



RWCA's Highlights of 2020

Community Conservation Continues Despite COVID-19 Restrictions

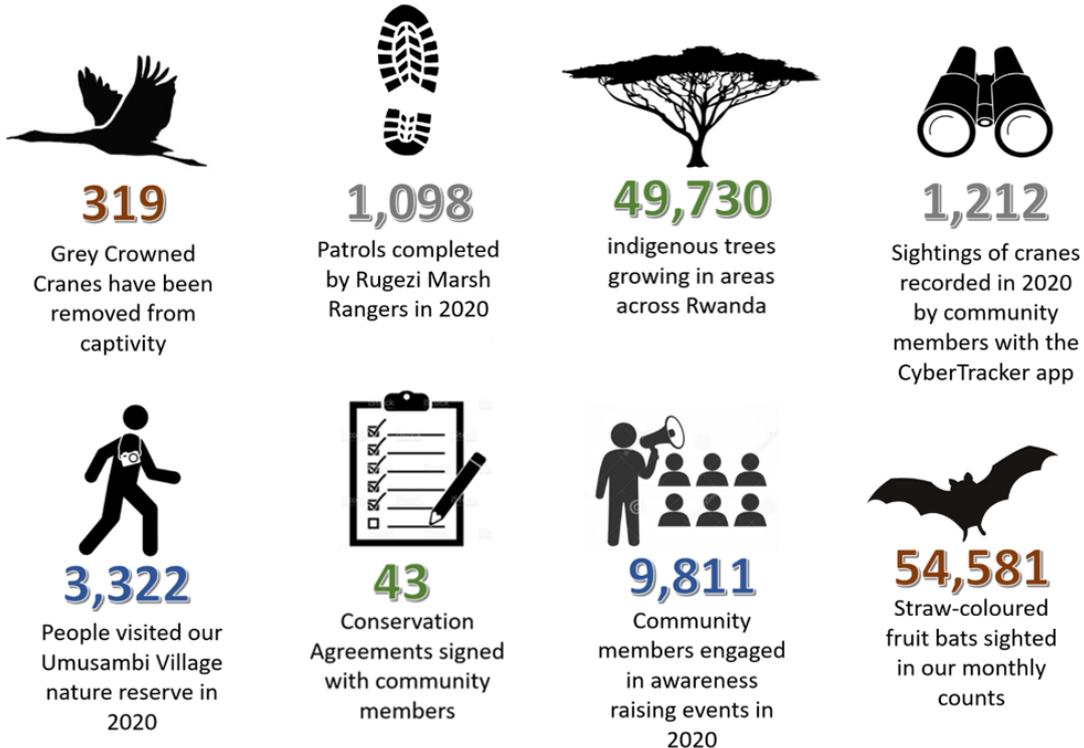


2020 has been a tough year for us all and we hope that all of our supporters are staying as safe as possible from COVID-19. Like the whole world, RWCA has had to adapt and find new and creative ways to maintain our impact when faced with restrictions that the pandemic has brought. We are thrilled that during this time, our model of Community Conservation has exceeded our expectations. With teams of people on the ground throughout the country, this has been a quick and efficient way to address conservation challenges as they arise and make a lasting impact.

As we move into 2021, our community model will be one of our top priorities for strengthening and scaling up.

RWCA's mission is to provide sustainable solutions to critical wildlife conservation issues in Rwanda and the East African region using a holistic and multi-disciplinary, One Health Approach.

RWCA 2020 Highlights



Our goals are to...

Provide a holistic multi-disciplinary approach to critical conservation issues in order to create sustainable solutions

- ❖ Protect wildlife and natural habitats
- ❖ Engage and educate local communities and improve livelihoods
 - ❖ Raise awareness of conservation issues
- ❖ Build the capacity of young Rwandese veterinarians and conservationists
 - ❖ Disseminate high quality research and evaluation

Our Achievements of 2020

Protecting Wildlife and Natural Habitats



We are happy to announce that as a result of our efforts since 2014, and in collaboration with the Rwandan Government, all Grey Crowned Cranes living in houses and hotels in Rwanda have now been removed from captivity. In 2020 we delivered another national media campaign and ended the amnesty for people declaring captive cranes.

Our Rangers have increased law enforcement and protection of the marsh, completing **1,098** patrols in 2020. They identified **1,398** cases of illegal activities throughout the year such as cutting grass, grazing livestock, hunting or cutting trees and **869** of these were serious enough to be reported to local leaders (63%) and of those, **851** were successfully followed up by the local leaders (98%).



In 2020, we recruited **19** more Community Rangers and our team has now grown to **50**, including **25** women. They were able to continue their important work protecting Rugezi Marsh throughout the time of COVID-19 completing patrols, educating fellow community members, collaborating with local leaders and monitoring the crane populations.



In 2020, we received **19** reports of poached cranes which was high compared to previous years and we believe is due to the economic impact of COVID-19. However, through our fantastic community networks, including local leaders and our teams of Rangers and Conservation Champions, we were alerted to these cases. These incidents of poaching were resolved directly by our community teams and in one case the crane chick was able to be reunited with its parents.



This hard work for species protection has paid off and we are now seeing a greater number of Grey Crowned Crane chicks and juveniles (**8%** of cranes sighted in our 2019 census were juveniles compared to **13%** in our 2020 census). Our teams of Community Champions regularly monitor and protect breeding sites.



Our teams of Community Rangers and Conservation Champions, use the CyberTracker app to monitor crane sightings and breeding events. In 2020, they recorded **1,212** crane sightings on CyberTracker and monitored **69** breeding pairs resulting in **91** fledged chicks.



In 2020, our indigenous tree nursery grew **22,595** saplings from **35** different species. We believe in 'growing trees' rather than just 'planting trees' and have a team of community members following up and caring for the areas we are restoring. We implemented projects on two islands within Rugezi Marsh to restore biodiversity and provided paid work opportunities for **374** community members who live nearby the islands.



In 2020, we signed **4** Conservation Agreements with community members who have important roosting trees for Grey Crowned Cranes on their land. We explained the importance of these trees and the community members committed to protect them.

Engaging and Educating Local Communities



Our community teams reached **9,811** people through **80** awareness raising events in 2020.

A large part of the role of our Community Conservation Champions is to raise awareness among their communities about the need to protect wildlife and their habitats. With COVID-19 putting restrictions on group gatherings and meetings, this has become harder to achieve. Yet creative ways are possible, with this Champion taking to the market with a loud speaker to spread the message!



Our Youth Environmental Clubs have sadly had to take a break during COVID-19, but with schools gradually reopening in November, we gathered **157** youth club members together to give them new school bags and school equipment with the slogan 'We are the Future for Nature'!



In 2020, we were able to adapt our model of Community Conservation to protect other important wetland areas, with the focus on the threatened Sitatunga (a swamp-dwelling antelope). We recruited 9 new Community Champions who educate local communities, monitor sightings and protect them from hunting.

Raising Awareness of Conservation Issues



Our nature reserve and sanctuary for disabled Grey Crowned Cranes opened to the public in 2020. Despite COVID-19 restricting tourism and international travel, we received **3,322** visitors since its opening in June. A large part of our aim is to raise awareness about our work and the need to protect Grey Crowned Cranes and wetland areas.



Our bat team have been working with boat drivers and guides who take tourists to an island within Lake Kivu home to thousands of Straw-Coloured fruit bats. They used to throw stones or try to disturb the bats so that they fly up into the air as a display.

We trained **31** boat drivers, guides and local hotel owners, raising awareness of bats and how to interact safely with them, how to avoid stressing or harming the bats and how they can protect bats and their habitats to ensure that do not leave the island and they can benefit from tourism in the longer term.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a lot of questions about bats into the public domain. We took this opportunity to raise awareness about bats and the need to protect them, as well as how to live safely alongside them to minimise any disease transmission. We reached more than **1000** people in Kigali city, in addition to featuring on TV and radio chat shows!



We also identified some caves, home to insectivorous bats, yet also used by people wanting to pray or meditate. We investigated how the cave is used by people, assessed the risks and raised awareness with community members about how to live safely alongside bats.

Building our Team's Capacity



In 2020, we worked hard to build the capacity of our community teams through the provision of equipment to improve their roles. We distributed bikes to all members of our community teams so that they can more easily travel longer distances, access new areas and respond quickly to reports of poaching.



Our team benefited from capacity building training from Houston Zoo veterinarian, Dr. Judilee Marrow who assisted us in some crane surgeries for cranes we rescued from captivity.

We also worked in collaboration with US Forest Services, building the capacity of our staff to develop best practices at our indigenous tree nursery which will bring stronger healthier saplings.

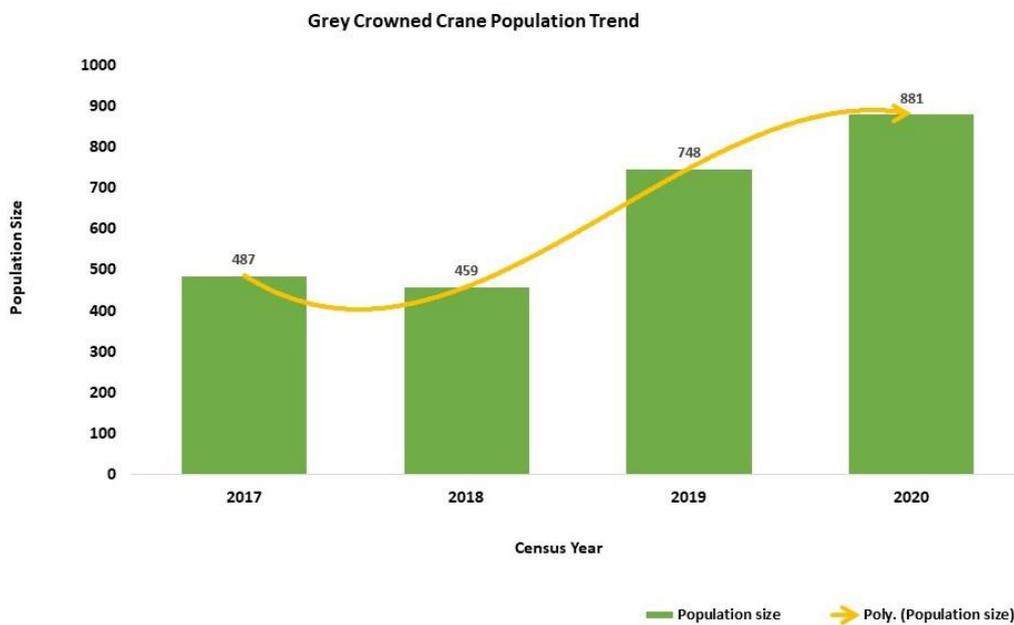


6 of our staff members have participated in international training opportunities in 2020 and **6** have also participated in meetings, workshops or working groups within Rwanda. **3** of our staff have been enrolled in Masters studies in 2020.

Research and Evaluation



Every year we conduct a Grey Crowned Crane census using both aerial and ground surveys to keep track of the crane population and any trends in different regions. This year we were delighted to record **881** Grey Crowned Cranes, up from 748 the year before!



The population trend of Grey Crowned Cranes in Rwanda is increasing over time suggesting that the work we are doing to protect them and their habitats is having an impact!



We have fitted **6** Grey Crowned Cranes with GPS tags so that we can better understand their movement patterns and habitat preferences. This is leading us to develop collaborations with our neighbouring countries as we know they fly over country borders!



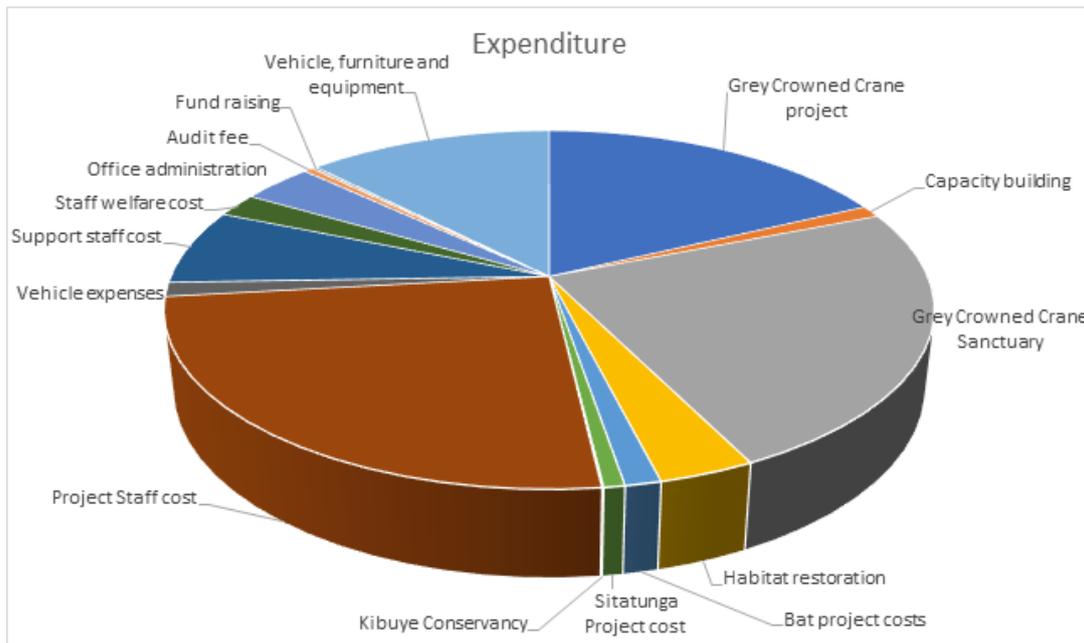
Throughout 2020, our bat team have continued to visit colonies of Straw-coloured fruit bats around the country and monitor their number fluctuations. This year we regularly visited 12 sites and countrywide population estimates have ranged from **19,130** to **54,581** bats.



In collaboration with Bat Conservation International, preliminary results of our research work in Nyungwe National Park in which we surveyed 8 different caves, has shown that we successfully caught the Hill's horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hilli*), a rare bat last seen in 1981. We also identified a new species to Rwanda and a new species to Nyungwe National Park.

Financial Summary

	USD	Frw	%
Funds received in 2019 for 2020	63,470	58,289,626	
Funds received in 2020	503,076	478,727,299	
Project costs	350,979	331,199,643	
Grey Crowned Crane project	84,124	79,382,525	17.8%
Capacity building	5,088	4,801,101	1.1%
Grey Crowned Crane sanctuary	111,965	105,655,451	23.8%
Habitat restoration	16,102	15,194,214	3.4%
Bat project	6,033	5,692,872	1.3%
Sitatunga project	3,512	3,314,500	0.7%
Kibuye Conservancy	269	254,000	0.1%
Project staff costs	117,859	111,217,633	25.0%
Vehicle expenses	6,027	5,687,347	1.3%
Operating expenses	62,370	58,855,842	
Support staff costs	32,143	30,331,553	6.8%
Staff welfare costs	10,132	9,561,098	2.1%
Office administration	16,882	15,930,691	3.6%
Audit fees	2,119	2,000,000	0.4%
Fundraising	1,094	1,032,500	0.2%
Capital expenditure	57,972	54,704,620	
Vehicle, furniture and equipment	57,972	54,704,620	12.3%
Total funds used in 2020	471,321	444,760,105	100%
Funds designated for 2021	95,225	92,256,820	



With your support and encouragement, we have achieved so much and we

THANK YOU!



For more information on the work we do please visit our website or facebook page.

www.rwandawildlife.org

www.facebook.com/rwandawildlife

Dr. Olivier Nsengimana
 Founder & Executive Director, RWCA