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Background to the “Tracks of Giants” project:

The TRACKS OF GIANTS (TRACKS) project is an initiative of the Wilderness Foundation and Wilderness Leadership School, a highly respected and much awarded environmental non-profit organisation of more than 50 years standing in southern Africa, which seeks to partner with key government and other organisations in each of the countries that will be traversed. In 2012 The Bateleurs flew three separate flight for the project.

The objective of the flights

To transport key personnel (the logistics manager, the expedition leader, and the film-maker) from Windhoek Airport to Purros, and from Opuwo to Cape Town airport.

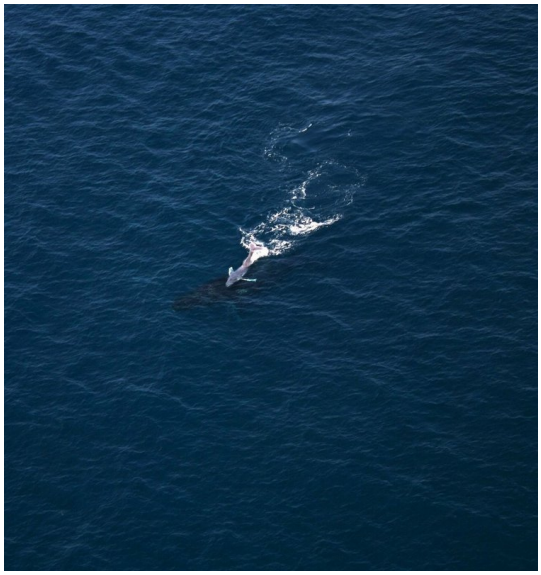
Beneficiary report by the Tracks of Giants project

“Tracks of Giants, the epic conservation trek of more than 5,000 kilometres through six southern

African countries has come to an end. But the impact of the expedition will have a lasting effect for years to come.

Starting on the Namibian coastline on May 01, 2012, the journey saw a team of conservationists travel across southern Africa through Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa where the two team leaders, Ian McCallum and Ian Michler, met with conservation 'giants' in each area. The "two Ians" undertook the entire journey without the use of mechanical transportation. They walked, cycled and kayaked in the historical tracks of migrating elephants in order to highlight the need for corridor conservation, transfrontier parks, and promote more understanding about the coexistence of humans with wild animals. They were supported by a backup team, and joined by various sponsors and environmentalists along the way.

Now that the expedition component, which has been absolutely vital for the gathering of relevant and up-to-date field data, is done, the most significant challenge is about to begin," says specialist wilderness guide, photojournalist and naturalist Ian Michler. "In the months to come we will be processing and laying out all the conservation, wildlife management, community and ecotourism issues we have encountered along the route. We are hoping the final products (a book and documentary film) will be ready in time for the next World Wilderness Congress in October, 2013."



Medical doctor, psychiatrist, writer and conservationist, Ian McCallum, hopes that the expedition

has laid the groundwork for building the trust of the local people in each region. “If we do not get the trust of the people on the ground, conservation is doomed. They have been disempowered over the years by governments and government departments, but we have to start listening to what they have to say.”

At the close of the expedition, the Tracks of Giants team handed over a GPS-linked elephant collar which they `had carried with them throughout the journey. The collar acted as a constant reminder of the purpose of the journey, as well as a valuable part of the backup team’s equipment. It was handed over to Elephants Without Borders (EWB) and will become part of the journey’s legacy when it is attached to one of the elephants that EWB tracks in the Chobe region of Botswana.

“The collar is a symbol of what we’ve learned from monitoring elephants and how that knowledge has become our path, leading us towards positive conservation efforts,” says Kelly Landen of EWB. Landen and Dr Mike Chase, also from EWB, guided the Tracks of Giants team through Chobe and the Linyanti Floodplain in Botswana.

The twenty week journey culminated on the dunes at Cape Vidal on KwaZulu Natal’s northern coastline on Monday, September 03. Wilderness Foundation CEO, Andrew Muir joined the team for the final week of the journey walking along the shores of St Lucia – a Natural World Heritage Site. They were met by founder of the Wilderness Foundation and Wilderness Leadership School and world-renown conservationist, Dr Ian Player.

“The journey may have come to an end, but the full impact of Tracks of Giants is still to come,” says Muir. “The Wilderness Foundation is extremely grateful to all the environmental organisations, sponsors and supporters that made this journey possible. We are looking forward to seeing the results of the foundation that has been laid.”

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