**PARK PROTECTION**

We are a strong force of dedicated men and women that have taken up arms to wage a war against poaching. As custodians, our efforts speak out on behalf of the voiceless wildlife under our watch: that all animals should be provided the fair opportunity to live freely in their natural habitat.

Our rangers undergo intensive military training in the toughest of conditions to prepare them physically and mentally to defend Zimbabwe’s wildlife heritage. Ours is an undeclared war, requiring our forces to be up to the task at all times. Since independence, our country applies a shoot to kill policy to protect vulnerable species from poaching. This policy has directly contributed to the phenomenal recovery of elephant populations among other species.

We also wage a war against climate change. The adverse shifts in temperatures and weather patterns are evident, and the direct impact on animals is there for all to see. Diminishing water sources, loss of habitat and veld fires are some of the elements we fight against, a massive feat which requires immediate and collective action. In addition to setting fireguards and identifying water solutions, our rangers are instrumental in the collection of scientific data for the management of invasive species, mapping of habitats and home ranges; fire management and siting of specially protected and endangered species using the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART).

However, our efforts are not in isolation. Zimbabwe collaborates with her neighbours, especially for shared species such as the African Elephant to undertake joint antipoaching efforts. These are guided at international cooperation bodies such as the Southern African Development Community with initiatives such as the Law Enforcement and Antipoaching (LEAP) Strategy.

Pictures: Rangers in Training, Rangers Standing with Elephant in Background, Rangers being deployed by Landcruiser, A firewood poacher exhibit, Snares, Rangers capturing Data for Smart System. Picture of Invasive Lantana Camara

**Law enforcement**

Zimparks is mandated to enforce laws against all illegal activities pertaining to wildlife across all protected areas in Zimbabwe. Illegal harvesting of natural resources not only threatens animals but affects human beings as well, especially the surrounding communities.

Each year, Zimparks conducts over 113,159 ranger patrol days, over 501 arrests, removal of over 48,151 snares, and more than 54,493 confiscations of illegally harvested natural resources and firearms.

The 5 million hectares under our management is covered on foot, horseback, boat and air; complemented by networks of supporting communities who provide information on poachers and other illegal activities.

Your support enables us to continue protecting the parks and provide security for both wildlife and vulnerable communities.

**Fire Management**

Fire outbreaks can be extremely destructive, leaving a trail of death and devastation in their wake. Each year, Zimbabwe loses approximately a million hectares of forest and grassland to veld fires. To combat veld fires in our parks, we conduct awareness campaigns with communities, highlighting mitigation and response measures. We also construct and maintain gravel roads and fireguards to limit the spread of unplanned veld fire outbreaks. Planned burning also takes place in specific areas to reduce the fuel load and maintain the balance of the ecosystem.

**Water management**

Zimbabwe’s iconic national parks are found in semi-arid areas with extremely hot temperatures in the dry season. Nothing is more important to wildlife than abundant and clean water. In all our parks, our rangers have three primary goals; to identify areas in need of artificial water supply, installing and maintaining water equipment and keeping it safe from vandalism or destruction.

Rangeland management

Guided by the weight of scientific evidence, our rangers provide the manpower to manage invasive species through the application of various control techniques and the reclamation of degraded areas within our parks. They are also active in data collection and recording of various phenomena within these rangelands.