



CHANGE MAKERS

Sue Watt highlights some of the many organisations working on wide-ranging community and conservation programmes across Kavango Zambezi

Unsurprisingly, given it spans an area almost twice the size of the UK, a vast array of conservation organisations strive to protect Kavango Zambezi's sweeping habitats and their varied fauna and flora. Some are huge global entities working across the whole landscape; others operate at a more local grass-roots level, but each has an important role to play.

Among them, the prestigious African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation (SOWC) is conducting important research as part of its pan-African State of the Wildlife Economy project. Its case studies on Zambia and Zimbabwe have been published and those on Angola, Namibia and Botswana will be released shortly. It is also producing a report that will cover the entire Kavango Zambezi ecosystem, which will be a vital tool in harnessing its future potential, complete with a costed action plan and policy brief.

SOWC's aim is to highlight the importance of wildlife as an asset for investment, promoting entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships. The report will be finalised later this year, providing an exciting and collaborative way forward, with various initiatives planned to have an impact within five years.

Meanwhile, here is just a small selection of the myriad NGOs that are currently supporting conservation and communities across the Kavango Zambezi landscape:



THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

The Zambezi Society

The Zambezi Society, founded in 1982, operates primarily in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley. But it also acts in an advocacy and participatory role in conservation planning and sustainable development across the Zambezi River Basin and its tributaries, spanning some 1.3 million square kilometres. Its focus in Zimbabwe covers wildlife protection, ranger welfare, research, education and human-wildlife coexistence.

WWW.ZAMSOC.ORG

WWF Namibia

For over 20 years, WWF has worked with the governments, communities and NGOs of the five countries to help establish the transfrontier conservation area and combat poaching, human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and deforestation. In 2022, it was instrumental in implementing an elephant survey covering 312,000sq km, flying a total of 697 hours, and which confirmed a population of some 227,900 elephants roaming the region. In December, WWF helped collar elephants and tag vultures in Zimbabwe's Chizarira NP, and its other projects include improving protection of miombo woodlands, stabilising or increasing rhino, elephant, vulture and large carnivore populations, reducing the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and securing the Kwando River's water flow and biodiversity. WWW.WWFNAMIBIA.ORG



MASON JAMES

VICTORIA FALLS WILDLIFE TRUST



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Based just outside Victoria Falls, the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust operates the only wildlife disease and forensics laboratory within Kavango Zambezi, working across the region. Its vets test for diseases in wild and domestic animals, helping to determine those that are circulating or might become a risk. The lab's forensic team works to combat the illegal wildlife trade, using DNA sequencing to identify which species bushmeat has come from and helping to bring poachers to court. Its extensive work also involves rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife, research, community outreach, and conservation of lions, rhinos and vultures, among other species. In addition, they are experts in rhino translocations, moving animals safely to other areas to improve genetic diversity.

WWW.VICFALLSWILDLIFETRUST.ORG

Kwando Carnivore Project

Namibia's Zambezi Region (formerly the Caprivi Strip) is a vital corridor for lion populations within Kavango Zambezi, jutting out like a pointed finger squeezed between neighbouring Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Home to three national parks, several community conservancies and some 142,000 people, the narrow strip of land provides the perfect recipe for human-wildlife conflict. Through providing predator-proof kraals for cattle, the Kwando Carnivore Project has achieved a 90 per cent reduction in the number of lions killed in retaliation for livestock losses. They also monitor carnivore populations (including wild dogs and hyena), raise community awareness of conservation and provide important research, the latest on the long-range dispersal of carnivores in southern Africa.

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/KWANDOCARNIVOREPROJECT



KWANDO CARNIVORE PROJECT

Fenced in. A predator-proof kraal installed by Kwando Carnivore Project to protect livestock from lions



PAUL FUNSTON / PANTHERA

Panthera

The global charity protecting wild cat species, Panthera works in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem in collaboration with Zambia's Department of Wildlife and National parks, impacting big cat populations across Kavango Zambezi. Supporting 17 anti-poaching teams, two lion monitoring and protection teams and one leopard monitoring team within

Kafue, it also focuses on human-wildlife coexistence outside protected areas, using community conservation officers and helping to instil a sustainable wildlife economy. From 2018-2022, Panthera collaborated with conservation organisations Game Rangers International, Musekese Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Crime Prevention, the Zambian Carnivore Programme and, from 2021, African Parks, to halt the decline of big cat populations in Kafue. Park management results indicate that lion and leopard populations across many areas in the park are showing signs of recovery. WWW.PANTHERA.ORG

Hands on. Panthera scientists anaesthetise and collar cheetahs in Zambia's Kafue National Park
LUCKY MULENGA / PANTHERA

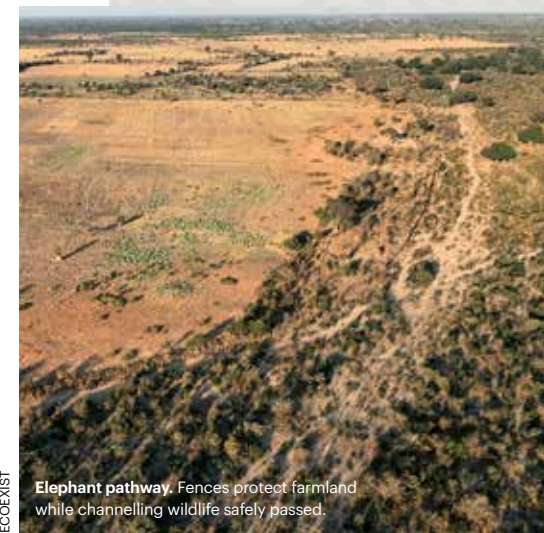


THE ECOEXIST TRUST

The small NGO Ecoexist fosters human-wildlife coexistence in Botswana's Okavango Delta Panhandle, helping farming communities live alongside 130,000 elephants. However, its work reaches across Kavango Zambezi, studying elephant migratory routes, wildlife connectivity and the impact of fences throughout the region.

Over 15 years, they have shared their research with neighbouring stakeholders to assist in land use planning and policies, enabling farmers to safely grow their crops away from important elephant corridors. They've also helped develop an 'elephant-aware economy', in which local people sell honey from bees that deter elephants from their crops, and crafts made from trees knocked down by elephants. Farmers are also taught about Conservation Agriculture, growing millet which is bought at a premium by Okavango Craft Brewery, based in Maun, to make its award-winning beers.

WWW.ECOEXISTPROJECT.ORG



ECOEXIST

Elephant pathway. Fences protect farmland while channelling wildlife safely passed.