

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Working with our local community in North Luangwa

Every day at the North Luangwa Conservation Programme, we help communities conserve their natural resources for their own benefits. One way that we do this is by teaching others about the incredible wildlife that they live beside.

Henry Sikapite | Conservation Education Coordinator, North Luangwa Conservation Programme

In 2003, our education programme, Lolesha Luangwa, began, thanks to a partnership between Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Zambia. Translated, Lolesha Luangwa means “look after the Luangwa ecosystem” in our local Bemba language. Each year, we engage almost 2,000 Grade Six learners within schools in the communities surrounding North Luangwa’s National Park.

One of the key themes within the Lolesha Luangwa programme is to teach students about black rhinos. The species was once found throughout Luangwa, but was poached to local extinction in the early 1990s. Later, once the area was secured, they were slowly reintroduced. To ensure that the rhinos would be not only protected, but also valued, by the local community, sharing the importance of black rhinos and other wildlife species is crucial for our education programme.

Through a series of lessons, we endeavour to build conservation knowledge among the learners, inspiring them to spread this awareness with their families and friends. Together, we hope that using this knowledge, individuals will ultimately take steps to conserve wildlife resources.

This helps to create a sense of responsibility to and ownership of Luangwa’s natural resources among our communities, which can reduce poaching and wildlife-crime incidents.

Some of our learners say, “We should not cut down trees and kill animals, poachers must be reported and arrested”. To complement what our learners hear in class, we also bring students into the Park to explore more about the wildlife they are learning about. This is the most exciting moment of my job; spending three days with students and teachers in the Park, sharing the experience of being in the wilderness and seeing wildlife up close!

The impact of Covid-19 on Lolesha Luangwa

Covid-19 has hugely affected our work at Lolesha Luangwa (and more widely across the North Luangwa Conservation Programme). Several of our outreach activities have been affected: no visits or outreach presentations have been given, schools have had to close, and our research teams were not able to complete their work. We don’t know when we will be able to teach our students about the incredible wildlife that lives near them, or provide the opportunity for them to see elephants, zebras and buffaloes with their own eyes.

Nevertheless, to continue strengthening our relations with schools and communities, we have distributed water buckets, bucket stands, washing basins and boxes of soap to supplement the Government’s effort in combating Covid-19. Where we can, we’ll continue to work with everyone in the local communities to benefit them and the wildlife that lives close by.



ALL IMAGES FROM MEADOWS





North Luangwa Conservation Project, which runs the Lolesha Luangwa education programme, works closely with everyone in the local community; sharing knowledge at schools, boosting community participation in conservation with elders, and improving access to better livelihoods.

