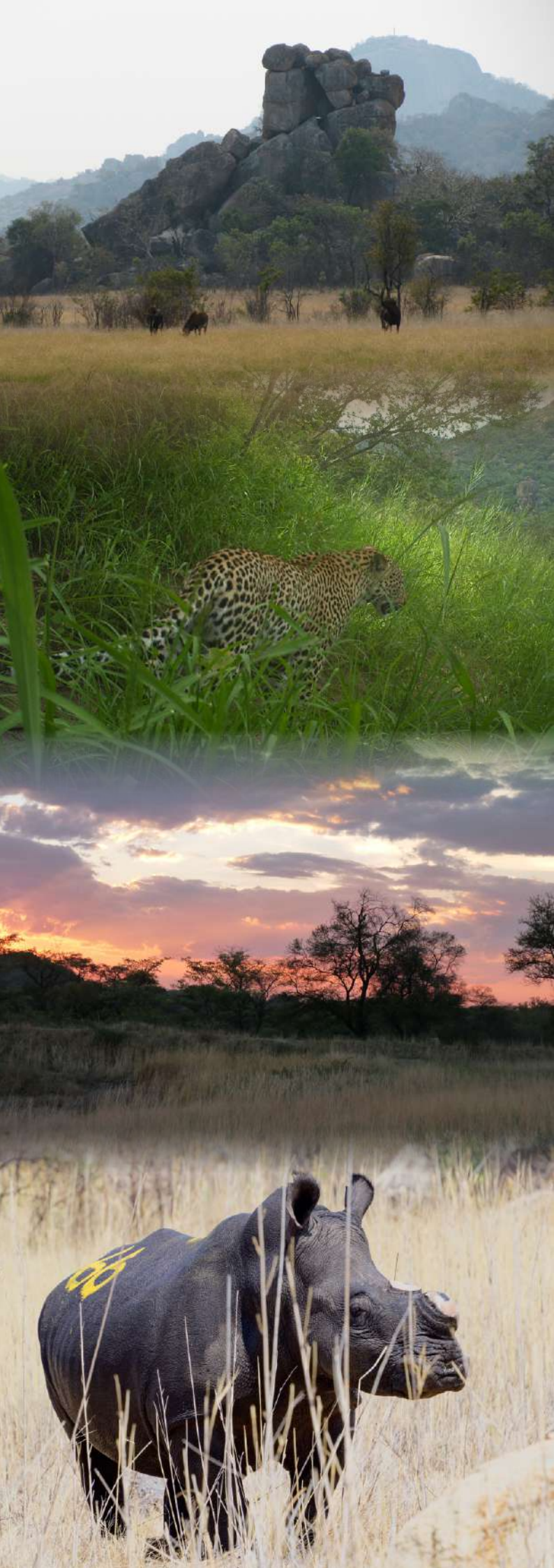




Dambari
Wildlife Trust

**Annual
Report
2024**

ABOUT DAMBARI



OUR MISSION

To promote the furtherance of biological knowledge, the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources while integrating conservation across boundaries in selected landscapes in Zimbabwe and adjacent countries.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dr Simon Tonge – Chair
Mr Gavin Stephens – Vice-Chair
Dr Moira Fitzpatrick
Dr Christopher Foggin
Mr Kenneth Jerrard
Mr Todd Moyo

STAFF MEMBERS

Ms Verity Bowman - Director
Dr Nicola Pegg - Senior Researcher
Mr Bright Sagonda - Education Officer
Mr Tafadzwa Tichagwa - Community Projects Officer

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IMPACT STATEMENT



**Dambari
Wildlife Trust**

2024 in numbers



RHINO CONSERVATION

100% juveniles ear-notched
100% black rhinos photo-verified
87% white rhinos photo-verified
500 database entries
Populations stable



LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

10 ha wetlands protected
150 ha grazing lands under
management



WILDLIFE MONITORING

Matobo

3,074 camera trap days
2,200 database entries
36 mammal species

Bumi Hills, Kariba

2,309 camera trap days
2,200+ database
entries
34 mammal species

CONSERVATION ACROSS BOUNDARIES

BIODIVERSITY MONITORING
RHINO MANAGEMENT
CAMERA TRAP SURVEYS
COMMUNITY RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

410 people involved
20+ stakeholder groups
engaged
8 community workshops
2 wards addressing
human-wildlife conflict



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

103 school pupils
1,600 wildlife records
5 indigenous ecological
knowledge lessons
101 vertebrate species
recorded

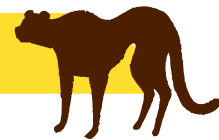


COMMUNICATIONS & AWARENESS

6 posters
3 newsletters
1 stakeholder report
1 research report

Our 2024 funding partners:





2024 proved more of a challenge to our Conservation Across Boundaries programme, which is central to our work, than we had ever anticipated. The reason was one that we could not have anticipated: bureaucracy. The government decreed that all NGO's had to re-register with their local authorities, in our case, the Matobo and Umzingwane Districts, providing completely new and onerous evidence as to who we are and what we do. It was disappointing that our track record and relationship with the community, spanning more than a decade, appeared to count for nothing. With such a small team at our disposal it was all hands to the pump and an absurd amount of staff time had to be devoted to it. In the interim, all school visits, workshops and community engagement, the very things that we exist to do were put on hold, so we worry about the loss of momentum with projects like the follow up to the Resilient Waters programme which had been such a success. By the year end we had received renewed permission to operate in the Umzingwane District, but the Matobo paperwork and permissions were still unresolved for us and most other NGOs active in that District.

Rhinos have always been a major focus of much of Dambari's work during its entire existence and I am pleased that the Trust was able to provide its usual professional support to the rhino operations work that took place in the Matobo National Park in September. As usual, the work was partially funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, so it was a shock when, shortly after the year end, we received notice from them that all work funded by the US going forward was to cease with immediate effect. At time of writing, we have no idea whether this ban will continue and what might be the long-term effect on rhino operations within Zimbabwe. I was pleased that, despite everything, we were contracted to undertake camera trapping work at Kariba on behalf of the African Bush Camps Foundation and that work continued through the year.

The only change on the Board during the year was that following management changes at our main sponsor, the Wild Planet Trust, Dr Kirsten Pullen transferred to the Board of the UK trust. I would like to extend, even more than usual, my thanks to all of our staff, and my fellow trustees, for their efforts on the Trust's behalf during this particularly trying year, and to all our funders, particularly the Wild Planet Trust, and the Chessington Conservation Fund in the UK, Save the African Rhino Foundation, Australia (SARF) and the Rhino Recovery Fund (RRF) for their steadfast support.



Simon Tonge



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



2024 has gone by in a flash and a blur and has been a rather frustrating year across the board.

In February all the NGOs working in the Matobo Hills were tasked with re-submitting multiple copies of their organisational and activity credentials in order to be considered for an extension to their Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Matobo and Umzingwane Rural District Councils.

The process has been long with our MOU for Umzingwane being ratified in June 2024 and we're still waiting on news from the uncommunicative Matobo RDC more than a year later. The communities are frustrated at the lack of activity and response from the RDC as are we.

On a happier note we conducted rhino monitoring work all year with the SARF camera trap sponsored project entering its 13th consecutive year and successfully carried out rhino management work to dehorn adults and ear-notch the youngsters before they separate from their mothers. The biodiversity survey in the African Bush camps concession has been completed and the final report is in preparation.

As with many other conservation organisations Dambari has been hit by the recent changes in American philanthropy and we look to the future with concern. We are considering strategies to counter the funding deficit, but until there is more clarity on the global funding situation, we will concentrate on critical activities only, to maintain conservation momentum.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Verity Bowman
Director

TOWARDS RESILIENCE IN THE MATOBO HILLS CONSERVATION ACROSS BOUNDARIES



Dambari Wildlife Trust Ecosystem-based Adaptation Project in the Matobo World Heritage Site

The Matobo Hills, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to unique biodiversity and rich cultural heritage. However, its ecosystem faces significant threats driven by human poverty, unsustainable resource use, climate change, and population pressures. These challenges have exacerbated human-wildlife conflict, threatening both livelihoods and conservation efforts. Dambari Wildlife Trust (DWT) is working at the interface of human, wildlife, and environmental interests, promoting sustainable natural resource use, biodiversity conservation, and peaceful coexistence between communities and wildlife. By addressing ecological challenges such as land degradation and human-wildlife conflict, DWT aims to enhance both environmental and community resilience.

Between November 2024 and March 2025, the project focused on deepening community engagement and conducting baseline surveys to assess human-wildlife conflict, specifically issues like livestock predation and crop losses due to wildlife in Umzingwane district. The findings from these efforts will inform future conservation strategies and conflict mitigation approaches.



*Figure : Morning Glory wetland; one of the protected areas in ward 9
Umzingwane district under DWT's Ecosystem-based Adaptation*

The primary objectives during this period were to:

- Conduct stakeholder engagement: Conducting inception meetings with key stakeholders at the district level.
- Involve Traditional Leadership: Engaging traditional leaders in the first two wards (8 & 9) to ensure community buy-in.
- Conduct baseline data collection: Conducting focus group discussions to assess the extent and nature of human-wildlife conflict at the ward level.

3.1 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on July 22, 2024, an inception meeting was held on October 8 at the RDC boardroom in Esigodini. This session introduced DWT's work to stakeholders, facilitated discussions on project goals, and secured approval to engage with local traditional leaders. Subsequently, community meetings were conducted in wards 8 and 9 on October 23 and 24. These meetings brought together village heads, headmen, councillors, and environment committee members to discuss conservation efforts and introduce a new human-wildlife coexistence initiative. In these sessions, we emphasized the role of land rehabilitation—through wetland conservation, invasive species control, and grazing land management—in strengthening climate resilience. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with communities expressing a strong willingness to collaborate.



Figure 2 : Headman Mr M.D. Nkala addressing a meeting at Shale during traditional leadership engagements.

3.2 Baseline Surveys on Human-Wildlife Conflict

In November 2024, workshops were held in wards 8 and 9 to gather comprehensive data on human-wildlife conflict. In total, 194 community members participated in focus group discussions, providing insights into the scale and nature of conflicts, including:

- Spatial and temporal patterns of conflict.
- Magnitude of losses, including livestock predation and crop destruction.
- Wildlife species involved, with a focus on the most problematic ones.
- Current mitigation strategies and their effectiveness.

Communities identified five priority species requiring urgent management:

Ward 8: carnivores (Jackals, spotted hyenas, leopards), monkeys and baboons, birds (pied crow and quail) and weeds (*R. scabra*).

Ward 9: carnivores (Leopards, mongooses, jackals), monkeys and baboons, snakes, rats, and weeds (*R. scabra*)

Livelihood impacts were also discussed, with community members noting that primates such as baboons and monkeys can significantly damage crop yields, while leopards can kill multiple goats in a single attack. Current mitigation strategies such as scaring away animals, weeding, and trapping were reported to be ineffective due to their labour-intensive nature.



Figure 3 : Community engagement during baseline data collection in ward 8 (left) and ward 9 (right).

3.3 Community Feedback and Emerging Concerns

To ensure transparency and knowledge-sharing, feedback meetings were conducted. During these sessions, community members raised concerns about increasing crop destruction and livestock losses, particularly as harvest season approached.

Key issues that emerged included:

- **Escalation of Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Farmers reported an increase in crop raids and livestock attacks.
- **Need for Effective Mitigation Measures:** While communities expressed willingness to adopt non-lethal deterrents, they highlighted a need for training and resources.
- **Importance of Timely Responses:** Delayed responses to conflict incidents often result in frustration and potential retaliatory actions against wildlife.
- **Challenges in Wetland Protection:** The theft of fencing around the Morning Glory wetland was reported, undermining conservation efforts. The case has since been escalated to traditional leadership for resolution.



Figure 4 : Feedback meetings conducted in ward 8 (left) and ward 9 (right).

4. Conclusion and Way Forward

The baseline data collected provides a crucial foundation for tailoring human-wildlife conflict mitigation strategies. The strong engagement and willingness of local communities to collaborate signal a positive trajectory for conservation efforts in Matobo Hills.

Moving forward, the project will:

- Strengthen community capacity through knowledge for non-lethal deterrents and alternative conflict management approaches.
- Implement practical conservation interventions, including mobile livestock kraaling to reduce predator attacks and improve soil fertility.

While the challenges are significant, the collective effort of DWT and the local communities is a promising step toward achieving sustainable coexistence. Continued support, and training will be critical in ensuring lasting success.

MATOBO BIODIVERSITY MONITORING PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS



MATOBO BIODIVERSITY MONITORING PROJECT

The Matobo Biodiversity Monitoring Project is an environmental education and awareness programme that marked its thirteenth consecutive year in 2024. This project would not have been possible without the incredible long term financial support provided by our principal donor, Chessington Conservation Fund. The project aims at educating young people and communities at large to sustainably utilize their natural resources and take care of the environment. Environmental education and awareness activities were conducted for terms 1 and 2, as the Memorandum of Understanding between Matobo Rural District Council and Dambari Wildlife Trust expired thereafter.

Achievements

- 103 pupils were recruited at the beginning of the year and thus bring the total number of pupils who have participated in the programme to 2 577.
- Pupils were educated on environmental lessons covering botany, ichthyology, ornithology, herpetology, human-wildlife conflict management, indigenous knowledge systems, rangeland management, and career guidance in environmental science.
- Locally collected seeds of indigenous fruit trees were propagated, and the resultant saplings (fifty - ten per school) were distributed to schools. Club members planted these saplings within school yards to help lessen pressure on wild fruit harvesting in nearby forests.
- Four informative and two awareness custom-made posters were produced and utilized to enhance environmental knowledge and awareness.
- Seventy-seven pupils were awarded with certificates of participation for attending 50% or more of the conservation club meetings. Among them, twenty-six were awarded special prizes for their exceptional commitment, while two received prizes for creating the best termly artwork and wildlife poems.
- Fifty-eight percent of the recruited club members across the five participating schools contributed animal sightings for the year 2024. A total of 1,652 animal sightings were recorded by club members, bringing the cumulative total sightings to 17,731 since 2012.
- Animal sightings were classified into six taxonomic groups: amphibians, birds, invertebrates, mammals, fish, and reptiles. In 2024, three new invertebrate species (katydid, pharaoh ants, and rhino beetle) and three new bird species (tawny-flanked prinia, igiyafefe, and ogcwili) were recorded. These sightings contribute to the development of a comprehensive checklist of fauna in the Matobo Hills, while repeated observations help track species prevalence over time.

Challenges

- Failed to carry out term three activities due to permission requirements.
- More teaching materials needed (e.g., binoculars) to effectively educate pupils without them sharing.

Results obtained from the evaluation of the project indicate positive changes in knowledge and attitude towards conservation issues among the trained pupils. We expect these pupils to share their acquired knowledge with peers and the wider community, fostering greater environmental knowledge and awareness. As this information spreads, we anticipate increased understanding of natural resources and a more responsible approach to their use within the community. Ultimately, our goal is for community members to adopt sustainable practices that support the long-term health of the Matobo Hills ecosystem.

In conclusion, the program is playing a vital role in educating pupils on environmental issues while equipping them with sustainable strategies to protect natural resources. We sincerely appreciate the dedication of conservation club members, club patrons, and partnering organizations that have supported this initiative since its inception in 2012. Your commitment has been instrumental in its success.



Figure 5 : Museum's ornithology technical staff showing Tohwe Secondary School club members how to identify raptors found in the Matobo Hills.



Figure 7 :A Matopo High School club member planting an indigenous fruit tree in her school yard.

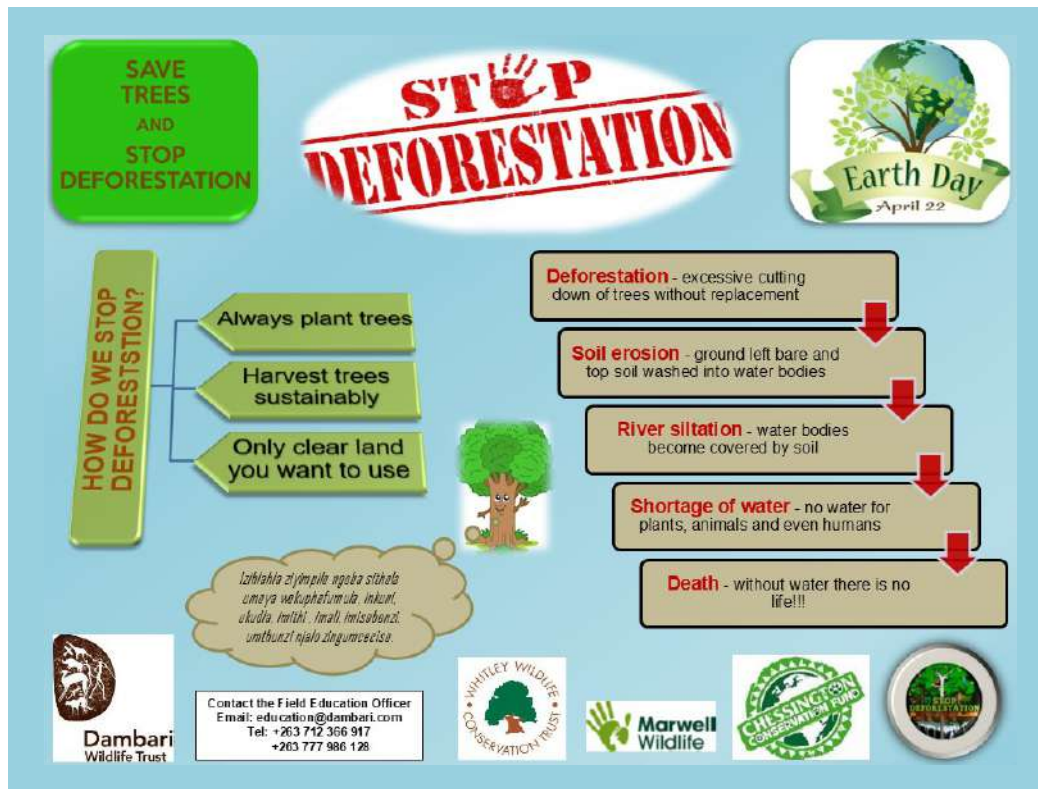


Figure 6 : Museum's ornithology technical staff showing Tohwe Secondary School club members how to identify raptors found in the Matobo Hills.



Figure 8 : Museum's ornithology technical staff lecturing Bazha Secondary School club members on the importance of birds in the environment.

Examples of Dambari's custom made awareness and information posters that are available on our social media pages.





RHINO CONSERVATION



Rhino Conservation

Sixty-three years ago (1962) white rhino were reintroduced to Matobo National Park from Kwa-Zulu Natal as part of a national restocking programme in Zimbabwe. Rhinos had been apparently extirpated from the Matobo area in the late 1800s. The initial introductions over five years provided the foundation for the white rhino population in the Park today. In 1986, black rhino reintroductions commenced under “Operation Stronghold”, where black rhino under intense poaching pressure in the Zambezi Valley were moved to more secure intensive protection zones in other parts of Zimbabwe.

From these humble beginnings, both black and white rhino populations have endured in the Park, surviving a period of intense poaching pressure between 2007 and 2012. Since their introduction, Matobo National Park has supported more than 280 individuals of both species, and more than 60 white rhinos have been relocated to other conservation areas since 1979. For almost a decade, Matobo was the only Zimbabwean National Park to house viable populations of both black and white rhino, making the Park an important icon for rhino conservation on State land.

Dambari Wildlife Trust has worked in partnership with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) to conserve, study and monitor the relatively small but important rhino populations in Matobo National Park since 2000. Ongoing efforts have generated valuable insights into population performance, habitat use and maternal lineages.

In 2024, population monitoring continued via camera traps. Use of this technology augments information gathered by Field Rangers, providing 24-hour information. In 2021, 91% of rhino were photo-verified during the year and three births were recorded following the bumper birth year of 2023. Unfortunately, one death (poaching related) was recorded in the year.

Dambari's research project conducted in 2023 – looking at habitat use and distribution of black rhino – was finalised in 2024 and recommendations from the findings were provided to Park Management.

Each year, rhino management operations are conducted to ear-notch and microchip young rhino and to dehorn individuals as a deterrent to poachers. Operations in 2024 were a great success, resulting in all rhinos over 18 months being identifiable, and no individuals carrying substantial horn material. Thanks go to the rhino operations team of pilots, veterinarians, and technical experts from Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, AWMC, Executive Air and Zim Parks.

Activities that continue to support and promote rhino conservation and ecological knowledge in Matobo and further afield in Zimbabwe will be the focus in 2025. We are grateful to our funding partners in 2024, without whom our field contributions would be impossible – Save the African Rhino Foundation, Australia; US Fish and Wildlife Services, Rhino Recovery Fund and Wild Planet Trust.

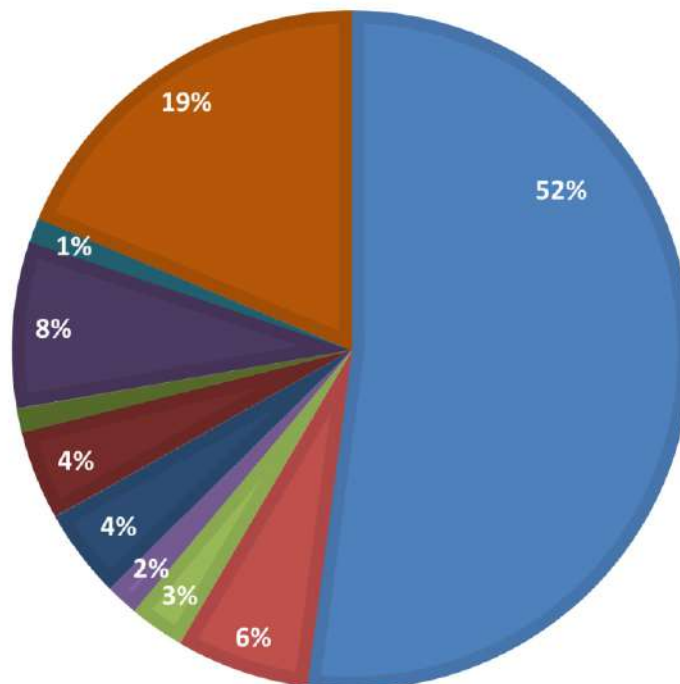




FINANCIAL REPORT

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE IN 2024 \$

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ CAB Conservation Across Boundaries | ■ RHINO Rhino Conservation Projects |
| ■ MBMP Matopos Biodiversity Monitoring Project | ■ MRCMP Matopos Rhino Camera Monitoring Project |
| ■ RW Resilient Waters | ■ MCS Matobo Conservation Society |
| ■ ABCMS African Bush Camp Mammal Survey | ■ SARF Save African Foundation |
| ■ BRP Black Rhino Project | ■ JRS JRS Herpetology |
| ■ CFLI Caledonia Mining Black Rhino | ■ WPT Wild Planet Trust |



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

Our generous 2024 Donors



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SPECIES DECLINE
wildplanettrust.org.uk



Rhino
Recovery
Fund

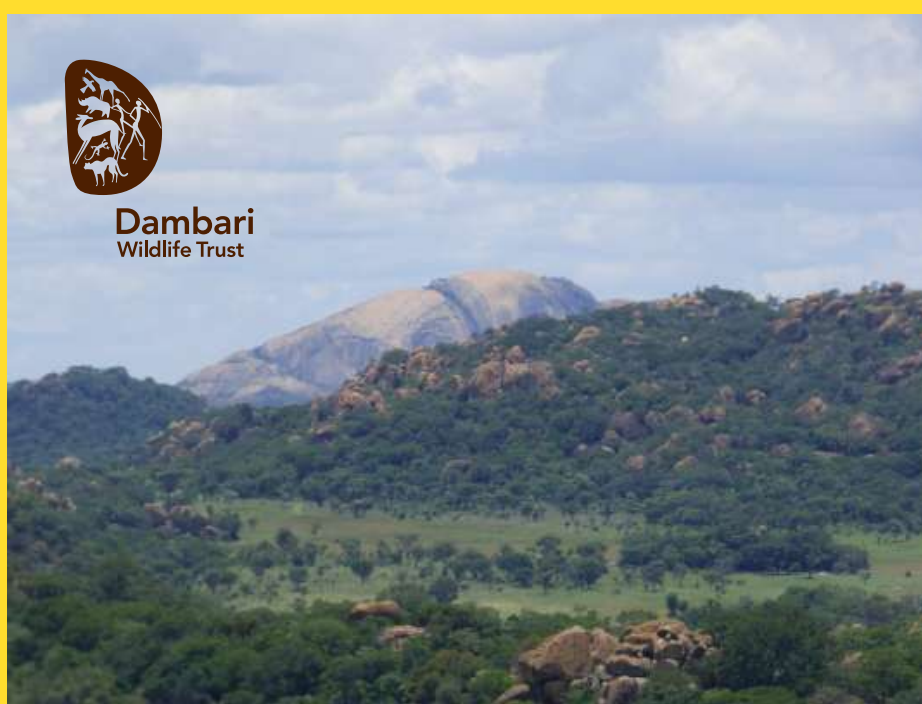
Canada
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales

SAVE
AFRICAN RHINO
FOUNDATION

MATOBO  SOCIETY
'Gcina Imvelo'



Dambari
Wildlife Trust



Conservation Across Boundaries

Promoting biodiversity and stewardship since 1997