



May the Roar of the African Lion be heard by the Children of our Children's Children and Forever

30th July 2009

Media Release: International Rangers Day marks announcement of important Ranger Training Initiative for southern Africa.

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GRAA ANNOUNCES IMPORTANT NEW RANGER TRAINING INITIATIVE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA.

In celebration of the International Rangers Day on the 31st of July 2009, the Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA), in partnership with the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) is proud to announce an important new ranger training initiative which aims to provide 500 trained Field Rangers to National Parks and Nature Reserves and private game farms in South Africa over the next 5 years. Funding for this training has been provided by the Liberty Wildlife Foundation based in the Netherlands, who have committed their support for the duration of this initiative.

Since the 1980's the GRAA has played a leading role in the establishment of a proper training curriculum for Field Rangers and Protected Area Managers in what is now known as Area Integrity Operations, but probably better known by the more familiar term of Anti-poaching Operations. This curriculum was designed and implemented with the support of most formal conservation organisations in the region and was instrumental in conservation authorities being able to effectively curb the threat to the region's rhino and elephant populations in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The standards and principles established in this curriculum were later incorporated into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and are continually updated and improved. It also forms the basis of all Field Ranger training presented at the SAWC, the GRAA's training provider of choice.

The GRAA welcomes the recent moratorium on the trade in rhino products as well the regulations on the marking of rhino horn and the hunting of white rhinoceros as announced by the South African Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Ms. Buyelwa Sonjica on the 20th of July 2009. Although these measures will assist in addressing the growing threat of rhino poaching in South Africa, the GRAA is of the opinion that it is also important to ensure that effective preventative measures are implemented.

Well-trained and properly equipped Field Rangers who act as an effective force ensuring the law enforcement integrity of protected areas is still the most effective means of curbing the threat of poaching in our national parks, reserves and on private land. We therefore welcome the recent announcement from SANParks Executive Director, Dr. David Mabunda, that the field ranger corps in the Kruger National Park will be expanded to counter the threat to rhino in this and other National



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Parks.

The GRAA would like to urge other conservation organisations and private land-owners who have rhino on their properties to consider similar measures in ensuring that rhino are afforded proper protection from the threat of poaching. Considering the value and cost of re-location and establishment of these animals in appropriate areas, it is imperative that buyers of such animals not only budget for these expenses, but that sufficient provision should be made for the effective protection of these animals once they are released. This can only realistically be achieved with the recruitment, training and equipping of field rangers to ensure the safety of such animals.

Organisations and private land-owners that have a need to train field rangers for this purpose are welcome to contact Jeremiah Machavi from the SAWC at jmachavi@sawc.org.za for details on enrollment and registration of candidates for this training.

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