox.ac.uk)*