

EVERY SPECIES COUNTS



**CELEBRATING A
DECADE OF IMPACT**

ANNUAL REPORT 20 25





RWCA's 10th Anniversary: A Decade of Conservation Impact

2025 marked a major milestone for RWCA - ten years of working to protect Rwanda's wildlife and wild places. It was a moment to reflect on how far we have come, honour the people who made it possible, and renew our commitment to the journey ahead.

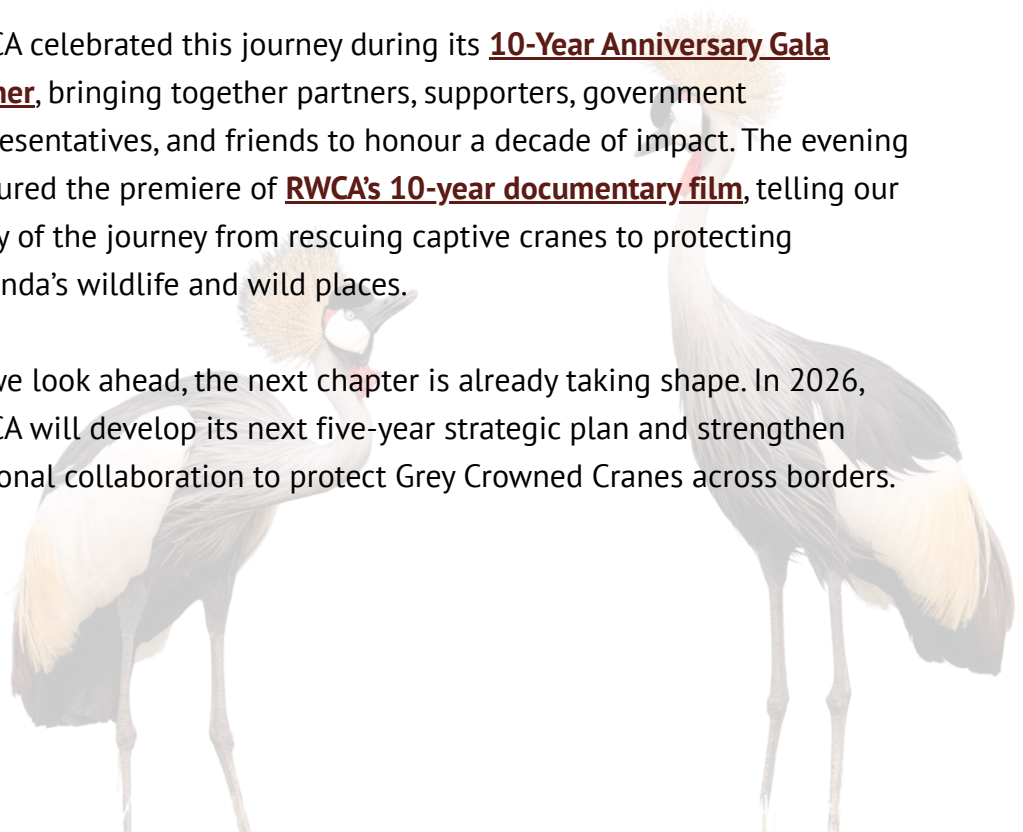
A decade ago, Rwanda's Grey Crowned Cranes were in serious decline. They were being captured and kept in hotels and private gardens, and fewer than 300 remained in the wild. Many people did not know this practice was illegal, and even fewer understood its impact.

In 2015, RWCA began working to protect the species and restore the wetlands they depend on. Together with communities, the Government of Rwanda, and conservation partners, we led nationwide efforts to remove cranes from captivity and return them safely to the wild. Today, those efforts have transformed the outlook for the species. More than **1,245 Grey Crowned Cranes** now thrive in Rwanda's wetlands, and no cranes remain in captivity.

Over the past decade, RWCA's work has grown far beyond a single species. Today, we protect a wide range of wildlife, restore degraded habitats, empower communities as Conservation Champions, and inspire young people to become the next generation of conservation leaders. At every step, communities remain at the heart of our approach.

RWCA celebrated this journey during its **10-Year Anniversary Gala Dinner**, bringing together partners, supporters, government representatives, and friends to honour a decade of impact. The evening featured the premiere of **RWCA's 10-year documentary film**, telling our story of the journey from rescuing captive cranes to protecting Rwanda's wildlife and wild places.

As we look ahead, the next chapter is already taking shape. In 2026, RWCA will develop its next five-year strategic plan and strengthen regional collaboration to protect Grey Crowned Cranes across borders.



A Decade of Conservation Impact

1,245

Grey Crowned Cranes

recorded in Rwanda, a major increase from 487 during the first census in 2017.

9,746

Conservation jobs

created including Community Rangers and Conservation Champions, social enterprises, and temporary jobs.

18,843

Patrols

conducted to deter illegal activities at Rugezi Marsh and Rweru wetland by our Community Rangers and Conservation Champions.

19,000

Hectares

under improved protection by RWCA including Rugezi Marsh and Rweru wetland.

714,675

Community members

engaged in awareness raising events, spreading conservation messages about protection of wildlife and habitats.

153,561

Children

learned about Grey Crowned Cranes and environmental protection.

354

Hectares

of wetlands and forests restored nationwide, protecting ecosystems for wildlife and people.

240,076

Trees

planted as part of our restoration work across the country.

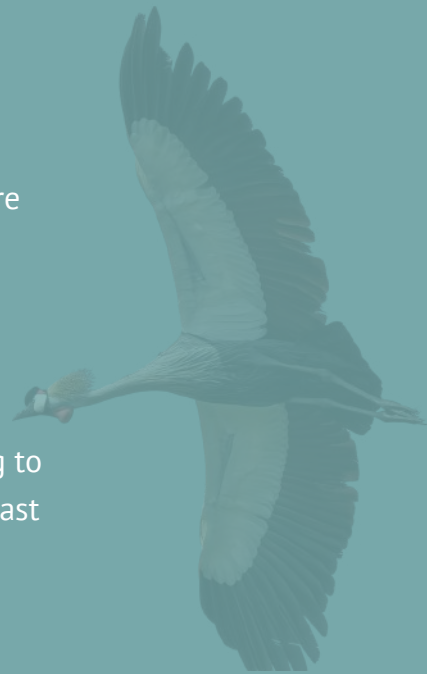


Our Mission

To apply home-grown solutions to protect and restore threatened wildlife and wild places.

Our Vision

To be the premier conservation organisation working to sustain free-living wild animals in Rwanda and the East African region.



To achieve our mission, we focus on implementing initiatives across six strategic areas.



About RWCA

Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA) is founded and run by Rwandans. As a team, we are deeply committed to the future of biodiversity and the people of our country. Our passion for conservation is not just a job; we see it as a real opportunity to shape the future of wildlife and the health of our planet, as well as the people who live alongside nature. We are now a team of over 270 staff, including Community Marsh Rangers and Community Conservation Champions, working nationwide to protect important natural habitats and preserve biodiversity.

We come from different regions of Rwanda, and each member of our team brings a unique perspective shaped by our diverse backgrounds. This firsthand understanding of our communities allows us to see the potential when people and an organisation unite towards a common goal. We have seen what amazing things can be achieved through collaboration, and this fuels our determination to continue making a difference.

At RWCA, our approach to conservation is rooted in the belief that solutions must be co-created with the communities we come from and serve. By integrating local knowledge with scientific expertise, we develop initiatives that resonate with our people's needs and aspirations. This collaborative model not only ensures the effectiveness of our efforts but also empowers communities to become champions of conservation. Innovation is at the core of our work, and our adaptability allows us to navigate evolving challenges.



Message from our CEO



Dr Olivier Nsengimana

Founder and CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2025 has been a special year for the RWCA community as we celebrated ten years of our journey. It has been a moment to pause, reflect, and appreciate how far we have come. In just a decade we have built something truly meaningful - a strong and lasting connection between people and wildlife.

I often think about the Ranger walking through the early morning mist of Rugezi Marsh, protecting biodiversity; the mother who no longer depends on the marsh to feed her family because she now has a stable livelihood; the young people growing up seeing wildlife as something worth protecting. These are the stories that define our journey.

Over the past decade, we have learned that conservation is not only about protecting species or restoring habitats. It is about trust - trust in communities, and in their ability to lead when given the right support. When that happens, change takes root.

Today, we are seeing that change. Grey Crowned Crane numbers are growing. Wetlands are recovering. Most importantly, communities are at the heart of this progress - protecting what matters, not because they are asked to, but because they believe in it.

None of this would be possible without you. Your support has helped turn small, local actions into lasting impact. As we look to the future, we carry these stories with us. They remind us that real change is built step by step, person by person.

The next decade is not only about growing our work, but strengthening it, so that together, we can build a future where both people and wildlife truly belong.

With gratitude,

Olivier



Species of Focus

Over the years, RWCA has used our experience with Grey Crowned Cranes to apply our conservation model to other endangered and threatened species in Rwanda.



Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*)

IUCN Status: ENDANGERED

Grey Crowned Cranes are threatened by habitat loss and the illegal pet trade and their population numbers in Rwanda were less than 300 when we first started working. Our goal is to stop the illegal trade and reduce habitat destruction, increasing and stabilising the population of Grey Crowned Cranes in Rwanda.



Straw-coloured Fruit Bats (*Eidolon helvum*)

IUCN Status: NEAR THREATENED

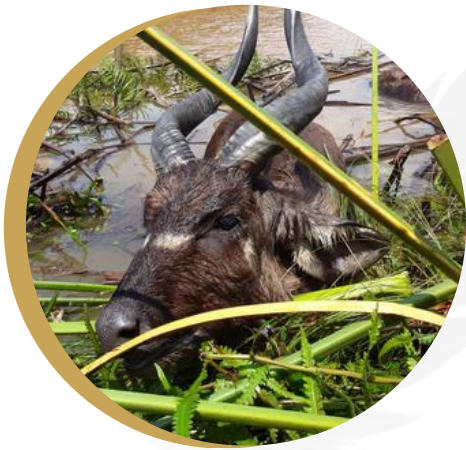
Straw-coloured fruit bats have an important role in seed dispersal and pollination. Their habitat is rapidly disappearing due to urbanisation and other human disturbances. Our goal is to increase the protection of their key habitats and raise awareness about living safely alongside them.



Hill's Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hilli*)

IUCN Status: CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

The Hill's horseshoe bat is a rare bat that is only known in Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda. A sighting was first recorded in 1981, and we confirmed the presence in 2020, the first time in almost 40 years this species had been detected. Our goal is to better understand and protect this species.



Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekeii*)
IUCN Status: LEAST CONCERNED

.....
This marsh antelope is not globally threatened, but in Rwanda, there are very few individuals left. They are severely threatened by habitat destruction and are hunted for meat. Our goal is to reduce the threats and increase the population of Sitatunga in Rwanda.



Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*)
IUCN Status: VULNERABLE

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Only one or two pairs of Shoebill have been sighted in Rwanda. They are globally threatened by international trade and habitat degradation. Our goal is to restore the Shoebill population in Rwanda to at least five pairs.



African Grey Parrots (*Psittacus Erithacus*)
IUCN Status: ENDANGERED

.....
African Grey Parrots are threatened by the illegal trade and have all but disappeared in Rwanda. Our goal is to reintroduce African Grey Parrots rescued from the illegal pet trade to restore the population in Rwanda.

In addition to dedicated projects for our species of focus, our wildlife veterinary response enables us to protect a wider range of species. Through rapid response initiatives, veterinary care, and collaboration with local communities and authorities, we rescue and rehabilitate injured, orphaned, or at-risk wildlife. This has included buffalo, rhino, elephant, lion, hippo, baboon, duiker, tortoise, and more.



Species Threat Reduction

Identifying the specific threats that each species faces, in different regions of the country, helps us tailor our approach and target the underlying problems in a holistic way.



75

Community Rangers
protecting Rugezi Marsh.

4,414

Illegal activities
identified and reported by
Community Rangers at Rugezi Marsh.

6

Joint patrol exercises
completed with stakeholders at
wetland areas.

173

Snares
removed by our Community
Conservation Champions.



Rugezi Marsh: Proof that Community-Led Conservation Works

Rugezi Marsh, one of Rwanda's largest wetlands and a designated Ramsar site, is steadily recovering after years of pressure from grazing, grass cutting, and tree harvesting.

At the centre of this recovery is RWCA's community-led approach. Working with the Government of Rwanda, RWCA supports 75 Community Rangers who conduct more than 3,000 patrols each year, helping reduce illegal activities and protect the marsh. Habitat restoration and alternative livelihood initiatives – including the provision of fodder grass seedlings and energy-efficient cooking stoves – are also reducing pressure on the wetland.

The results are clear. The Grey Crowned Crane population at Rugezi Marsh increased from 71 in 2017 to 351 in 2025, representing nearly 30% of Rwanda's crane population. The 2025 Ramsar Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool also shows management effectiveness has risen from 42% to 66% over five years.

“What works at Rugezi Marsh is not complicated. We involve communities in everything we do. Once people see that conservation can support their livelihoods, they stop being a threat to the marsh and become its guardians.”

– Dr Deo Ruhagazi, Deputy CEO





Protecting Rweru Wetland: Community Champions at the Forefront

At Rweru wetland, conservation is driven by the people who live alongside it. RWCA works with 20 Community Conservation Champions who patrol the wetland, monitor threats to wildlife, especially sitatunga antelope, and work with nearby villages to build awareness and shared responsibility for protecting the ecosystem.

Their work is helping change how communities relate to nature. In one memorable moment, fishermen and Community Conservation Champions noticed a blue monkey struggling in the water. As their boat passed, the monkey climbed aboard and rode with them before being safely returned to shore – a small but powerful sign of growing care for wildlife.

Community Conservation Champions also play a vital role during emergencies. When a wildfire broke out in the wetland, they worked with local communities, RWCA staff, and government authorities for nearly two days to stop the flames from spreading through the papyrus.

“People used to see this wetland only for what it could give them. Now they see it as something they must protect,”

– RWCA Community Conservation Champion

With continued training and support, Community Conservation Champions will remain at the forefront of protecting Rweru’s wildlife and wetlands.



Protecting Grey Crowned Cranes Across Borders

Over the past decade, RWCA's work to save Grey Crowned Cranes has taught us an important lesson: Grey Crowned Cranes move freely across wetlands that extend beyond Rwanda's borders. Protecting them, therefore, requires conservation efforts that span the region.

To address this, RWCA launched a transboundary partnership in 2022 with organisations Nature Tanzania, Nature Uganda, and International Crane Foundation Uganda. In 2025, the collaboration expanded with the Association Burundaise pour la Protection de la Nature (ABN) formally joining the partnership.

RWCA hosted a five-day regional workshop bringing together conservation organisations, technical experts, and government representatives from all four countries to begin developing a shared strategy for protecting cranes and their habitats. The partnership was further strengthened with partners signing a Memorandum of Understanding committing to coordinated conservation action across the region.

Through this collaboration and shared commitment, partners are working to secure a future where Grey Crowned Cranes can thrive across their full range.



Research and Monitoring

A better understanding of the species we are working with (their population numbers, behaviours, movement patterns, habitat preferences, and diseases) helps us design our conservation actions and check that our conservation work is having an impact.



75

Breeding events

monitored by our Community Rangers and Conservation Champions, with 122 chicks successfully fledged.

51,137

Straw-Coloured fruit bats

counted in one month by our 12 Community Conservation Champions at bat roosts nationwide (highest monthly count in 2025).

2,184

Survey 123 entries

recorded by our Community Rangers and Community Conservation Champions of species sightings.



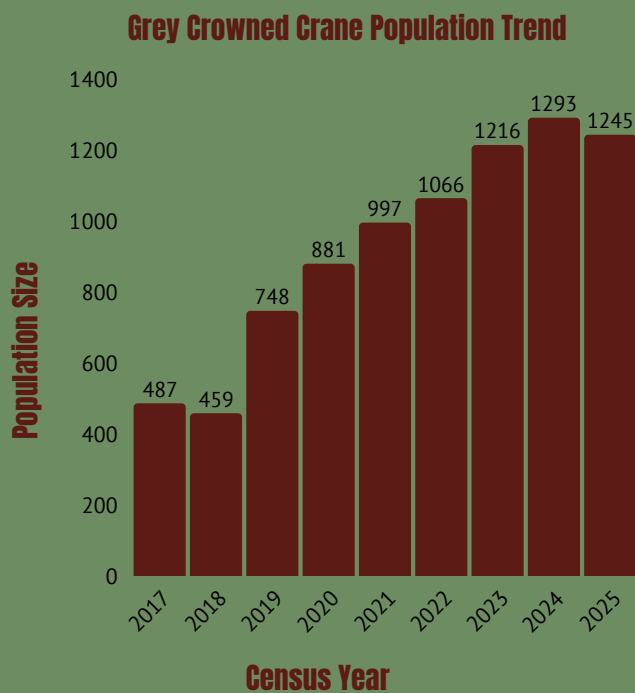
Crane Census: Counting Cranes Beyond Borders

In 2025, RWCA carried out its ninth consecutive Grey Crowned Crane Census in Rwanda and, for the third time, expanded the survey beyond Rwanda to include neighbouring countries.

This year, 1,245 cranes were recorded in Rwanda, a major increase from 487 during the first census in 2017. At Rugezi Marsh, numbers continue to rise steadily, with 351 cranes counted in 2025 compared to just 71 in 2017. This growth reflects nearly a decade of habitat protection, restoration, and consistent monitoring by RWCA's Community Rangers and local communities.

Once again, thanks to our transboundary collaboration, the census also covered the transboundary zone across Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, with Burundi joining for the first time!

By sharing data across borders, we are strengthening regional monitoring and improving protection for Grey Crowned Cranes across their range to ensure they continue to thrive.



Exploring new habitats of the Endangered Harrison's giant mastiff bat

In 2025, RWCA continued efforts to better understand and protect Rwanda's bats, focusing on one of the country's least-known and most threatened species: the Harrison's giant mastiff bat.

Our team surveyed 15 cave systems across Rwanda and confirmed that all were active bat roosts. In total, 12 different cave-dwelling bat species were recorded. Most importantly, three caves were identified as roosting sites for Harrison's giant mastiff bat, including two that had never been documented before. In two caves, the species was found sharing roosts with a closely related mastiff bat, highlighting how much we still have to learn about their distribution and genetics.

Many caves face growing threats, including waste dumping, guano harvesting, and frequent human disturbance. Near one threatened cave, we worked with a local primary school where 80% of students said they had previously harmed bats due to misinformation. After conservation lessons and discussions, students pledged to protect bats and planted trees to help restore their habitat.



Insights from RWCA's 2025 Research Publications

In 2025, RWCA continued to strengthen its contribution to conservation research through new publications that deepen understanding of Grey Crowned Cranes and other species across Rwanda.

These studies reflect RWCA's commitment to evidence-based conservation and to sharing knowledge that supports stronger wildlife protection and management.

Explore the publications below to learn more about the research guiding conservation action – and help us spread the knowledge.

✦ Diversity and abundance of arthropod communities from Rugezi Marshland, Northern Rwanda: Call for effective and sustainable biodiversity conservation planning. [READ](#)

✦ IUCN Conservation Success Stories: Combating the illegal trade of Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. [READ](#)

✦ Reintroduced Grey Crowned Cranes exhibit reduced dispersal and smaller home ranges than wild conspecifics in Rwanda. [READ](#)

Wildlife Interventions

Many of our team members are veterinarians, and we ensure that all of our work involves best practices for the care and treatment of wildlife.





Training Regional Wildlife Vets

RWCA hosted the third Wildlife Immobilisation Course, and for the first time, expanded the programme to include wildlife veterinarians from across the region, including participants from Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Led by Dr. Markus Hofmeyr from WCN, seven veterinarians spent 5 days in Akagera National Park taking part in an intensive hands-on training. Participants gained practical experience in darting wildlife, animal monitoring, sample collection, and conducting health checks.

“We are now forming a strong network of young veterinarians who can work together and are ready to respond to wildlife emergencies. I feel hopeful for the future of wildlife across Africa,”

– Dr. Olivier Nsengimana,
Founder and CEO

Watch highlights from the training [HERE](#)



Saving a Young Hippo Near Akagera National Park

RWCA's veterinary team responded to an urgent call near Akagera National Park after a young female hippopotamus fell into a deep hole. Trapped and unable to escape, she had become exhausted and dangerously weak.

Working closely with the Akagera National Park team, RWCA veterinarians carefully immobilised the hippo to reduce stress and ensure her safety. Using a specialised rescue truck, the team gently lifted her from the hole and transported her to the water's edge. Once released, the young hippo slowly regained her strength and walked back into the water on her own.

"Each rescue reinforces our commitment to conservation and inspires us to continue our work for animals in need."

— Dr. Jessica Kamatenesi, Field Veterinarian

This rescue highlights the importance of rapid response, skilled veterinary care, and strong collaboration in protecting Rwanda's wildlife.

Inside the Lab: Supporting Wildlife Research In Rwanda

RWCA's Molecular Laboratory continues to strengthen wildlife conservation in Rwanda by generating scientific evidence to inform management decisions.

One key project focused on the growing lion population in Akagera National Park. Using molecular techniques, the lab analysed DNA samples to better understand how closely related the animals are. These insights help park managers make decisions that support a healthy and sustainable lion population.

The laboratory also expanded wildlife health monitoring by launching a molecular diagnostic service, with samples collected during veterinary interventions analysed to detect a range of possible diseases.

The lab also continues to analyse samples from the Rugezi Marsh Biodiversity Survey, using DNA barcoding to confirm species identification and contribute data to global biodiversity research databases.





Translocating Two Buffalo Back to Volcanoes National Park

Our veterinary team continues to respond to wildlife emergencies across Rwanda, sometimes in unexpected places.

One such call came from the Volcanoes National Park in the north, where two large African buffalo had wandered out of the park, moving close to a lodge and nearby communities. Although the animals were calm, their presence posed a risk for both wildlife and people.

RWCA's veterinary team responded quickly. Using their expertise, they safely immobilised the buffalo, monitored them throughout, and successfully relocated them back inside the park.

This successful operation was carried out in close collaboration with park authorities and local communities, ensuring the safety of both the animals and people living nearby.

Through rapid response and strong partnerships, RWCA's veterinary team helps ensure wildlife can safely return to the habitats where they belong.

Watch highlights of the rescue [HERE](#)



Conservation Education

We aim to inspire the next generation of conservationists who will protect Rwanda's wildlife and wild spaces for years to come.



BABOONS IN OUR WELLS, ELEPHANTS IN OUR MAIZE, AND MICE IN OUR GRAINSTOCKS



There are many ways to protect your crops from predators like baboons, elephants, and mice. Some of these ways are: - fences, traps, electric fences, and other methods. In Rwanda and Uganda, some farmers use these methods to protect their crops. However, these methods are not always easy to use, and they can be expensive.



A close-up, profile view of a young boy in a school uniform, looking intently at a book. He is wearing a green and white checkered shirt over a green t-shirt. Other students in blue and white uniforms are visible in the background, also looking at the book. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting.

62,623

Students

engaged in conservation education activities from schools across Rwanda.

255,100

Community members

participated in awareness raising events.

Uniting Communities for Conservation Through Sport

Around Rugezi Marsh, conservation is not only discussed in meetings, it is also played out on football fields and through cycling races.

The Umusambi Football Tournament returned for its third year. Bringing together women's and men's teams from all eight sectors surrounding the marsh showcasing their talent while serving as ambassadors for conservation. While teams competed on the field, each matchday also became an opportunity to share messages about protecting wetlands and Grey Crowned Crane, reaching more than 23,000 people.

The Umusambi Cycle Race also returned for its third edition with the gruelling 90km gravel race around the marsh. This year, the event kicked off with a new 104km road race starting from Umusambi Village and finishing at Rugezi Marsh, with educational messages reaching more than 45,000 people.

These events helped communities celebrate their wetlands while strengthening a shared commitment to protect them.





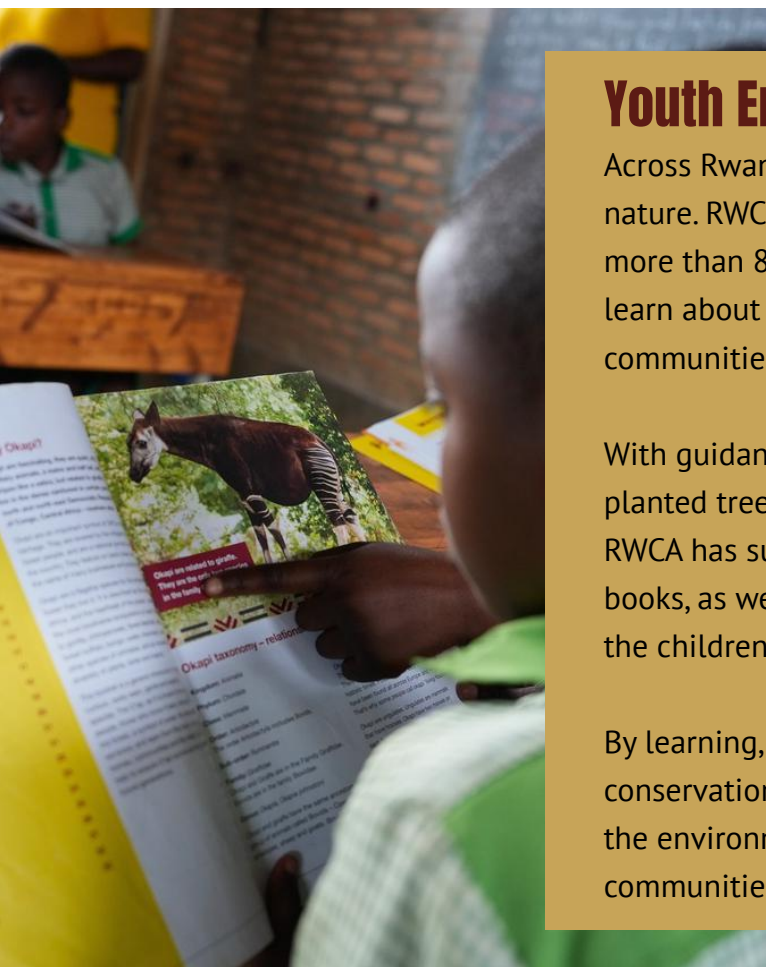
Conservation on the Move

In 2025, the Crane Cruiser Mobile Classroom continued bringing conservation education to children in remote areas of Rwanda.

This year, we reached 1,248 students, giving schools with limited access to environmental programmes the chance to learn about nature. By taking lessons directly to classrooms, RWCA helps students from rural communities take part in hands-on learning that connects science, nature, and everyday life.

Since 2023, this programme has engaged students and taken part in fun and interactive lessons about pollinators, birds, bats and echolocation, and the importance of different habitats. These activities help spark curiosity and build appreciation for the natural world around them.

While many schools visit Umusambi Village to experience wetland conservation firsthand, the Crane Cruiser plays an important role in reaching students who cannot travel there. By bringing conservation education closer to them, the programme helps ensure more young people are inspired to protect Rwanda's natural heritage.



Youth Environmental Clubs in Action

Across Rwanda, young people are stepping up to protect nature. RWCA supported 13 Youth Environmental Clubs with more than 840 members, giving young people opportunities to learn about conservation while taking action in their communities.

With guidance from mentors, club members got stuck in and planted trees, collected trash, and started vegetable gardens. RWCA has supported the clubs with equipment and activity books, as well as providing school bags and shoes to ensure the children are able to stay in school.

By learning, acting, and inspiring others, these young conservationists are becoming passionate ambassadors of the environment, ready to care for nature and inspire their communities.

Community Involvement and Livelihoods

We strive to involve communities in all that we do, encouraging local people to take pride in Rwanda's wildlife, at the same time as recognising that improving community livelihoods can directly support our programmes.



1,258

Temporary jobs

in habitat restoration and construction provided to community members, including 50% to women.

525

Families

provided with health insurance covering 2,529 family members.

5,849

Conservation Agreements

signed by community members committing to protect natural habitats.





Sustainable Fodder for People and Nature

RWCA distributed 2,882,134 fodder grass cuttings to 4,965 households living around Rugezi Marsh, helping reduce pressure on its precious natural resources.

Many families rely on cutting grass from the marsh for livestock feed. Over time, this practice can damage vegetation, disrupt wildlife habitat, and weaken the health of the ecosystem. By providing an alternative, fast-growing fodder, RWCA is helping communities meet their needs while protecting the wetland.

This initiative is built on partnership. Every household signs a Conservation Agreement, committing to protect the marsh and use sustainable alternatives for livestock feed.

By combining practical support with community commitment, this approach is helping safeguard Rugezi Marsh and the rich biodiversity it supports. Through this collaborative approach, communities are playing an active role in safeguarding the critical marsh habitat, demonstrating that conservation succeeds when people are part of the solution.

Empowering Women: Protecting Wetlands

Around Rugezi Marsh, women's cooperatives are turning new skills into sustainable livelihoods that also help protect the wetland.

In 2025, sewing cooperatives received electric sewing machines, allowing members to work faster and produce higher-quality clothing and bags that meet market demand. Craft cooperatives also continued to grow, with women refining traditional basket weaving using sustainable materials such as banana fibres and kitenge fabric.

To strengthen these cooperatives, the 71 women participated in cooperative management training, learning practical skills in budgeting, saving, record-keeping, and developing business plans.

Many of these women once depended on harvesting grass from the marsh. Today, with new skills and better tools, they are earning income while reducing pressure on this important wetland and helping safeguard its future.

"My life has improved, and I no longer depend on the marsh. Through my savings, I was able to buy rabbits and my own sewing machine. Today, I can sew school uniform for my children and make clothes for my clients, building a better future for my family."

– Member of Women's Sewing Cooperative



Local Guides for Eco-Tourism

Rugezi Marsh is rich in wildlife and natural beauty, and in 2025, a new group of trained community guides can begin to share that story with visitors.

RWCA organised a two-week Community Guide Training, bringing together 12 participants, including Community Rangers, guides from Umusambi Village, Rugezi Ornithology Center, and Burera Youth Community, as well as two recent graduates in tourism.

Through a combination of classroom sessions and field training, participants developed a wealth of practical skills in bird identification, visitor communication, storytelling, and responsible guiding practices.

By strengthening local guiding capacity, RWCA is helping lay the foundation for responsible eco-tourism that supports communities while safeguarding one of Rwanda's most important wetlands.



Cleaner Cooking: Healthier Wetlands

Protecting Rugezi Marsh also means supporting the communities who live around it.

RWCA distributed a further 200 energy-efficient cooking stoves to families living near the marsh, building on 280 stoves the previous year. These stoves use less firewood and produce less smoke, making cooking safer and healthier while reducing the need to collect wood from the marsh's buffer zone.

For families, this means shorter cooking times, cleaner indoor air, and more time for other activities. For the marsh, it means less pressure on the buffer zone and stronger protection for its unique biodiversity.

By combining practical support with conservation, RWCA is helping communities live more sustainably while safeguarding one of Rwanda's most important wetlands. When communities thrive, nature thrives.



Restoring and Protecting Natural Habitats

Habitat protection features throughout all our projects and we are passionate about growing indigenous trees for the benefit of both people and wildlife.



354

Hectares

of land under restoration nationwide.

44,800

Agroforestry trees

planted to support community livelihoods and landscape resilience.

17,720

Indigenous trees

planted at restoration sites across Rwanda.

228

Kilograms of indigenous tree seeds

sustainably collected by our team of Community Seed Champions.



Restoring Habitats for Wildlife and People

Habitat restoration is at the heart of RWCA's mission to rebuild healthy ecosystems while supporting the communities that depend on them. In 2025, we continued to expand our restoration work, focusing on indigenous tree species that help create resilient, self-sustaining landscapes.

Several new sites came under restoration, bringing our total restoration footprint to 354 hectares of wetlands and forests nationwide. Community participation remains central to this work: 1,232 local people, over half of them women, received temporary employment to support the restoration work, strengthening stewardship and building pride in protecting nature.

Guided by our principle that we don't just plant trees—we grow them, Community Conservation Champions support the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the sites, helping achieve tree survival rates of over 90% and ensuring lasting impact for both nature and people.



A New Conservation Area Takes Shape

In Rwanda's Eastern Province, a new conservation landscape is beginning to take shape. In 2025, RWCA moved from vision to action, securing land and starting vital restoration work.

Nearly 150 hectares of land have been secured toward our 300-hectare restoration goal. Teams of community members have begun to remove invasive plants and replant indigenous trees and grasses bringing life back to a recovering savannah ecosystem. This growing landscape will strengthen habitats and support important species, including the Shoebill and the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane.

Looking ahead, restoration work will continue to expand, alongside a growing team of Community Rangers and Tree Champions who will protect the area and care for newly planted trees. This will lay the foundation for a thriving, wildlife-rich landscape that will benefit nature and the local community for years to come.



Building a Resilient Landscape with Communities

Communities are transforming Rugezi Marsh, one hillside at a time. In 2025, RWCA strengthened and expanded restoration efforts by working closely with local leaders and residents to restore degraded hillsides while supporting sustainable livelihoods.

This integrated approach reached three new sites, restoring 56 hectares of steep slopes into safer, more fertile land. Terracing and planting indigenous trees improved soil stability and biodiversity, while agroforestry, fodder grasses, and fruit trees support crops, livestock, and household incomes—reducing pressure on the marsh.

For many families, the impact is life-changing.

“In 2018, I lost my house to landslides. It was a very difficult time for my family. But since RWCA built terraces on our hillside, everything has changed. I have built a new home, and now I live without fear when it rains.”

– Community Member nearby Rugezi Marsh

Community engagement remains at the heart of this work. Through Conservation Agreements and ongoing dialogue, local people actively protect and maintain restored areas—helping build a resilient landscape for the future.



Seed Champions at the Heart of Restoration

At RWCA, restoration begins with seeds and our 18 Community Seed Champions are at the centre of this work. Trained in sustainable harvesting, they carefully select mature indigenous trees and collect seeds without harming the trees or surrounding habitats. Their deep knowledge of local landscapes makes them true guardians of Rwanda's natural heritage.

Our Seed Champions collected seeds from 18 different indigenous tree species, which are then stored safely in our nursery seed bank until ready for germination. This important work ensures a reliable supply of high-quality seeds for planting and supports restoration across the country.

By starting with the right seeds, RWCA is able to grow the right trees, creating healthier ecosystems and laying the foundation for long-term restoration success.



Restoring Rwanda's Forests Together

RWCA and Rwanda Forestry Authority joined forces to restore and protect Rwanda's degraded habitats through a new Memorandum of Understanding.

The partnership provides a framework for joint habitat restoration efforts, focusing on planting and promoting indigenous tree species that restore forests, support wildlife, protect water sources, and improve climate resilience for surrounding communities.

We are excited to combine RWCA's community-based conservation experience with RFA's national expertise in forest management to strengthen restoration work and create lasting impact for both people and nature.

Umusambi Village



Connecting People and Nature

More people than ever are discovering the beauty of Umusambi Village. In 2025, the site welcomed **10,546 visitors**, as growing numbers of students, families, tourists, and nature enthusiasts came to experience the restored wetland.

Walking along its peaceful trails, visitors encounter rich birdlife and see the elegant Grey Crowned Cranes, while learning about the work we do.

For many, a visit offers a rare chance to connect with nature and understand the importance of conservation firsthand. As visitor numbers grow, Umusambi Village is becoming a powerful space for inspiring appreciation and support for protecting Rwanda's wildlife and wild places.

Umusambi Village: Bringing Wetlands Back to Life

Once a degraded wetland, Umusambi Village has transformed into a thriving ecosystem and a model for wetland restoration.

A safe refuge for Grey Crowned Cranes rescued from the illegal pet trade, the restored habitat has become one of Kigali's top birdwatching sites, with over 140 bird species, from Spotted Eagle-Owls and Purple Herons to Common Sandpipers and Palm Nut Vultures.

Umusambi Village also cares for other rescued wildlife—injured, displaced, or confiscated from illegal trade—giving them a second chance to recover and thrive in nature.

Through careful habitat restoration and ongoing protection, Umusambi Village demonstrates how degraded wetlands can come back to life and support diverse wildlife.



Disabled Cranes Thrive at Umusambi Village

At Umusambi Village, rescued Grey Crowned Cranes are thriving despite the odds. They were rescued from captivity after being kept as pets, where injuries or disabilities meant they would not survive in the wild. At Umusambi Village, they have found a safe home, living freely in a natural wetland environment once again.

A dedicated team of veterinarians and caretakers provide daily monitoring, health checks, and careful observation to ensure their well-being. One of the most inspiring signs of success is their breeding!

In 2025, nine breeding pairs were recorded, including three wild pairs that chose to breed at Umusambi Village. Twelve chicks hatched, and nine young cranes successfully fledged—showing that even cranes once harmed by captivity can play a role in the future of their species.



Staff Development



RWCA wins the Wildlife Ranger Challenge

Imagine running 21km over rough terrain carrying 22kg backpacks! Our team of Community Rangers competed in the Wildlife Ranger Challenge against more than 170 teams across 24 African countries, and came out victorious. Their incredible performance saw the RWCA men's team take 1st place and the women's team secure 3rd place—a true testament to skill, strength, and teamwork!

This victory goes beyond medals. Every day, these Rangers protect Rugezi Marsh and its incredible biodiversity, including endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. Their courage, endurance, and teamwork on the course mirrors the same commitment they bring to conservation on the ground, proving that determination and skill deliver extraordinary results.





RWCA Founder & CEO Dr Olivier won the Whitley Gold Award for significant, sustained contributions to conservation.



Placide presented at the International Congress for Conservation Biology 2025 in Brisbane, Australia.



Peace joined international bat researchers from 21 countries for a workshop in Malaysia organised by Global South Bats initiative.



Jean Paul and Monique represented RWCA at The African Ranger Congress in Kenya.



Dr. Christophe successfully completed the world renowned Malilingwe Course in Chemical and Physical Restraint of African Wildlife in Zimbabwe.



Providence participated in an exchange visit to Painted Dog Conservation in Zimbabwe.



New Developments





A Home for Conservation

After years of growth, RWCA is putting down roots. With generous support from the Houston Zoo, RWCA was delighted this year to secure its own permanent home, moving from rented offices to a dedicated space that will support our long-term work in conservation.

The new headquarters will provide offices for staff, meeting space for collaboration, and guest rooms to host visiting researchers and partners—creating a welcoming hub where ideas, partnerships, and action can thrive.

In 2026, we hope to begin transforming the building into a vibrant and functional workspace that reflects our mission to protect Rwanda's wildlife and wild places.



A Space for Women to Grow

A new chapter is taking shape for women's enterprises around Rugezi Marsh. In 2025, RWCA began the construction of a Community Centre that will become a dedicated space for the women's sewing and craft cooperatives to work, collaborate, and grow their businesses.

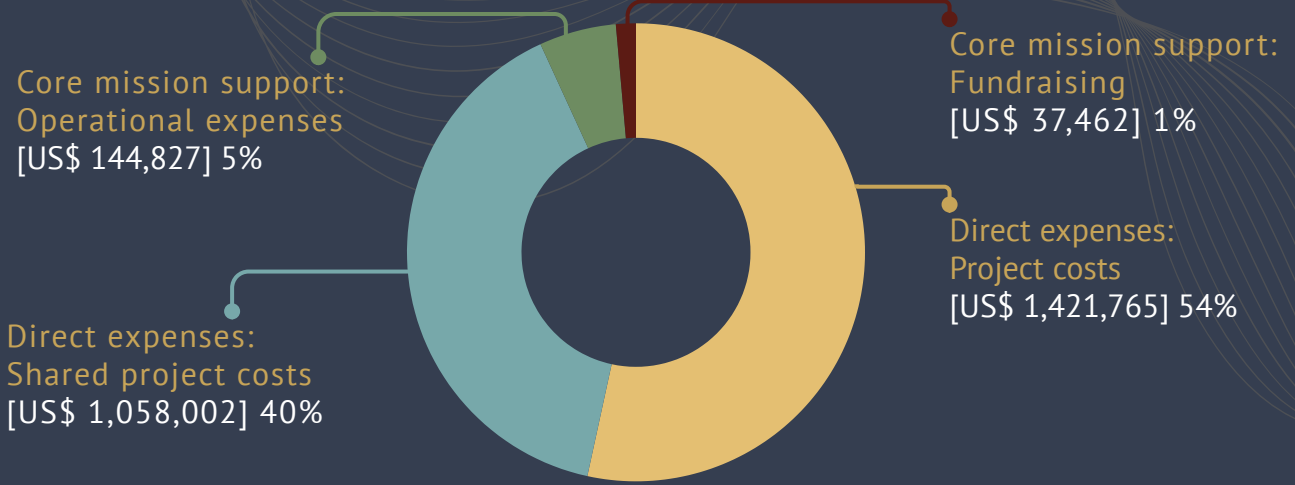
When it opens in 2026, the centre will include a workspace, an exhibition area for handmade products, and a small coffee shop—creating a welcoming place for visitors while supporting women's livelihoods.

This new space will help women increase their income, build sustainable businesses, and support their families while reducing their reliance on the marsh.

Financial Summary



Income for 2025	USD	RWF
Funds received in 2024 for 2025	733,691	1,014,685,552
Funds received in 2025	2,812,207	4,021,465,030
Total income for 2025	3,545,898	5,036,150,582
Funds designated for 2026	883,842	1,228,563,678
Total expenditure for 2025	2,662,056	3,807,586,904



With Gratitude

Our work would not be possible without the support of our dedicated donors and supporters. You have made this work possible through grant funding, awards, training opportunities, skill sharing, and the donation of equipment and time. We express our deepest gratitude for your fantastic support and look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming years to achieve even more!



A special thank you to all our individual donors. Your generous support is a source of great encouragement for us, as it is truly heartening to see individuals from all corners of the world rallying behind our cause and believing in the impact of our work. Thank you!

Support our Work

By making a gift to RWCA, you will help secure the future of threatened wildlife and their habitats in Rwanda. We depend on your generosity to maintain our vital conservation work.

To make a donation scan the QR Code or visit:

<https://wildnet.org/wildlife-programs/grey-crowned-cranes/>





Thank you for your support, it really does make a difference.


All donations are received via our wonderful partner Wildlife Conservation Network. 100% of the donation will go to us at RWCA and can be used across all our projects.



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 [Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association-RWCA](https://www.linkedin.com/company/rwanda-wildlife-conservation-association-rwca)

www.rwandawildlife.org