

Wear and tear

Zambia's North Luangwa National Park spreads out over 4,636 km² from the Luangwa River in the east to the Muchinga escarpment in the west, one of the oldest sections of the Great Rift Valley on the continent. The North Luangwa Conservation Programme (NLCP) works over an area more than twice that size, facilitating law enforcement and protected area management in the surrounding areas, criss-crossed with a remote but relatively extensive network of about 1,000 km of roads, none of which are sealed but graded at best.

Claire Lewis | Technical Advisor,
North Luangwa Conservation Programme

Tough vehicles are therefore needed for a functional law enforcement unit, in deploying and managing patrols, providing back up, distributing rations, reacting rapidly to reports of illegal activity, helping with sector administrative management, escorting arrested poachers to police stations, attending court sessions and recovering illegal firearms and trophies.

Vehicles are also used for other conservation and management activities undertaken by the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) across the entire ecosystem, for example responding to wildlife conflict situations in surrounding communities. Other vehicles are assigned to particular units, such as the one used for the Rhino Monitoring Team.

On average, each Land Cruiser completes approximately 30,000 km per year and can be expected to carry out field duties for 6 to 8 years. The rough driving conditions result in cumulative wear and tear above and beyond normal circumstances and replacement of older vehicles and regular maintenance and repair of others is essential.

NLCP took delivery of its newest 4x4 Land Cruiser for the rhino monitoring officers in December 2011, funded through generous donations from Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Martin Wills Fund, Simon Gibson Charitable Trust, Peter Lawrence and SRI. This vehicle will be used every day to move the ZAWA rhino officers around the Intensive Protection Zone so they can make best use of their time tracking rhinos on foot. The car is also used to reach sites to pick up radio telemetry signals, to distribute lucerne and bone meal to supplementary feed stations and to retrieve camera trap units for downloading back at base. Having this vital piece of 'kit' makes the job of

the rhino officers that much easier and more efficient, meaning we can spend more of everything on keeping the rhinos safe. Thank you to all the donors.

Tough vehicles are needed to navigate tough terrain

A new lease of life

The Laikipia Wildlife Forum's Environmental Education Bus was in a sorry state. During the 6½ years between its launch in January 2004 (its launch) and June 2010, it had travelled 169,000 km on unpaved and extremely rough roads, carrying 640 Kenyan school groups and 49 community groups, reaching a total of 24,531 people directly, and many more indirectly through open days.

Cathy Dean | Director

The wear and tear was leading to more and more breakdowns, with 5 to 7 trips each year cancelled or significantly postponed (6 months or more) due to breakdowns, and 7 to 10 trips incurring significantly increased journey times (5 hours plus) and distances, due to diversions to avoid impassable roads as a result of rain. On average, the Bus became completely stuck in mud three times a year, resulting either in children and staff sleeping overnight in the Bus or the Bus being abandoned for the night and children continuing on foot. It was reaching the end of its useful life.

The LWF asked for our help, and thanks to the generosity of our long-time funders, USFWS and Chester Zoo, we were able to come up with the bulk of the funds needed to buy a new vehicle. The LWF team had carried out a thorough assessment of the functional requirements, and had researched the options available: the new Bus would be able to cope with extremely rough roads and muddy conditions, carry its passengers in a quieter dust-and-moisture-free environment, have excellent visibility and be a teaching tool in itself, not just a means of transport.

With input from Chester Zoo, the artwork on the Bus – which had to be neutral in colour to comply with the requirements of conservancies in the Laikipia District – was designed around a new rhino logo to complement the LWF's existing five symbols. A strapline in Swahili, 'Conserve

the environment for improved livelihoods' helps brand the Bus as an LWF initiative.

In December 2011, Sammy Njorogo was promoted to Environment and Eco-Literary Programme Manager and Jackson Njaria recruited as EELP Assistant. And in January 2012, the new Bus was launched. It promises to be a full-on year.



Thanks

Our very grateful thanks to USFWS RTCE, which provided a grant of \$34,660 for the new bus, and to Chester Zoo (\$2,015 plus support in-kind). SRI gave \$2,375 from our own core funds. The LWF and the Royal Netherlands Embassy also helped cover the costs: a good collaborative effort.