

Part 5

CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

Sue Watt recognises the champions of some of our less-celebrated endangered species

The plight to save Africa's iconic wildlife has seen myriad high-profile conservation charities focusing on the 'charismatic megafauna' clique of A-list animals — lions, elephants, rhinos and gorillas among others we all love to spot on safari. Attracting generous donors and philanthropists, these NGOs include the likes of Lion Recovery Fund, Save the Rhino, The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund and Save The Elephants. But what of the animals that are less familiar, less 'sexy' perhaps, but are still facing the same struggle for survival? Thankfully, there are conservation organisations fighting their corner too, such as these examples



VulPro
WWW.VULPRO.COM

Watching wakes of voracious vultures scrapping around a carcass, you might think it implausible that these powerful birds of prey are endangered. As nature's bin men, they play a crucial role in cleaning up landscapes and preventing disease. Yet some African populations have declined by up to 95 per cent over recent decades, due to the poisoning of carcasses by poachers, electrocution from power infrastructure, loss of habitat, and demand for their body parts in traditional medicine. VulPro rescues injured birds, administers veterinary treatment and breeds those that can't be rehabilitated to release their offspring to the wild. They track, monitor and research vultures, and help set up 'vulture restaurants', where farms and tourism establishments provide meat to their wild avian clients.

Pangolin.Africa

WWW.PANGOLIN.AFRICA

Revered in China and Vietnam as ingredients for traditional medicine and as a culinary delicacy, pangolins have the unenviable reputation of being the world's most trafficked mammal. Enigmatic, elusive and nocturnal, their exact number is unknown, but sightings are increasingly rare. Pangolin.Africa publicises their plight through sharing their fascinating film *Eye of the Pangolin*, which captures footage of all four African species. They encourage reporting of sightings on their Pangolert WhatsApp line, collating information on pangolin distribution across Africa. The NGO also supports rescue and rehabilitation, and funds tracking devices, camera traps and the development of pangolin-friendly electric fencing.



Eye of the Pangolin filmmaker Bruce Young and a member of the Ba'aka tribe with a black-bellied pangolin in Central African Republic

PANGOLIN.AFRICA

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme

WWW.ETHIOPIANWOLF.ORG

On the Sanetti Plateau of Bale Mountains National Park, you'd find it difficult to believe that Ethiopian wolves are the world's rarest canids: looking like elegant, long-legged foxes, they're easy to spot hunting giant mole-rats, their favourite fodder. Indigenous to Ethiopia's highlands, only around 500 survive in the face of relentless human encroachment. In a crowded country, people move into the wolves' habitat, bringing their dogs and diseases such as rabies and canine distemper. For 30 years, the EWCP, with its teams

of local vets and wolf monitors, has protected these beautiful animals through vaccination campaigns for both wolves and domestic dogs, conserving the Afroalpine habitats vital to their survival, raising awareness, and supporting sustainable community micro-enterprises.



WILL WHITFORD

The Hirola Conservation Programme

WWW.HIROLACONSERVATION.ORG

Hirola are the world's rarest antelope. Only around 400 roam the borders of northern Kenya and Somalia, with a small, translocated population in Tsavo. Sleek, tawny-hued animals with dark, lyre shaped horns, they are classed as Critically Endangered, at risk from habitat degradation, disease, conflict, and predation. In this volatile region, HCP, founded by award-winning Dr Abdullahi Ali Hussein, engages local people to appreciate, conserve and



increase the hirola population through anti-poaching measures, regenerating their grassland habitats, raising awareness in schools and offering scholarships to study conservation.



The Okapi Conservation Project

WWW.OKAPICONSERVATION.ORG

Resembling a cross between a zebra and a sable, with saucer-shaped ears similar to a wild dog, the quirky okapi actually belongs to the giraffe family. Only 10-15,000 survive, roaming the rainforests of DR Congo. Exacerbated by political conflict and armed militia activity, the threats they face include human encroachment, poaching and deforestation through illegal logging and mining. In 1992, the OCP, in partnership with DRC's government, set up the 13,700sq km Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Ituri Forest, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The NGO supports anti-poaching activities and works closely with the indigenous Mbuti and Efe people, building schools and health clinics, improving food security, and establishing agroforestry and women's empowerment initiatives.



WILL WHITFORD

The Painted Wolf Foundation

WWW.PAINTEDWOLF.ORG

These beautiful, uniquely patterned predators go by many names, among them wild dogs, painted wolves and painted dogs. Just 7000 survive across Africa, facing threats that are mostly manmade — snaring, road kill, human encroachment and persecution among them. Established in 2018 in Zimbabwe, PWF aims to double wild dog numbers within 30 years, providing grants for research, translocations and conservation across the continent. Projects they support include protecting and researching West Africa's last remaining three or four packs in Senegal, working with the Kalahari's San people to alleviate increasing conflict and killings of painted wolves due to livestock predation, and investing in research for innovative solar-powered GPS collars to monitor populations across southern Africa.