



18 September 2017

Ford Wildlife Foundation Supports the Wildlife and Roads Project with New Ford Ranger

The Ford Wildlife Foundation (FWF) handed over a new Ford Ranger to the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Wildlife and Roads Project, which aims to reduce the impacts of roads on wildlife, particularly roadkill rates in South Africa's protected areas. The handover forms part of Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa's (FMCSA) commitment to the conservation and preservation of the environment in sub-Saharan Africa.

Work conducted by the EWT suggests that roadkill rates in South Africa's protected areas are substantially higher than in protected areas in other parts of the world, and with tourism expected to grow significantly by 2020, the road networks in protected areas will be placed under increasing pressure to meet the associated demands. Striking a balance between the need for an efficient transport network to support tourism in protected areas and the need to conserve wildlife is therefore a challenge.

South Africa's protected areas are the prime custodians of our incredible plants and animals. The more popular parks receive high volumes of vehicular traffic, which impacts negatively on wildlife through wildlife-vehicle collisions. The Wildlife and Roads Project initiated its Roads in Parks Project in 2014 to reduce the impact of road users on wildlife in protected areas. The five-year project will ground-truth data collected via expert surveys and social media platforms in order to establish cost-effective, long-term roadkill monitoring and mitigation in parks.

"The EWT's Wildlife and Roads Project is the only large scale initiative in the country that tackles the issue of wildlife deaths on our roads head on," says Wendy Collinson, Wildlife and Roads Project Executant. "Road Ecology is a rapidly emerging field of research for which the EWT and the FWF are spearheading pioneering initiatives, and being recognised as being at the forefront of this area of research."

How the Ford Ranger Will Support the Wildlife and Roads Project

"Our projects will benefit enormously from the use of the Ford Ranger since we are active on all roads in the country – from protected areas to regional and national highways – and the enormous amount of traveling that we do has often been problematic in the past due to the lack of a project vehicle," says Collinson. "Being a part of FWF will allow us more freedom to expand our projects, with a reliable vehicle."

The locally-built Ford Ranger, which is one of South Africa's top-selling vehicles overall and in the light commercial segment, will be used to enable the project to go further and make a real impact – particularly in the remote locations often associated with conservation and environmental projects.

“It is exciting to be associated with such a well-known, respected organisation that supports environmental education, research, and conservation projects in sub-Saharan Africa,” says Collinson.

Ford Wildlife Foundation Dedication to Conservation

For the past 30 years, Ford Motor Company of South Africa (FMCSA) has been actively involved in the conservation of wildlife and ecosystems in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. To date, FMCSA has invested almost R40 million to support more than 170 conservation projects. In 2014, FMCSA established the Ford Wildlife Foundation (FWF) – a body that consists of FMCSA, members of Ford's dealer network, and experts from the wildlife conservation sector.

The Ford Wildlife Foundation is unique as it does not provide a cash donation to the conservation projects it supports, instead Ford's partner organisations are equipped with Ford Rangers. The vehicles provided are used to help project operations, such as transporting field equipment, helping vets reach sick or poached animals, or translocating the animals themselves. The vehicles operating in all Ford Wildlife Foundation projects are monitored and serviced by Ford's extensive dealer network to ensure they operate at peak efficiency.

Since 2014, the FWF has invested R8 million in vehicles and vehicle services to support 23 conservation projects in South Africa. In 2017 alone, Ford Rangers at a total value of R5.3 million have been handed over to partner organisations to support their work in the field.

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