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Wishing our friends and donors happy holidays. Thank you for your support during 2018. Let's make 2019 a year that counts for conservation!

FROM AMY AND THE RUAHA CARNIVORE PROJECT TEAM



RCP REPORT | NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2018

RCP is proud of our graduating Simba Scholars

We believe education is the best tool for children to adapt to a changing world and it is important to encourage children to stay in education beyond primary school. Traditionally pastoralists depended solely on their cows and would continuously move in search of pastures, but now more pastoralists are staying in one place as land is becoming scarcer. Their children will need to find new ways of making a living and education will make a big difference in their future.

For that reason, we are extremely happy to see a new group of Simba Scholars graduating from secondary school. In many cases, they are the first in their families to reach this level of education, and they are making us and their parents so proud! This won't be the end for some of them - the best two students of this group will be selected as Carnivore Scholars and will be supported through higher education by RCP.



Simba scholars - Baraka, Salehe, Msafiri, Mesia and Kalista - and some of their parents pose together during the graduation ceremony. Photo credit: Jovinus Francis, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

A new approach for the Lion Defenders - engaging the women in the villages

Ruaha Carnivore Project works with the Barabaig community to stop the cultural practice of lion hunts. Our Lion Defenders - local young warriors - work both to reinforce traditional livestock enclosures and find lost livestock, two factors which lead to depredations and retaliatory killings. But there is also the cultural element whereby young men gain status and the attention of women through their hunting escapades. So, we decided to address the issue at the root of their shows of bravado and engage directly with the women they are hoping to impress!

Our park trip team took a group of particularly influential young women in to the National Park in order to familiarize them with Ruaha Carnivore Project and give them a first-hand experience of the wildlife in the Park. It was their first time visiting the park and seeing the magnificent wildlife up close and, thanks to Stephano our community liaison officer, they were convinced to stop encouraging the young men to spear lions and other wildlife.



Barabaig girls enjoying watching the wildlife coming to drink from the Ruaha River, from the safety of the bridge in the Park. These young women had never experienced wildlife in a positive light before. Photo credit: Salum Kenya, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

The Kids4Cats Programme brings benefits to local school children

The Kids4Cats programme was developed to support local schoolchildren with basic educational materials and tools, through pairing village schools with ones abroad. Through this twinning programme schoolchildren in the remote Ruaha area receive direct benefits, through funds raised by their twinned schools in the US and the UK.

The programme helps to raise awareness of carnivore conservation in the US and UK, engaging students and their families in community conservation. It also gives Tanzanian families a reason to conserve large carnivores on their land since their children receive vital tools such as books and improvements to school buildings. The children benefit from better opportunities and, in the long term, it nurtures a conservation spirit in the children who have benefitted from this programme.

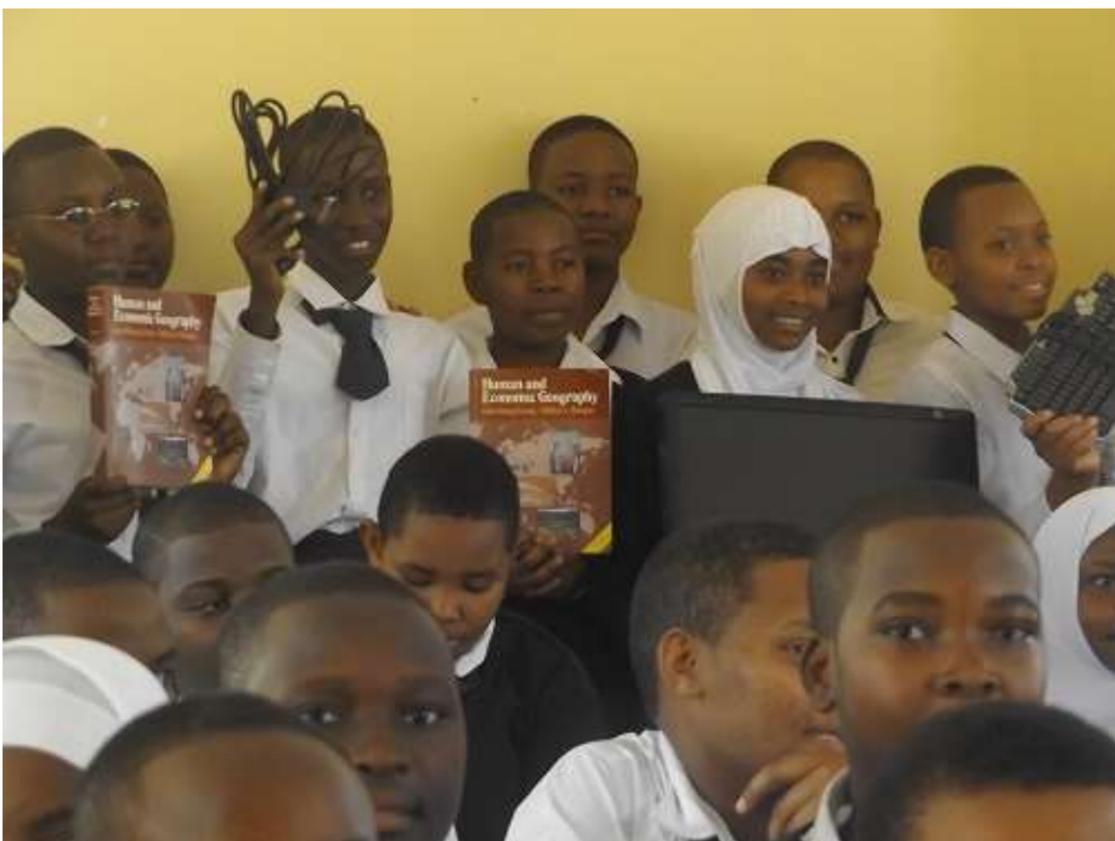
During October and September, 16 schools each received \$250 worth of materials. Each school has different needs, ranging from cement to build a new classroom to pens and books. Whatever the improvement, the clear message is that it is thanks to carnivores that their school is receiving these benefits.



Children at Mahungu Primary School are learning about carnivores as they receive the Kids for Cats supplies. Photo credit: Fenrick Msigwa, Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Pupils at Makifu Primary School receive tools for installing electricity in the school and reams of paper to print the upcoming exams! Photo credit: Elisante Kimambo, Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Students at Pawaga Secondary School receive a computer and some stationery that will help them in the coming year. Receiving these in-kind benefits towards their schooling is definitely increasing the commitment of these young people to the conservation of carnivores in their village. Photo credit: Fenrick Msigwa, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

RCP ends the year with a new expansion in Pawaga village

RCP has a wider variety of conservation programmes, including reinforcing livestock enclosures, providing community benefits, engaging warriors as Lion Defenders, conducting camera-trapping and satellite collaring, and providing extensive outreach and education about wildlife to local villagers. Since the programme started in 2009 in the small village of Kitisi, we have expanded and currently work with the majority of villages around the Park.

As we expand further from our camp in Kitisi it becomes harder to manage all our programmes. In the last month, we have expanded the Lion Defender Programme to cover Pawaga, which is an area of concern for traditional lion killings. Our new Lion Defenders Samweli (Maasai) and Mesho (Barabaig) will have the difficult task of protecting these lions and convincing the youth to stop traditional hunts. This is no easy task, but we have learned how to do it in our core area, and we are confident that they will be excellent at the task.

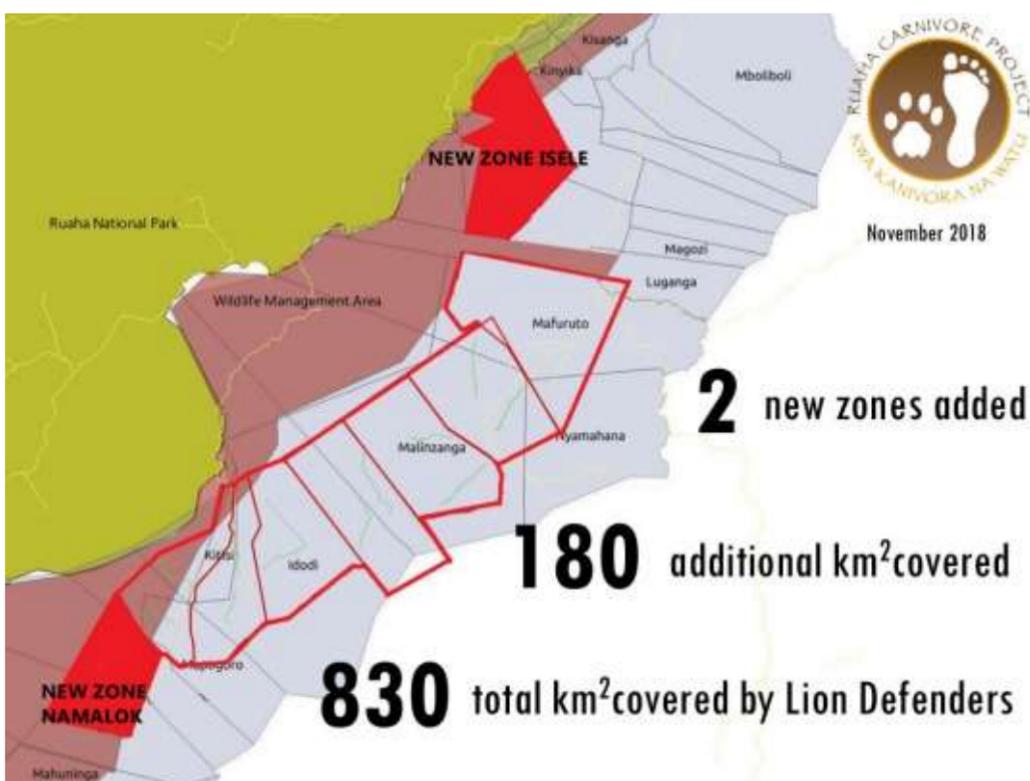
We also employed a new Conflict Officer, Unege, in the villages of Kinyika and Kisanga, closing the small gap that remained in our data. We welcome Unege who will be our ears in this last frontier of the Iringa region.



Mesho, the new Barabaig Lion Defender in Isele receives training on the usage of GPS and how to complete forms from the experienced Lion Defender, Mwinyi.
Photo credit: Ana Grau, Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Meshack (Research Assistant) and Amry (Conflict Officer) with Unege, our new Conflict Officer on the day he was selected in Kinyika village. Photo credit: Ana Grau, Ruaha Carnivore Project.



This map shows the areas where the Lion Defender Programme has expanded into during 2018.
Map credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.

Community Camera Trapping (CCT) brings much needed development to villages

Three months have passed since we expanded the CCT programme to four new villages, and November was the month they were anxiously waiting for - the results were out for the three-month competition! The village that recorded the most wildlife was Kisanga, followed by Mbugani, Luganga and Mboliboli villages.

The winner of the competition received four million shillings worth of benefits which will be allocated across three sectors: health, education and livestock care. The benefits were distributed in a public celebration in Mboliboli village where the regional government encouraged the citizens to protect their wildlife, so that they can be the winners of the next round!

The benefits will make a huge difference to the villages, with Mbugani planning to build extra classrooms in their school and Kisanga finalizing the construction of a health centre. The pastoralists of Mboliboli and Mbugani are combining their benefits to build a place for the cattle to drink.

Our hope is that through these benefits and associated celebrations, all the villagers will increasingly appreciate and protect wildlife on their land.



Many people attended our first ever CCT celebration in the village of Mboliboli. Although making sure there is food for so many people can be quite a challenge, spreading the word of the benefits from carnivore presence is RCP's priority. Photo credit: Ana Grau, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

What has been going on in the villages? CCT cameras reveal the wildlife that's been around.



The lions in Idodi keep showing up in our cameras. Lions like to use roads where they are available to move quickly through their territory. This lioness is worth 15,000 points in our competition. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Isele village also sees lions fairly often, however, it is the first time we have spotted this particular male in the cameras. Another 15,000 points for Isele! Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



And more lions spotted in Kisilwa village. As the rains start the prey disperses and lions leave the park in search of wild prey. Another 15,000 points for Kisilwa village. Photo credit: Ruaha

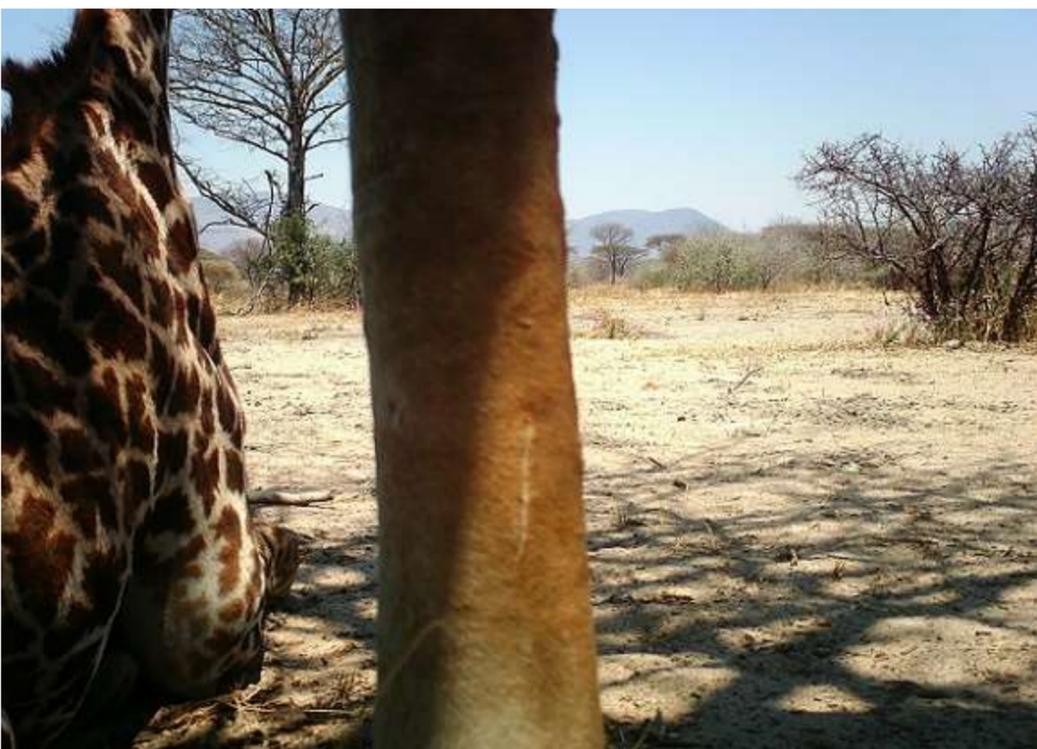
Carnivore Project.



There would be no predators without prey, so we also give villages points for images of prey. Wild pigs are actually scarce in this landscape. This wild pig gives Malinzanga village 2,000 points. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Since we started putting cameras in village land in 2015, we have only seen cheetah once. In October this year we finally received a picture of the second cheetah in Isele village. Although Ruaha is an important area of East Africa for cheetahs, we rarely see them so we are happy to see they are safely using village land. Cheetahs can attack smallstock during the day and they are worth 15,000 in our competition. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Can you tell what is going on here? Clue - this picture is worth 4,000 points for Makifu village. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



A group of Eland with small calves was spotted in Kisilwa village. Eland are good lion prey, but their meat is also valued by poachers. This group of six is worth 12,000 points, almost as much as a lion, which certainly makes it worthwhile for the village to protect them. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



Striped hyaenas are not common inside the Park but can be seen fairly regularly on village land. This one spotted in Mbugani is worth 5,000 points. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



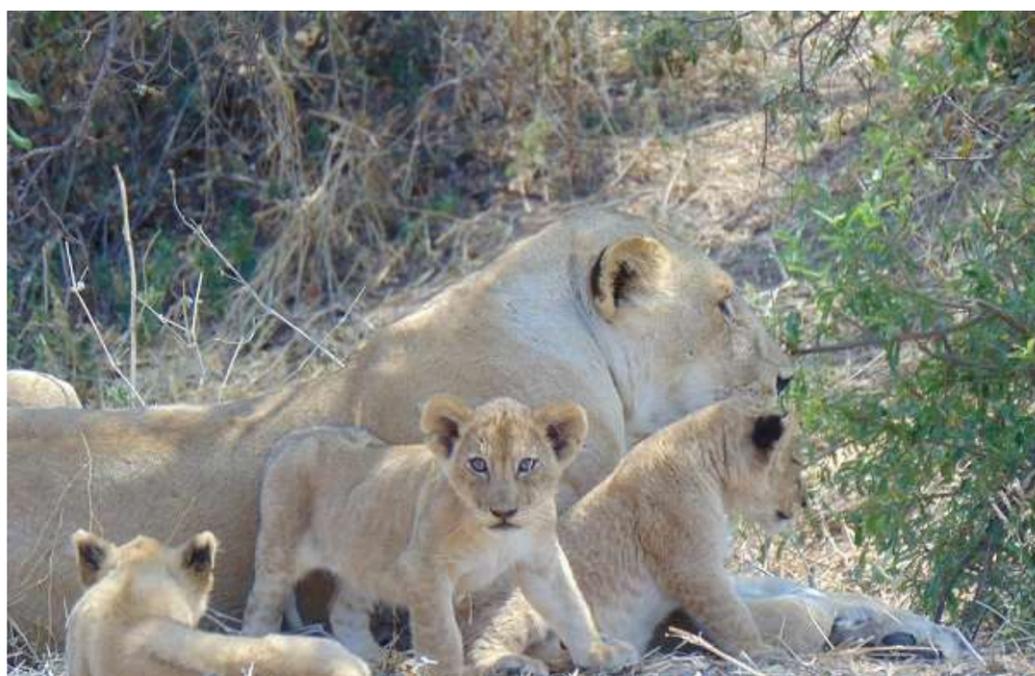
This beautiful leopard was caught on our CCT camera in Mafuluto. Leopards have distinctive markings and can be identified by their spot patterns. Leopards are worth 10,000 points as they can cause substantial conflict locally. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.



And one more lion spotted in Mafuluto, one of the villages that suffers the most depredations in our area. This picture will give them 15,000 and push them ahead in the competition. Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project.

Update from the Park - RCP Sightings Programme

The rains have slowly started in Ruaha and the number of tourists is reducing. But there are always some guides looking out for carnivores in the park. They help keep our data flowing, regardless of the season or the weather. Many thanks to all the guides and lodges for another great sightings season!



Many lionesses in Ruaha have young cubs around this time of the year. It is a great month to visit the Park. Photo credit: Michael Samweli, [Asilia Africa Kwiwala Camp](#).



We know this male lion is still young because his nose is still pretty pink. He has a great mane for his age though. Photo credit: Ayubu Nyang'ango, [Mdonya Old River Camp](#).



The months prior to the rains are the hottest time of the year in the Park. But why not take a dip in the meantime? Photo credit: Zacharia Kahimba, [Mdonya Old River Camp](#).



You know it's really hot when you see hyaenas cooling off in the river. But the rains, which bring relief and an abundance of food, weren't far off - soon after this photo was taken the landscape was transformed into a green Eden. Photo credit: Majuto Magelah, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).



The guides often see pairs of lions off on 'honeymoons' in the bush. The approaches of this (rather young!) male look as if they are being well received. Photo credit: Josephat Mdegella, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).



Although leopards usually hunt at night, this one was spotted with freshly killed prey in the day.
Photo credit: Elisante Mbisse, [Nomad Kigelia Camp](#).



The yawn of this young lion reveals some impressively sharp white teeth! Photo credit: Hussein Ngaroka, [Nomad Kigelia Camp](#).



The cute factor of these cubs is a total delight. While their mother takes a moment to have a drink, one of the cubs ventures out onto a log in the river. Hopefully she's keeping a watchful eye out for crocs! Photo credit: Isaya Kisege, [Mwagusi Safari Camp](#)



Buffalo are large and dangerous prey for lion to take down, but they are a prized kill as they will provide plenty of food for the pride. Once the buffalo has been brought down, it takes several lionesses to prevent it from escaping back to the safety of the herd, which, once mobilized, presents a formidable force for any pride of lions.
Photo credit: Hassan Kaiwanga, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).

Species Spotlight - Ruaha's rich birdlife

East Africa is a region rich in birdlife. Did you know that Ruaha National Park has a checklist of 550 birds? This great diversity of birds is a function of its location, which is in the transition zone between the acacia savannah of East Africa and the Miombo woodland belt of southern Africa.

The birdlife in Ruaha is good year-round, but at its best from November to April when the migratory birds from Europe and northern Africa are present. At this time of the year, many resident bird species are nesting and are in breeding plumage. So, next time you head out into the Ruaha National Park, make sure to look out for some of these incredible species.



The beautifully exotic grey crowned crane occurs in the Ruaha National Park. These birds perform a spectacular courtship dance which is one of the highlights of the summer season.
Photo credit: Whiteman John, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).



White-backed vultures are critically endangered in East Africa and are threatened due to poisoning of carcasses by poachers and farmers. They are patient birds and will wait it out for hours until it's their turn to feed from a carcass brought down by a big cat or a group of wild dogs. Unfortunately, if the carcass has been poisoned, they will die in their hundreds alongside any carnivores that feed from the same carcass.
Photo credit: Whiteman John, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).



Fishing is what this goliath heron does for most of the day.
Photo credit: Whiteman John, [Ruaha River Lodge](#).



This sharp-eyed black-headed heron has managed to catch a yellow-collared lovebird for dinner using its stealth, patience and its giant bill as a weapon. These small colourful lovebirds abound in the region. Photo credit: Hussein Ngaroka, [Nomad Kigelia Camp](#)



A useful relationship exists between yellow-billed oxpeckers and wildlife plagued by ticks. Here a flock of grooms a couple of buffalo who stand quietly by and let the little birds do their job. Photo credit: Dulla Fardy, [Jabali Ridge Camp](#).



Yellow-billed storks congregate on a pan of water, digging their sharp beaks into the muddy water in search of food. Photo credit: Theophil Myinga, [Jongomero Camp](#).



This fearless lilac-breasted roller has caught a small snake. The Ruaha landscape abounds in a variety of snakes, from small twig snakes to large black mambas. Snakes are often found in and around the camp, and staff are always on the look-out for them. Photo credit: Naumu, [Ikuku Safari Camp](#).

References: <https://www.safaribookings.com/ruaha/birds>

Meet the Team - Ester Petro Halula - Camp Cook

This month we feature Esther Petro Halula, one of the cooks at our camp. Esther is 21 years old and was born in Dodoma. Coming from the Barabaig tribe means that her family traditionally migrated seeking pasture. After staying some years in nearby Mloa she finally settled with her family in Kitisi in 2008. Here she completed her primary school education and in 2014 arrived at Ruaha Carnivore Project. Esther is happily married with a three-year-old child, Nezia.



Ester says that working at Ruaha Carnivore Project, "...helps me to learn so many things. There are different styles of cooking, like making bread, that I have learned since coming here. I also like to meet so many interesting and nice people".

Photo credit: Margaret Roestorf, Ruaha Carnivore Project.

It is not very common for a Barabaig woman to gain employment and Ruaha Carnivore Project is proud to have her on our team!

THANK YOU ~ ASANTE SANA

As always, we thank all our donors for their generous and committed support.



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. Should you wish to speak directly to the Director, Dr. Amy Dickman, please contact her at amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk.

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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.

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To pay via **cheque** please contact Amy Dickman at amy.dickman@zoo.ox.ac.uk.

Until next year... we wish you a happy New Year and look forward to sharing our news with you again in 2019!



Photo credit: Ruaha Carnivore Project CCT image.

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