



THE VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

Every conservation programme has overheads that cannot be entirely covered by donor funds, because most donors restrict the bulk of their funding to direct, field costs. However, little can be achieved if projects cannot employ good staff or support the necessary project administration and infrastructure. Thus, volunteering for conservation has become an essential component of the fundraising armoury of non-profit organisations.

Dr Nicola Pegg | Senior Scientific Researcher, Dambari Wildlife Trust

Through volunteering, visitors get a peek at conservation work behind the scenes, and contribute to the recipient organisation by providing an extra pair of hands, sharing their skills and providing financial support to core activities. Volunteering attracts a range of people, from conservation professionals seeking field time, to untrained but enthusiastic conservationists who want to make a difference.

Past volunteers have been great, and we've learned a lot from them, and they from us



This is of great value, not only because the host organisation can tap into a range of skills, but also because volunteers have the potential to spread the word about conservation to a massive audience via the plethora of social networking platforms currently available. Every conservation champion, regardless of their background, is invaluable. Dambari

Wildlife Trust's volunteer programme is aimed at matching volunteers' particular skill sets and interests with projects that are underway, to ensure that both parties benefit optimally.

We have several fortnight-long slots available over the year, timed to take advantage of the field season. Past volunteers have been great, and we've learned a lot from them. We hope that they also developed a deeper understanding of field conservation through their experience with us!

If you'd like to experience real-life conservation work in the developing world, lend a hand and share your skills there's a hard-working wildlife organisation out there that would appreciate your input and enthusiasm, and that would love to show you the ropes!

Interested in volunteering?

To learn more about Dambari's volunteer programme, email director@dambari.com or visit our website www.dambari.com

Sharpening skills for rhino monitoring

Ranger training is one of several ways that Dambari Wildlife Trust (DWT) contributes to rhino protection in Zimbabwe and facilitates professional development and practical skills amongst rangers.

Verity Bowman | Director, Dambari Wildlife Trust

Since 2003, DWT has facilitated the African Rhino Specialist Group's 'Sandwith's Training for Field Rangers' courses for those on the frontline of our national parks' Rhino Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs). The purpose of this interactive training is to build rangers' knowledge about African rhino species, emphasise why ongoing protection is essential, and provide practical training on how to record accurate and useful information from field observations. Benefits further accrue when trained rangers are transferred between IPZs and are more quickly integrated into existing teams.

The course covers historical population information, the poaching problem and its effect on Zimbabwean and regional populations, the biology, ecology and behaviour of African species, as well as individual recognition using natural markings, ear notches, horn features, age and sex. This information, when analysed, informs management of trends in demographics, habitat use and territoriality, leading to plans to optimise protection and population growth. The course's modular structure facilitates frequent in-house 'refresher' courses to keep the rangers' data collection skills sharp and dependable.

In May this year, with funding from Marwell Wildlife's Rhino Appeal, two DWT trainers put 28 Matobo rangers through the training course over two 3-day sessions. Interim tests were held each morning and on the afternoon of the final day, participants sat a rigorous 2-hour examination on all modules.

Eighteen participants attained the stringent rhino monitor accreditation level, five of whom passed with distinction. The remainder will carry out further revision before attempting the exam again. After each course, morale was high and trainees felt enabled and ready to put their knowledge into practice, to ensure that their rhino IPZ is well protected and managed for optimum growth.