



Strengthening Law Enforcement and Reducing Elephant Poaching at Yankari Game Reserve by Providing Rangers With Basic Field Equipment



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Summary

This project addresses AEAP Objective 1: *Reduce Illegal Killing of Elephants and Illegal Trade in Elephant Products*. The project aims to do this by strengthening the capacity of Bauchi State Government to combat poaching within Yankari Game Reserve and the illegal trade in ivory. Yankari Game Reserve contains what is probably Nigeria's last viable elephant population. Managed by Bauchi State Government since 2006 as a game reserve Yankari has been neglected and under-funded in recent years. As a result there has been an upsurge in elephant poaching and the ivory trade. Covering an area of 2,244km² Yankari is protected by approximately 90 rangers. But these rangers lack basic field equipment such as boots and uniforms, and their patrol work is not effective or safe as a result. This project purchased essential field equipment for all 90 rangers including uniforms, hats, boots, rucsacks, raincoats and water bottles. The uniforms and hats were purchased in the USA and shipped to Nigeria, all other equipment was purchased or manufactured in Nigeria. Use of the field equipment will be closely monitored by the Wildlife Conservation Society. Monthly reports on the impact of the project have been provided to all stakeholders. Quarterly reports on the project are posted on the WCS website www.wcsnigeria.org

Rationale

Elephant populations have been declining across West Africa for several decades, mainly as a result of illegal hunting for ivory, and few large populations now remain. Yankari Game Reserve supports one of the largest surviving populations in West Africa and the last viable elephant population in Nigeria. Previously managed by the federal government as a national park, Yankari has been managed by Bauchi State Government since 2006 as a game reserve. Tourist facilities at the reserve have been improved but management of the reserve outside of the main tourist camp has been neglected and under-funded. As a result, levels of poaching increased substantially and there has been a resurgence of the illegal ivory trade.

An aerial census of Yankari Game Reserve by MIKE in 2006 estimated the elephant population to be 348. However elephant poaching continues and at least 10-20 elephants are killed each year for their ivory, some observers claim the true figure is much higher. Although levels of poaching are relatively high, anti-poaching patrols are increasingly effective with approximately 70-100 poachers arrested each year although most of these are livestock herders illegally grazing their cattle and sheep inside the reserve. Human-elephant conflict is a growing problem in the communities surrounding Yankari particularly since many farmers now also engage in dry season farming close to the reserve boundary.

Yankari is currently protected by approximately 90 rangers (40 permanent staff and 50 casually employed). All rangers lack basic field equipment such as uniforms, boots and

raincoats. Without such equipment field patrols are not as effective as they should be and the continued lack of basic field equipment has resulted in low levels of morale amongst the rangers. To protect Nigeria's last elephant population it is vitally important that all Yankari rangers are adequately equipped to combat elephant poaching and the ivory trade in an effective and safe manner.

Project Goal: Reduce Illegal Killing of Elephants and Illegal Trade in Elephant Products

Strategy: Strengthen the capacity of Bauchi State Government, Nigeria, to combat poaching and illegal trade in ivory and other elephant products

Priority Activity: Provide rangers in Yankari Game Reserve with appropriate field equipment to carry out their mission as safely and effectively as possible.

Outputs and Benefits

Output 1: all rangers provided with essential field equipment.

Ninety rangers were provided with olive green uniforms and hats (purchased in the US), as well as boots, rucsacs and waterproof ponchos (manufactured locally in Nigeria), and simple water bottles.



Some of the Yankari rangers with new uniforms and rucsacs (boots had not yet been supplied when this picture was taken)

Benefit 1: anti-poaching patrols are more effective and levels of elephant poaching reduce; improved level of morale among rangers.

The new field equipment is the first such equipment provided in many years. It has significantly raised the morale of Yankari rangers and has improved their effectiveness in the field. Revitalized anti-poaching patrols have succeeded in arresting a number of elephant poachers. Although elephant poaching has not yet been eradicated and roughly 10 elephant carcasses are discovered each year, we are confident that levels of elephant poaching have declined.

Output 2: a ceremony to formally hand-over the field equipment organised.

Although a formal hand-over ceremony has not yet taken place, discussions to plan for such an event have commenced between Bauchi State Government and WCS.

Benefit 2: levels of awareness raised of the importance of Yankari elephants and significant publicity generated as a result.

In March 2014, Bauchi State Government signed a 4-year MOU with WCS for the management of Yankari Game Reserve. A number of articles appeared in national newspapers and the publicity generated helped to raise the level of awareness of the importance of the Yankari elephant population.

Output 3: monthly reports produced.

Monthly reports on the impact of the project are provided to all stakeholders. Quarterly reports on the project are posted on the WCS website www.wcsnigeria.org

Benefit 3: the effectiveness of the project is constantly monitored and all stakeholders engaged and committed

The effectiveness of the project is monitored on a daily basis by the WCS project manager, Nachamada Geoffrey, who is based in Yankari Game Reserve. Additional monitoring is provided by quarterly monitoring visits to Yankari by the WCS Country Director, Andrew Dunn.

Output 4: an evaluation report produced.

Given that the boots and raincoats were only supplied to Yankari in June 2014 an evaluation of the project at this time is considered to be premature. An evaluation report will be produced in June 2015.

Benefit 4: the impact of the project is known and acknowledged by all project stakeholders.

Although it is still a little early to be able to judge the full impact of the project, the morale of Yankari rangers has increased and their effectiveness in the field has improved. Revitalized anti-poaching patrols have succeeded in arresting a number of elephant poachers and we are confident that levels of elephant poaching have declined.

Next Steps

A ceremony to formally hand-over the equipment will be used to raise levels of awareness of the importance of the Yankari elephant population and to encourage greater levels of commitment to elephant conservation by Bauchi State Government. We are also planning that a representative from the Federal Ministry of the Environment will visit the site to conduct a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the project. An evaluation report will be produced in June 2015.



Yankari rangers with 2 poachers arrested for hunting inside the reserve

Additional Photos



Some of the Yankari rangers marching with their new boots



Yankari rangers preparing for patrol, new rucsacs visible