



AFRICAN WILDLIFE
FOUNDATION



25 YEARS of Conservation Impact in Zimbabwe



A Legacy of Commitment, Innovation, and
Action for a Nation's Wildlife and People

For a quarter of a century, AWF has played a pivotal role in Zimbabwe's conservation journey, bringing innovative ideas and fostering collaborations with government, the private sector, and local communities to conserve wildlife and habitats. These partnerships have set powerful precedents for how government and local communities manage living with wildlife, how neighboring countries share strategies for caring for wildlife, and how leaders in government and business value nature as a part of economic growth for the country.

Leading for Wildlife

In addition to our transboundary work, at the national level **AWF has provided crucial contributions to national conservation strategies for both elephants and rhinos.** These strategies, known as Management Action Plans, guide country-level policies and investments for species conservation and recovery.

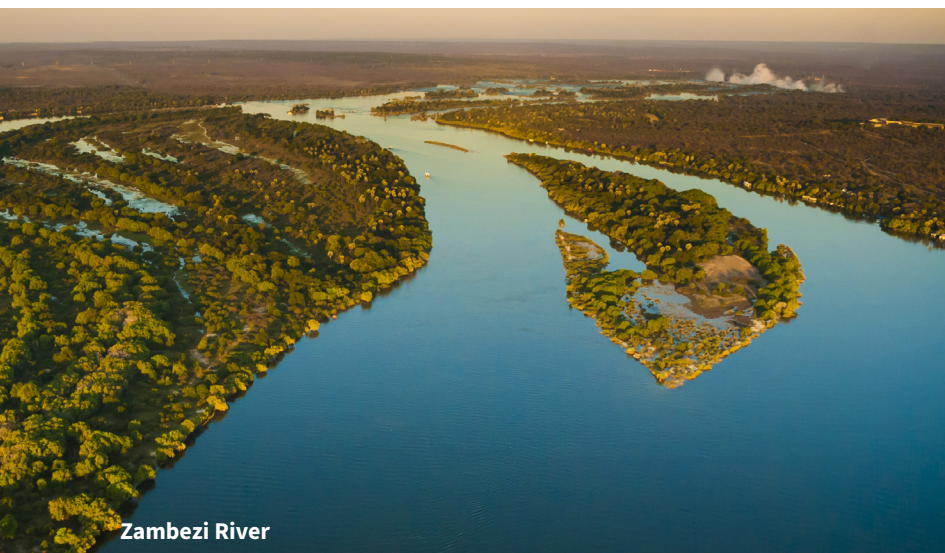
Bringing the value of wildlife and wild lands to national economic planning, **AWF supported development of a groundbreaking economic analysis to quantify nature as a contributor to Zimbabwe's GNP** in response to a request from the Ministry of the Environment. In 2023, the landmark Zimbabwe Biodiversity Economy report revealed that nature, through non-timber forest products, ecotourism, ecosystem services, forestry, and fisheries, contributes approximately US\$2 billion annually to the nation's economy. This has helped to link nature to sustainable value chains that generate investment and economic scale and is guiding carbon sequestration valuation in national forestry planning.

Impact Metrics

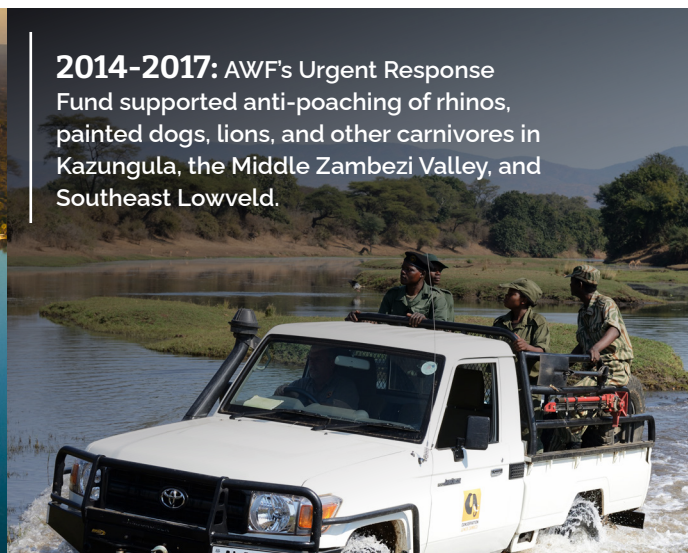
National Elephant Population Increased	60,000 in 2001 82,000 in 2023
National Rhino Population Doubled	~500 in 1992 1,003 in 2024
Overall areas under transboundary conservation management (3 landscapes)	227,707km² in 2002 243,812km² in 2025
Nature's value to Zimbabwe's GNP, defined by Zimbabwe Biodiversity Economy Report	US\$2B

Living with Wildlife

Beginning in the early 2000s, AWF **supported the government of Zimbabwe in a game-changing conservation approach** that shifted management of wildlife resources from government-led programs to community-led initiatives. Known as CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources), the approach has since become a model for other countries. AWF's role included partnering with rural districts on land use planning to help identify how communities could best negotiate space for people and wildlife to thrive. **Most recently, AWF supported Zimbabwe's people in the Middle Zambezi Valley through human-wildlife coexistence strategies, sustainable livelihood projects, entrepreneurial training for youth, and improvements in access to fresh water**—decreasing human-wildlife competition for this essential resource.



Zambezi River



2014–2017: AWF's Urgent Response Fund supported anti-poaching of rhinos, painted dogs, lions, and other carnivores in Kazungula, the Middle Zambezi Valley, and Southeast Lowveld.

Caring for Wildlife

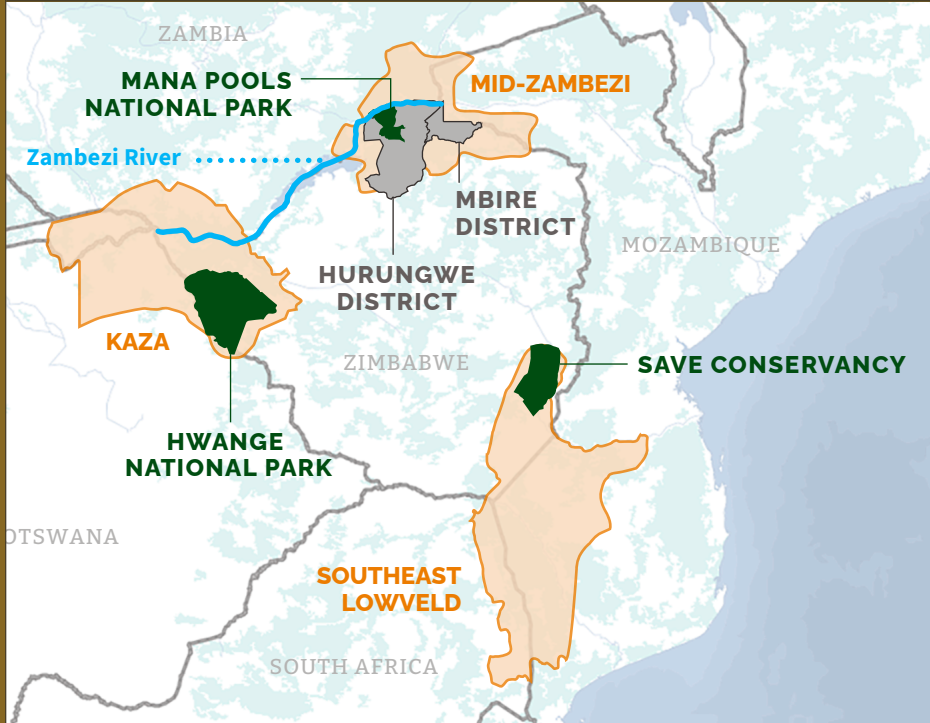
AWF's large landscape approach emphasizes conservation of ecological systems defined by factors such as watersheds, wildlife habitat, and migration corridors versus political boundaries. In Zimbabwe, we've contributed to conservation efforts across three different transboundary landscapes and six countries—Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, and South Africa.

In the early 2000s, AWF identified **Kazungula**, a transboundary landscape in western Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia. Our work there included researching and mapping wildlife movements, developing tourism and other enterprise models, developing capacity of local communities, fostering transboundary collaboration, and contributing to species conservation. This work laid the foundation partners built on to develop the formal KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area. Today it is the largest land-based transboundary conservation area in the world, spanning five countries (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). Within the conservation area, in 2014–2015, AWF supported development of a 10-year (2016–2026) management plan to **guide wildlife authorities in how to sustainably manage Zimbabwe's largest national park, Hwange National Park.**

In northern Zimbabwe, the **Middle Zambezi Valley** landscape spans Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique. Here, AWF has left a durable legacy in and around Mana Pools National Park, part of a UNESCO World Heritage protected area and home to a critical elephant population. **Starting in 2016, and continuing for the next nine years, AWF provided direct technical and financial support to Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) to manage Mana Pools**, investing in infrastructure, equipment, wildlife management training, anti-poaching operations, human-wildlife coexistence, and transboundary dialogues with Zambia and Mozambique. **Elephant poaching in Mana Pools dropped dramatically from 100 in 2014 to zero by 2020.** Transboundary collaborations also included supporting the **first-ever Zimbabwe-Zambia joint hippo survey along the Zambezi River** in 2022. AWF's vision of a collaborative landscape-level conservation approach in the Middle Zambezi Valley, begun through convening stakeholders from Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in 1999, was formalized with the official signing of an agreement by leaders of the three countries in 2024.

Rhinos have been our focus in a third landscape in southeastern Zimbabwe, the **Southeast Lowveld landscape** (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa), where our work in the Savé Valley Conservancy has **helped to stabilize the rhino population.**

Zimbabwe Landscapes



Highlighted AWF Investments in the Mid-Zambezi Landscape

