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Ford Wildlife Foundation Supports Cranes and Wetlands Conservation with New Ford Ranger

Start

The Ford Wildlife Foundation (FWF) handed over a new Ford Ranger bakkie to the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) to support its Cranes, Wetlands and Communities Project. 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.

As part of two decades of work by the EWT's African Crane Conservation Programme, the EWT's Cranes, Wetlands and Communities Project has been running for the past seven years to halt the decline of all three of South Africa's crane species – including the Vulnerable Blue Crane, the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane, and the Critically Endangered Wattled Crane.

Due to their dependence on wetlands for their survival, the project uses cranes as flagships for the protection and restoration of key wetlands and grasslands within strategically selected catchments in the Drakensberg and Highveld regions. The expansion of these protected areas and ecosystems is important for both people and cranes alike – these are our water factories to support our everyday lives, economic development and support biodiversity. In addition, the project works with communities in each of the focus areas to ensure people become part of the long-term solution in conserving natural resources and biodiversity.

The EWT project is already turning the tide on the decline of crane populations in South Africa. By focusing on the core areas important for cranes and using cranes as flagships for habitat protection, the project has protected over 100 000 hectares of land in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. That is an area five times the size of Table Mountain National Park. As a result, all three species of cranes are increasing in number, with the Grey Crowned Crane population in KwaZulu-Natal increasing by 44% over the past decade alone.

How the Ford Ranger Will Support the Cranes, Wetlands and Communities Project

The project consists of a team of eight that is dedicated to the conservation of some incredibly unique and valuable parts of South Africa. "Team members have to travel large distances from rural Eastern Cape in the south to the Lakes District – Chrissiesmeer in Mpumalanga, working daily with farmers and rural communities, schools and municipalities. With only four vehicles available – two of which

are soon to be decommissioned – the support of a new Ford Ranger from Ford Wildlife Foundation will be invaluable to the project’s operations,” says Tanya Smith, Southern Africa Regional Manager, African Crane Conservation Programme.

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.

Ford Wildlife Foundation Dedication to Conservation

For the past 25 years, FMCSA has supported more than 150 conservation projects and invested over R30 million to help maintain wildlife and ecosystems in South Africa. In September 2014, FMCSA officially established the Ford Wildlife Foundation to continue that support.

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 are provided to help project operations, such as transporting animals between different locations, vets to sick or poached animals, or environmental experts to educate others on the importance of conservation.

With the support of Ford’s extensive dealer network, the vehicles operating in all Ford Wildlife Foundation projects are monitored and serviced by Ford to ensure they operate at peak efficiency.

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