



 **GCC**
GLOBAL CONSERVATION CORPS

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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LETTER TO THE READER

2023 has been a transformative year for GCC, marked by growth and new initiatives following the loss of our dear friend and board member, Anton Mzimba. We expanded his vision of equitable conservation education for youth bordering Kruger National Park, with a focus on connecting young people to the natural world.

For the first time, we extended the Future Rangers Program into four high schools near Kruger, building on our past work with local primary schools. With limited efforts in high schools to prepare students for careers in the wildlife economy, this was uncharted territory for GCC. Thanks to support from principals and natural science teachers, we launched a weekly after-school program for grades 8-11. Participation required an interview, excellent grades, and letters of recommendation, ensuring that only passionate and dedicated students were selected. In 2024, we plan to engage top-performing grade 12 students, supporting them as they transition into the workforce. High school students are a critical link between local youth and the future of African conservation leadership. I'm incredibly proud of the Future Rangers team for stepping into this new space and creating opportunities for students to turn their passion for nature into careers.

Throughout 2023, GCC invested heavily in developing our education delivery platform. This digital tool aims to share curriculum with partners, help NGOs track their impact, and enable students to record their learning journeys. We partnered with CVC Solutions, a software company specializing in web and mobile development, to bring this vision to life. In September, our teams met in Atlanta to discuss the platform's design, and by mid-2024, we plan to launch our Beta Testing Platform.

On a personal note, it was humbling to see RHINO MAN finally come to life. After nearly a decade of work, the film premiered in London in June 2023, attended by the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Edinburgh, and long-time conservation partners. The opening speeches by John Jurko and Orlat Ndlovu moved the audience deeply. Seeing this lifelong dream of telling the ranger story come to fruition was surreal—a true testament to the hard work of the dedicated filmmakers who saw the project through.

All of this progress is made possible by the unwavering support of our team, donors, partners, and communities. Together, we are creating lasting change in conservation education, and for that, I am deeply grateful.


Matt Lindenberg
GCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



STRATEGIC APPROACH



The Global Conservation Corps (GCC) is dedicated to reversing biodiversity loss and mitigating climate change by elevating local communities through education and engagement in conservation efforts. Recognizing the critical role of local knowledge and practices, GCC's strategic approach focuses on inclusivity and community leadership in conservation. By delivering environmental education programs and leveraging technology, GCC aims to equip youth living near high-priority wildlife areas with the knowledge, passion, and skills necessary to become future conservation leaders.

Central to GCC's mission is the Future Rangers Program and Digital Learning Platform, which combines classroom and hands-on experiences to foster a deep connection between students and nature. This program identifies passionate learners through a unique digital interface that tracks student progress and engagement. These students are then engaged in interactive environmental education and hands-on wildlife experiences, such as game drives, field trips, career talks, and other opportunities,

building their enthusiasm, interest, and knowledge about nature. By providing a digital record of their environmental education, GCC ensures that these young conservationists are well-prepared to seek careers in the wildlife economy.

GCC's efforts are currently concentrated in South Africa, where socio-economic challenges intensify environmental issues. However, the organization plans to bring its approaches and Digital Platform globally, applying the lessons learned to other regions where social and environmental challenges intersect. By centering traditional knowledge, fostering community partnerships, and utilizing innovative technological solutions, GCC aims to create sustainable conservation practices that benefit both people and wildlife. The ultimate goal is to enable communities to take ownership of conservation efforts, ensuring long-term environmental and socio-economic benefits.

2023 IN NUMBERS

1825	Primary School Students Reached
51	High School Students Reached
71	Students on a game drive
51	Students to Koru Camp
49	Students to Blyde River Canyon
49	Students to Moholoholo Rehabilitation Center

2023 MILESTONES

JAN

Future Rangers expands to high school

JUL

Anton Mzimba Posthumously Awarded the International Ranger Award

FEB

Successful campus clean-up at the Dayamani High School

AUG

Inaugural All-Girls Leadership Excursion at Koru Camp / GCC attends Business of Conversation event

MAR

GCC co- hosts a United for Wildlife event with GKEPF at the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve

SEP

GCC Welcomes New Board Members – Chandni Hirani and Stephanie Welsh

APR

GCC welcomes new partner - Koru Camp

OCT

Mbhoni Presents at the “Countering the Illegal Wildlife Trade in Southern Africa” Training Workshop

MAY

GCC turns 8

NOV

Austin Dingledine joins GCC as Wildlife Guardians Experience Director

JUN

RHINO MAN Private Screening in London with Prince William

DEC

Ashleigh Baker and Wendy Collinson joins GCC team

OUR PROGRAMS



Future Rangers Program



Primary School - 2023 marked the sixth year of our engagement with four strategic primary schools bordering Kruger National Park: Mahlekisana, Salani, Muchuchi, and Manyeleti Primary Schools. Our dedicated educators, Lefa Malapane and Promise Mkhathshwa, delivered weekly lessons to over 2,000 students every week. The implementation plan remained consistent, ensuring all learners from grades R-7 (ages 5-12) received lessons on the environment, nature, wildlife, biodiversity, and climate change.

High School - After six years in primary schools, GCC expanded its focus to high schools - an area often overlooked in environmental education. Many programs end as students move to high school, but GCC recognizes the importance of continuing engagement throughout their educational journey. Through discussions with Sokisi and Dayimani high school management, we launched an after-school program for two groups: the Explorers (Grades 8-9) and the Ambassadors (Grades 10-11). Mbhoni, Promise, and Lefa led curriculum development, ensuring lessons engaged students at higher academic levels while teaching transferable skills for the workplace.

To choose participants, we implemented a rigorous process to ensure only dedicated students committed to a conservation pathway joined. Unlike the broad exposure approach in primary schools, this program focused on investing in emerging conservation leaders. Students had to complete a written application, participate in an interview, submit letters of recommendation, and demonstrate top academic grades.

In addition to weekly lessons, GCC partnered with local NGOs and conservation leaders to arrange partner visits to the schools. Throughout the year, conservation partners—including the Black Mambas, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Hoedspruit Reptile Center, SECAP, and Southern African Wildlife College—visited the students to share insights into their careers and the skills required for success in conservation.



Field Trips

To amplify the program, we organized impactful field trips for the students. Learners visited the Moholoholo Rehabilitation Center to learn about endangered species and the impacts of wildlife crime. Mbhoni led hikes through the Blyde River Canyon in the Drakensberg Mountains, where students learned about teamwork and discipline. Students also visited the Southern African Wildlife College for game drives in ‘Big Five’ country and explored the K9 unit and ranger base. As a highlight, students enjoyed a 2-night/3-day excursion to Koru Camp in the Balule Game Reserve. Koru offers youth their first chance to experience the bush, with daily game drives, team-building lessons, and opportunities to share personal struggles in a supportive environment. At Koru, students had open conversations about mental health, abuse, and the challenges of growing up in today’s world.

Events

The year concluded with the Annual Careers in Conservation (CiC) Expo and Fun Day at Sokisi High School, where 400 learners from eight partner schools attended. Conceptualized by Mbhoni Mzamani, CiC aims to connect youth with conservation opportunities. The day featured a keynote address by Indalo Inclusives’ CEO Rest Kanju, a speed-dating exercise with partner booths, speeches from business leaders, and a vibrant lunch. The event ended with a color-splash run, celebrating the unity of the students and their bright futures.

Education Delivery Platform

Since launching the Future Rangers Program, tracking the impact of our efforts has been a challenge. While we’ve reached over 10,000 youth, it has been difficult to measure the tangible outcomes and identify standout students. Through workshops and stakeholder engagements, we discovered that many NGOs in South Africa face similar challenges. To address this, we began developing technology in 2019 to track students’ conservation learning journeys, provide high-quality impact reports to partners, and enable curriculum sharing across NGOs.

In 2023, we tested our minimum viable product in 20 schools, tracking over 4,000 students. This included recording student activities, lessons, and field trips. Throughout the year, we realized the need for a high-end development agency to enhance the platform. We therefore partnered with Berlin-based CVC Solutions to advance the software’s development. Their expertise has been invaluable, and with their support, we’re on track to commercially launch our digital platform in October 2024. This platform will serve NGOs in the greater Kruger region, enabling us to track and measure the impact of conservation education on a larger scale.

RHINO MAN the Movie

Love and sacrifice—these were the two words RHINO MAN Director John Jurko emphasized throughout 2023 as we neared the finish line of the film. In the wake of Anton Mzimba’s tragic passing, the team rallied to complete the film to the highest standard. After eight years in the making, RHINO MAN had several private screenings.

The most significant screening took place early in 2023 at the TPNR HQ, where Anton’s family, including his wives and father, attended a private event. This screening marked the first public viewing of the film, and we needed the blessing of the Mzimba family before sharing Anton’s story with the world. After the film ended, Anton’s father stood and expressed his immense pride, saying the world needed to know Anton’s name. Those powerful words affirmed our mission to honor Anton’s legacy through the film.

In March 2023, we held another private screening with United for Wildlife and the Greater Kruger Environmental Protection Foundation at TPNR HQ. Later, in London, RHINO MAN was shown at the prestigious Battersea Power Station to an international audience, with conservation leaders like Orlat Ndlovu and Leitha Mkhabela in attendance, alongside HRH Prince William and Princess Sophie.

To cap off 2023, RHINO MAN was nominated as a finalist at the Jackson Wild Film Festival in Wyoming. The film will officially launch on July 26, 2024, marking the two-year anniversary of Anton Mzimba’s passing, a poignant moment to honor his memory and sacrifice.



OUR PARTNERS

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The success of the Future Rangers Program is entirely built on the strength of programmatic partnerships. Throughout the year, our students were able to conduct field trips at the Southern African Wildlife College, Timbavati Foundation, Koru Camp, Moholoholo, and the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre, with free or highly subsidized associated costs. Additionally, the ongoing support from the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund has been pivotal, funding the entire salary of GCC's Lefa Malapane, and bringing frequent overseas visitors to visit our programs.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The majority of our overhead expenses are covered from select families and foundations who make substantial contributions to GCC. These transformative partners cover GCC's staff salaries, ensuring that general fundraising, grants, and other related income goes directly into our programming. A special thank you to the Morgridge, Smith, Fein, Eastwood, Dietschi, Kratter families and foundations, who formed the backbone of GCC's work in 2023.



FINANCIALS



Thanks to the generosity and belief of our cornerstone funders, the Morgridge Family Foundation, we were able to hire two full-time US-based team members during 2023, to help solidify our operational capacity and fundraising efforts. With guidance from our accountants, we invested all cash on hand into high interest bearing accounts, which bolstered our revenue substantially throughout the year. Furthermore, GCC explored various revenue-generating income streams, to diversify our income and shift from 100 percent donor reliant to a more resilient business model.

CASH ON HAND AT BEGINNING OF 2023: \$99,072

Future Rangers: \$55,654.92

AMEF: \$1,499.74

General/Unrestricted: \$223,595

Total Income/Donations: \$280,749.66

Expenses by Category:

General Operating Expenses: \$144,718.86

Future Rangers Program: \$220,294.45

Digital Education Platform: \$69,154.58

Total Expenses: \$434,167.89

CASH ON HAND AT END 2023: \$55,146.38

THE TEAM

BOARD MEMBERS

ELLIE MILANO MICHELE
SOFISTI KATE VANNELLI
JUSTIN WALKER
MICHELLE MORGRIDGE
CHANDRI HIRANI
STEPHANIE WELSH

MATT LINDENBERG
REBEKAH WORTMAN
JOHN JURKO MBHONI
MZAMANI BEA ASUNCION
LEFA MALAPANE PROMISE
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ADVISORS TO THE BOARD

ERNEST HLATI DAVID
RAPER ROBERT LUDKE

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