



MALAWI

Majete Wildlife Reserve

700 km²

African Parks Project since 2003

Government Partner: Malawi Department
of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW)

The Wyss Foundation and WWF-Belgium
were major funders in 2017



Majete

CRAIG HAY | PARK MANAGER

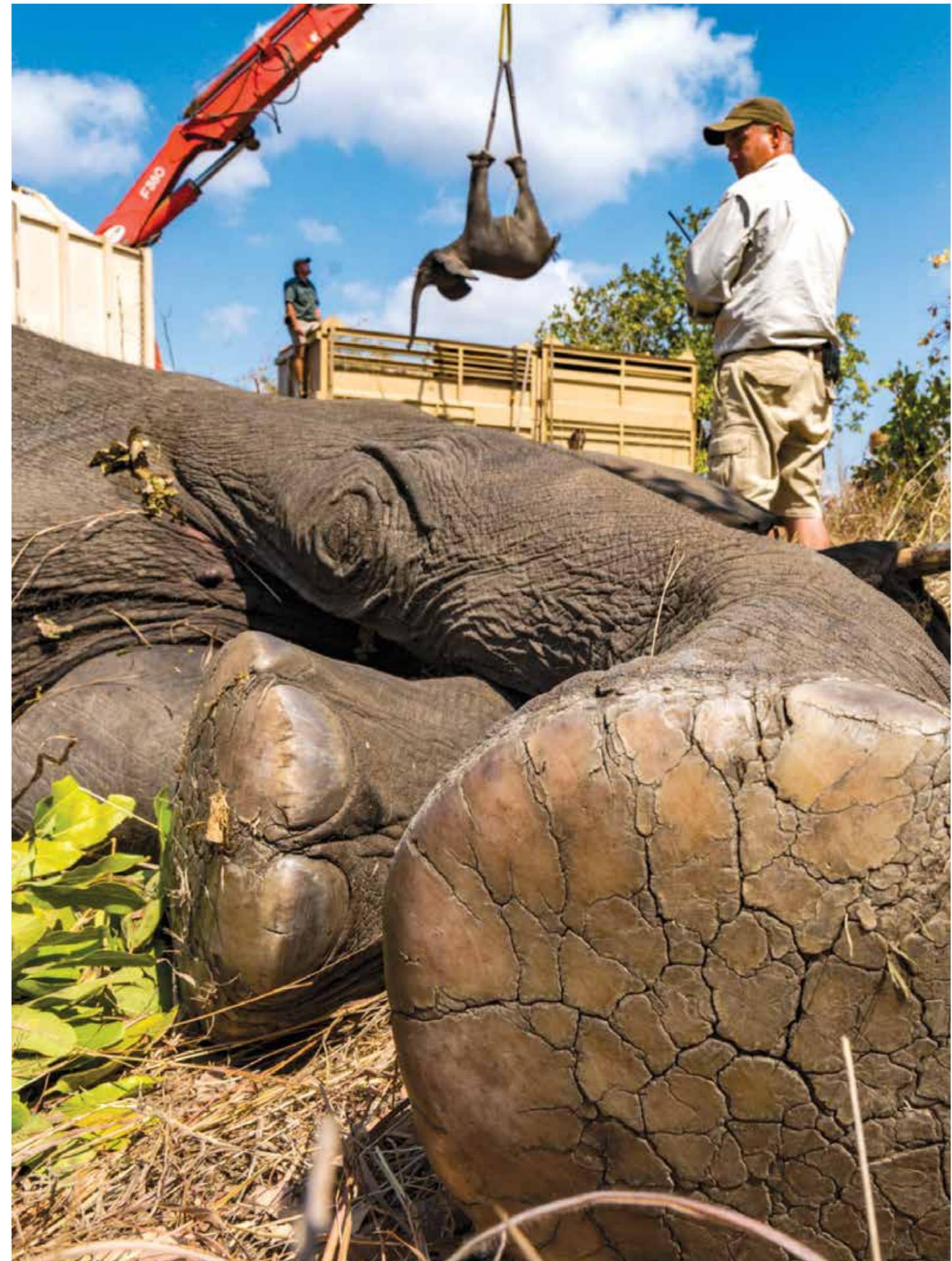


MALAWI – Over just 14 years, Majete has transformed from a once empty forest with no employment or tourism and only a few remaining antelope within its perimeter, to a productive and flourishing haven for Africa’s most iconic wildlife, generating revenue and benefits for local communities. Decades of lawlessness and poaching had seen the reserve’s wildlife, including elephants, completely eradicated by the 1990’s. But this all changed in 2003, when African Parks signed a 25-year management agreement with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) to manage Majete, the first park to enter our portfolio. We immediately began to revive the park through a series of species reintroductions: rhinos in 2003, elephants in 2006 and lions in 2012, bringing back 2,900 animals overall representing 14 different species. With their return, tourists started to come to the park, and much needed revenue followed, feeding back into the management of the reserve and supporting local communities. Today, Majete is flourishing, so much so that wildlife is being moved to populate other parks and private reserves within the country. We’ve maintained a 14-year track record of zero poaching of rhinos and elephants since their introduction; 154 elephants and 345 other animals were successfully translocated to Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve completing the historic ‘500 Elephants’ translocation, and tourism increased 14 percent from last year, with over 9,000 visitors, half of whom were Malawian nationals bringing in over US\$550,000 to the reserve and communities. Majete is a tale of a park rising from the ashes – living proof of how a park deemed to be a wasteland can be revived and restored and serve as a life-source for wildlife and humans alike.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Majete Wildlife Reserve was at the centre of the historic ‘500 Elephants’ translocation that took place during the last two years. The reserve provided the final 154 elephants and 345 other animals, comprising of waterbuck, zebra and eland, to help repopulate Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve 650 km north of Majete. Another 113 animals including zebra, eland, kudu, impala, waterbuck and warthog were also captured from Majete during the same period and sold to three private ranches for tourism. In just over a decade, Majete Wildlife Reserve has become a flourishing source for wildlife and is helping to repopulate other reserves in the country. The translocation was a globally significant event for Majete and Malawi and helped position the Malawian Government as an emerging leader for conservation in Africa.

We maintained our remarkable track record of not having lost one rhino or one elephant to poaching since their reintroductions in 2003 and 2006 respectively. One of the rhinos gave birth in the park, joining two other calves who were born in 2016; the elephant population was on the rise with 430 elephants estimated in the beginning of 2017 before the translocation of 154 elephants, taking the number down to approximately 270 at the end of the year. Three lion cubs were also born, bringing the small but growing pride to 11. Planning began for the translocation of up to five lions that will be brought to Majete during the course of 2018, to help grow and genetically enhance the pride. Field work on the ecology and conservation of zebra, hyaenas, leopards and lions was conducted by two Master’s students from the University of Stellenbosch throughout the year.



A family group of anaesthetised elephants that were translocated to Nkhotakota, Malawi. © Pete McBride



Two lionesses, one with a GPS collar, within Majete. © Marcus Westberg



Rangers patrol the park 24 hours a day, seven days a week. © Nico Wills



Local children hold donated saplings provided to communities. © Marcus Westberg

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Thanks to our well-trained and equipped ranger team, we have managed to maintain zero losses of all of the high-value species including rhinos, elephants and lions since their reintroductions as long as 14 years ago. The team of 29 full-time rangers conducted 6,442 patrol man-days, resulting in 30 arrests and 15 convictions, with only 12 snares removed compared to 87 the previous year.

Every ranger received refresher training at the beginning of the year; 12 received tactical tracking training, four underwent medic training in Liwonde National Park, and recruitment began for bringing on new rangers on board, with 10 selected. The Domain Awareness System (DAS) was installed and fully operational by the end of the year; a new operations room was constructed, and the radio network was upgraded to an improved digital radio system.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community engagement is essential for building a constituency for conservation and Majete made significant advancements over the year with education and income generation schemes for the local communities. Increasing access to education was a key focus of the park in 2017. To that end, 30 schools from surrounding villages were visited by the park's Extension Officers and supported in visiting the park; two school blocks were completed, impacting

1,951 school children; and the Majete Scholarship Programme continued to support 105 'scholars in need' and five university students. The Environmental Education Centre extension was completed and officially opened by the sponsor of the project, Ms. Anne Hoiyer. Majete also contributed towards the construction of a community-based Child Care Shelter providing healthcare and other basic needs to children living around the reserve.

Communities took part in various sustainable income generating activities including the production of beaded jewellery, woven baskets and sewn products, honey production and community visits generating approximately US\$12,000 in income for community members. The community campsite also generated an additional US\$11,000 which helped support the purchasing of bicycles for community policing, scholarships and the renovation of school and healthcare clinic structures. The resource-use programme, which allows for the supervised harvesting of sustainable resources in the reserve, saw 15,835 bundles of grass collected, worth approximately US\$8,000. In addition, 109 beekeepers were supported and produced 1.2 tonnes of honey, generating approximately US\$4,500 in revenue. The reforestation project, which encourages communities to plant trees to reduce pressure on natural resources, resulted in over 11,000 seedlings being planted in schools and villages.



0 rhinos and elephants poached since 2003

Community livelihoods continued to improve as a result of our partnership with the Hunger Project, which works with 113 villages around Majete. Seven boreholes were drilled, providing clean water for almost 2,000 people, 430 families were trained in sustainable farming methods, and 110 people (45 women and 65 men) were trained in carpentry, tailoring and tinsmithing. Treating and preventing Malaria is a primary concern in and around Majete. The collaborative Majete Anti-Malaria Project supported by Stichting Dioraphte in partnership with African Parks, the Malawi College of Medicine, University of Wageningen, the University of Amsterdam and others, made good progress on the goal of reducing the incidence of this deadly disease by 80 percent by 2018.

PARK MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Majete hosted two weeks of fire training, an important component of park management, where participants from Majete, Liwonde National Park and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve (all under management by African Parks) participated in learning how to fight and manage wildfires, as well as providing overall fire safety. The important dialogue continued regarding the mitigation and compensation measures for Majete as a result of the proposed development of the irrigation canal, which will extract water from the dam in the reserve to support farmers and promote agriculture.

Construction projects during the year included the extension of the Environmental Education Centre, two staff accommodation units, the law enforcement operations control room and the expansion of office space at the headquarters for the finance team. Majete also hosted the African Parks management meeting in September, during which all the Executive and Senior Management teams from across Africa came together for one week to discuss updates and plans for 2018.

TOURISM

In a move to increase tourism to Majete, a management agreement with the Sunbird Hotel Group was signed for Thawale Lodge and Mwembezi restaurant and was fully operational in February. Overall, visitor numbers increased 14 percent to 9,174 tourists visiting Majete during 2017, half of whom were Malawian nationals; and gross park revenue increased 31 percent to US\$558,000 including the sale of game animals to other private reserves for tourism, which amounted to a net income of US\$23,000.

Improvements were made to the curio shop at the Heritage Centre, where locally produced crafts and products were made available for sale; and an older Land Cruiser pickup was converted into a game viewer for additional tourists, bringing the fleet to four.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2018

- Strengthen law enforcement capabilities through training and equipment
- Maintain ongoing track record of zero losses of rhino and elephant from poaching
- Introduce up to five lions to genetically improve the resident pride, and secure funding for the reintroduction of giraffe
- Create a successful honey production scheme to produce seven tonnes of honey
- Increase tourism revenue with a new addition of a bush camp site
- Improve infrastructure with the addition of houses for law enforcement and tourism personnel; implement a water purification plan and replace 30 km of the perimeter fence