



Every year Tusk organises an awards ceremony to celebrate the remarkable people who work on the frontline of conservation across Africa. It's a reminder of the many unsung heroes who are making a huge difference on the ground, usually without recognition. This year's Tusk winners again reflect the range of challenges they face.

BY SUE WATT



FRONTLINE STARS

JOHN KAMANGA

Founder of South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO), Kenya

WINNER: THE TUSK AWARD FOR CONSERVATION IN AFRICA, SPONSORED BY LAND ROVER

John Kamanga lives in two worlds. One is that of the traditional Maasai, into which he was born and bred. The other is the modern academic world, as a graduate holding Community Development and Anthropology degrees. It's his innate ability to combine these two worlds that is helping to create a collaborative coexistence of both wildlife conservation and pastoralist tradition in today's complex natural landscape.

Most of Kenya's wildlife lives outside protected areas, making it increasingly vulnerable to human encroachment and conflict. The vast fence-free rangelands and community forests spanning 10,000 sq km between the Maasai Mara and Amboseli form a vital wildlife corridor between the two reserves, home to the largest mammal populations in Kenya.

Yet Kamanga had seen these community lands being eroded as

a result of fencing and subdividing by nomadic pastoralists, negatively impacting the movement of both wildlife and livestock. In 2004, bringing together a collective of 16 Maasai-owned group ranches, he established the South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO).

Unusually, SORALO gives a voice to pastoralists in conservation. Grassroots and

"It's about coming to understand how the Maasai communities have always lived with wildlife," he says, "and giving them new tools and new ways to benefit from wildlife today."

collaborative at its core, and driven by local communities, it protects this landscape by embracing Maasai traditions with modern solutions to sustain both pastoral communities and wildlife.

The promotion of open pastoral rangelands is critical to SORALO's work. They help to secure and strengthen

community rights to land, to create Land Use Plans and conservancies, and to reform subdivided plots into collective rangelands. They support community game scouts who protect wildlife from poaching, and monitor the presence of lions, cheetahs, leopards and hyenas to keep people and their livestock safe.

SORALO helps improve local livelihoods too, whether through traditional Maasai pastoralism or new enterprises like tourism, empowering women and youth. Its Lale'enok Resource Centre, managed by women, provides scientific information, underpinned by traditional knowledge, to everyone from Maasai herders to land management groups and international academics.

Never forgetting its Maasai heritage, SORALO also promotes traditional culture, pioneering a Pastoral Conservation

Leadership course and designing culturally sensitive lessons in school wildlife clubs.

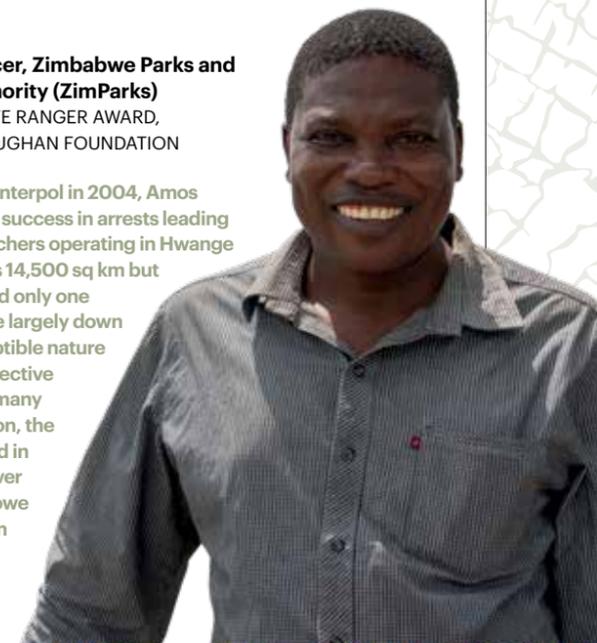
Melding modern life and Maasai heritage, Kamanga is passionate about his work. "It's about coming to understand how the Maasai communities have always lived with wildlife," he says, "and giving them new tools and new ways to benefit from wildlife today."

AMOS GWEMA

Principal Intelligence Officer, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks)

WINNER: THE TUSK WILDLIFE RANGER AWARD, SPONSORED BY THE NICK MAUGHAN FOUNDATION

Since joining ZimParks from Interpol in 2004, Amos Gwema has had extraordinary success in arrests leading to convictions of wildlife poachers operating in Hwange National Park. The park spans 14,500 sq km but has fewer than 50 rangers and only one vehicle. His achievements are largely down to his dedication, his incorruptible nature and his ability to create an effective network of informants. With many criminal kingpins now in prison, the number of elephants poached in Hwange has declined from over 300 in 2013 to 25 in 2019. "I owe my great, great grandchildren this wildlife," he said. "They should also be able to enjoy it in their lifetimes."



IAN STEVENSON

CEO of Conservation Lower Zambezi, Zambia

FINALIST: THE TUSK AWARD

Ian Stevenson has been protecting Zambia's wildlife through his work with Conservation Lower Zambezi for over 20 years. The NGO now has 70 staff covering everything from anti-poaching, law enforcement and developing informant networks, to protecting communities from human-wildlife conflict and teaching schoolchildren about conservation. He credits CLZ's success to his staff, praising the "incredible team, incredible skills, and incredible relationships."

GEORGE OWOYESIGIRE

Deputy Director Community Conservation, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)

FINALIST: THE TUSK AWARD

George Owoyesigire's 15-year conservation career began in Kibale National Park, and he's since worked in many of Uganda's prime wildlife regions. Today, based at UWA headquarters, he focuses on community conservation. His innovative initiative to prevent crop-raiding by Kibale's elephants by using fences of beehives (which elephants dislike) has dramatically reduced instances of conflict for communities while providing them with income from honey production.



HIPOLITO LIMA

Founder and Rangers Supervisor, Programa Tato, São Tomé and Príncipe

WINNER: THE PRINCE WILLIAM AWARD FOR CONSERVATION IN AFRICA, SPONSORED BY NINETY ONE

Now 70 years old, Hipolito Lima is a conservation hero in his island home of São Tomé, thanks to his tireless efforts to protect sea turtles over the past 26 years. But coming from a community raised on turtle meat, with his father a well-known hunter, this wasn't easy. "When I realised living turtles had more value than dead turtles, I decided to do the opposite of my father," he said. "But we suffered a lot." His passion and commitment succeeded, however, leading to new legislation for turtle protection and the foundation of NGO Programa Tato, to conserve turtles and their marine and coastal habitats. Employing local rangers – once turtle-hunters themselves – to monitor nesting sites, he's also empowered islanders to become turtle guardians and conservation leaders.

