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TSWALE'S WALK TO FREEDOM

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD:



SPRING 2026

 THE
ASPINAL
FOUNDATION
Registered Charity No. 326567

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Welcome to 2026's first issue of Wildcry. With your help our team have achieved great things since the last edition, and we have some truly incredible stories to share. Stories that demonstrate that when animals are given the chance of freedom, their instincts can lead them home...

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, work to prepare three beautiful, UK-born black rhino females for rewilding is progressing well. Our amazing team have prepared an update for you to explain the delicate and fascinating process of getting black rhinos ready for international travel!

We also know how much our supporters enjoy a glimpse into the lives of the teams who have dedicated themselves to protecting animals and their habitats. If you've ever wondered what a Congo Ranger's Day looks like, Sophia, our Overseas Project Manager, has just returned from a monitoring visit to our project with stories to share. **Read on to experience a day of forest life.**



CONGO & GABON

TANZANIA

JAVA

MADAGASCAR

SOUTH AFRICA



UPDATES ON TAF PROJECTS IN THIS ISSUE



MORE TAF PROJECTS YOUR DONATIONS IMPACT

Supporters of our work in Java will be delighted to learn that the three langurs who travelled from the UK in 2024 are one step closer to a life in the wild. Meanwhile, the team in Madagascar are working more closely than ever with local communities to protect forests and make real change in this threatened landscape.

One of the stories I am most excited to share with you is that of Tswale the elephant.

After almost three decades of grotesque mistreatment, this powerful bull has been rescued and rewilded.

Thanks to a passionate group of conservationists and animal-lovers from all around the world, he will never again know the indignity of human abuse.

Tswale's story is a powerful reminder of why your support matters so much. Captured as a calf, he grew

into a magnificent bull elephant without ever knowing the freedom of the wild. Yet when the moment finally came, his instincts had not faded. Within days of release, he was able to communicate with wild elephants kilometres away, join their herd, and begin to take his place among them. Following the call that had lived inside him all along - the call of the wild.

All of this vital work is only possible thanks to the kindness of our friends and donors. We hope you enjoy reading these updates and seeing the very real impact that your love for nature has had on the world.

THANK YOU



AMOS COURAGE
OVERSEAS PROJECT DIRECTOR
THE ASPINALL FOUNDATION (TAF)

RHINOS ON THE MOVE TANZANIA



You may recall that we recently wrote to you with exciting news regarding our ambitious project to rewild three UK-born black rhinos named Kisima, Chanua and Mizi.

Behind the scenes at Port Lympne Reserve, one of our UK partner parks, the team have been working tirelessly to prepare the rhinos for their upcoming journey to Tanzania. You could say that our team are teaching these gorgeous girls the fine art of international travel!

Currently, the team are getting the girls used to their personalised Business Class travel crates. **Each rhino has her own tailored crate, custom-built to offer comfort and safety during their journey.** However, rhinos are naturally suspicious creatures, and we need to work with them to get the girls as comfortable and relaxed in their crates as you would be in your seat on an international flight.

THE STEPS TO GETTING THEM THERE

1. FAMILIARISATION

The first step is familiarisation. Keepers who the rhinos trust most use favourite snacks such as chunks of celery and carrots to tempt them into the crate. At first, the visits to the crate are quick and the doors are never closed.

2. INCREASE TIME AND FREQUENCY

Slowly, the team increase the time spent in the crate and the frequency of visits. This step is vital to ensure the rhinos are confident in a previously unfamiliar setting, ensuring that they are as calm as possible on moving day.

3. INCREASE NOISE LEVELS

As Kisima, Chanua and Mizi grow in confidence, they will become comfortable standing in their crates for extended periods. At this stage, the team will introduce noise levels around the crates to replicate the environment of a loading situation at an airport.

4. PERIOD OF ACCLIMATISATION

Again, a carefully managed period of acclimatisation will follow. Rhinos can't be rushed and we monitor each animal carefully to ensure that they are completely at ease.



5. CLOSE THE DOORS FOR A SHORT TIME

When they are comfy in their crates and used to the noises of humans busily preparing around them, we will finally close the doors and gates on the crates for a short time.

6. INCREASE TIME WITH DOORS CLOSED

Over time, the rhinos will spend increasing lengths of time in their transport crates until we are confident that they are ready for their big adventure to Tanzania. We will keep you updated with the girls' progress as they prepare for their new life in the wild!

Thanks to your support, this day could be coming in the near future

ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE WILD JAVA

DECEMBER 2024

Three male Javan langurs named **Taman, Vitus and Kaget** left the UK to start

...a new life in the lands of their ancestors...

as part of an Aspinall Foundation rewilding project.

The boys were flown to our project in West Java, where they underwent a mandatory 3-month quarantine process to protect the native population. Following successful quarantine, they graduated to socialisation enclosures where they experienced wild foods and new enrichment activities made using native materials and foods. This both physically and mentally stimulates the primates while also **slowly getting them used to the smells, tastes and textures they will encounter in the wild.**



GRADUATED TO EAST JAVA

2025

Recently, Taman, Vitus and Kaget graduated to our project in East Java to be introduced to other primates. They are currently living in a large socialisation enclosure with seven other langurs, all of whom are wild-born rescued animals.

Sadly, in Indonesia our team regularly rescue wild-born primates from the pet trade. Sometimes owners will come to realise they cannot care for their 'pet' and they voluntarily surrender the animals. On other occasions, we work with government authorities who confiscate the animals from unsuitable homes. No matter how they come to us, these rescued primates receive the very best of care as we strive to return them to the wild, where they belong. **So far, we have rehabilitated and returned to the wild more than 190 langurs with your generous support!**



The opportunity for Taman, Vitus and Kaget to form bonds with other primates is vital to allow them to thrive in the forest. In the wild, Javan langurs live in groups of roughly seven with one dominant and one subordinate male. It is crucial for their welfare that we encourage our rehabilitated animals to display this natural behaviour and integrate into groups before they are released into the forest. This bonding process takes at least six months, sometimes longer depending on the individual animal.

INDONESIAN TEAM REPORT:

- Taman, Vitus and Kaget are adjusting well to wild foods
- Signs of bonding with their new friends is highly encouraging

When they are ready, the primates will be released into the forests where they will live free and without fear of humans, all thanks to the generosity of supporters like you.

TSWALE'S WALK TO FREEDOM

SOUTH AFRICA



For almost three decades, Tswale's life was defined by human control. Captured as a calf, he grew into a powerful bull elephant without ever knowing the freedom of the wild. **He was treated as little more than a commodity by many of the humans he encountered.**

Last year, that changed.

Through an extraordinary conservation collaboration supported by The Aspinall Foundation, Tswale has been successfully rewilded and **given a permanent home at Bellevue Forest Reserve in South Africa's Eastern Cape.**

The translocation was led by the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) in partnership with WeWild Africa, with vital support from

the Aspinall Foundation, the EMS Foundation and Animaltalk Africa Trust. Together, these organisations proved that ethical, well-planned rewilding is possible even for elephants raised entirely in captivity.

Bellevue Forest Reserve was carefully selected for its natural vegetation, reliable water sources and stable elephant population. These conditions offered Tswale the best chance to adapt and thrive. Before joining the resident herd, he spent time in a rewilding enclosure under the close supervision of Amos Jivendava, his handler of more than 20 years. Amos accompanied Tswale throughout the relocation, providing continuity and reassurance during a major transition.

Within just a few short days of his transfer to Bellevue, Tswale began to show intriguing behavioural changes: he started ignoring his human handler and began to make low rumbling noises. Unknown to Amos, who had never seen Tswale communicating with his own kind, **the bull elephant was communicating with the resident herd, who were kilometres away!** By day three, Tswale was staring determinedly in a set direction, showing he knew where he wanted to go.

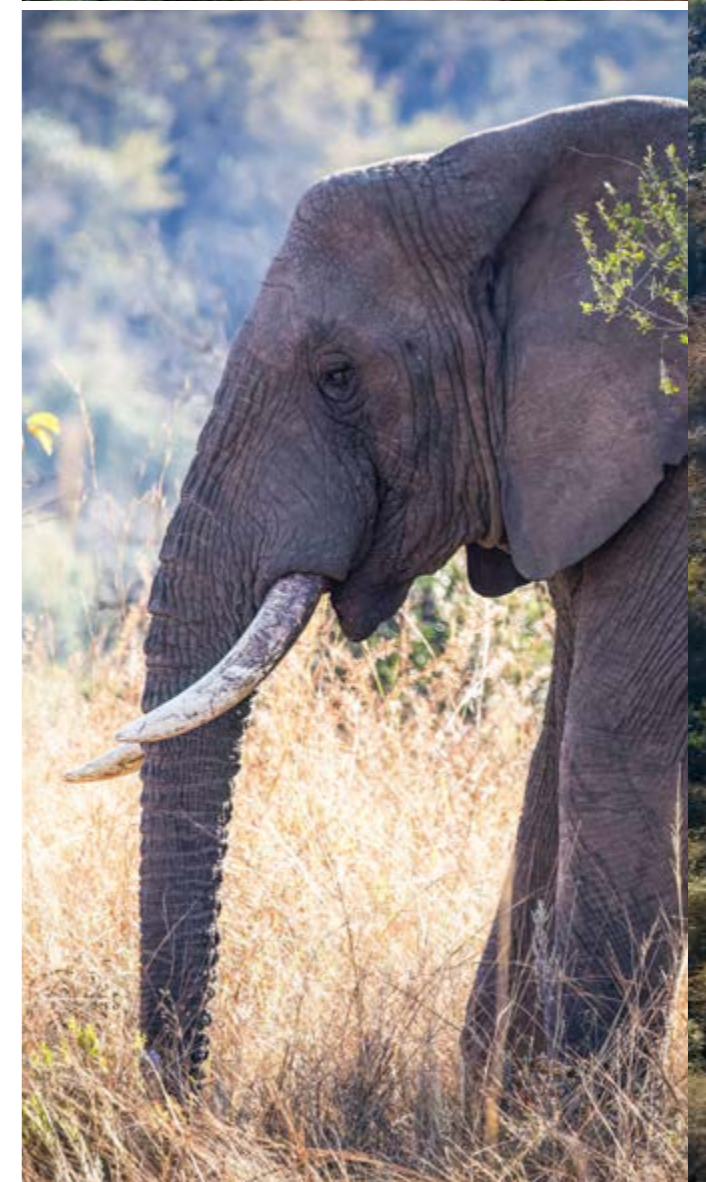
He had a big drink, turned his back on Amos and set off into the bush.

Amos could not keep up and Tswale had no intention of waiting for his former companion. The last time Amos heard Tswale, **the elephant was trumpeting joyfully.** A little later, rangers discovered Tswale calmly grazing with the elephant herd. He was accepted by the wild elephants far more quickly than anticipated and rapidly took on a dominant role among the young elephants, particularly the spirited young bulls.

Observers report calm social interactions and even protective behaviour toward younger elephants,

...a powerful reminder that his natural instincts endured despite a lifetime in captivity.

Remaining under the custodianship of the MTPA, Tswale is thriving in his new environment. **His story offers hope for other captive elephants across South Africa, showing that with commitment, collaboration and compassion, a return to the wild is possible for ANY elephant.**



NEWS FROM THE FIELD CONGO

It has been a busy time for our team in Congo, who recently undertook an exciting project to move some of our protected silverback gorillas between island habitats to support their ongoing care and rehabilitation.

WHAT ARE ISLAND HABITATS?

The Mpassa River runs through the area of forest we protect. Over years, erosion of sandbanks and similar forces slowly create natural islands which are ideal gorilla habitats.

We equip these islands with the basics to allow us to monitor and care for the gorillas, leaving them as natural as possible. The native vegetation and fruiting trees create a completely wild environment, which allows the gorillas living there to experience all the sights, sounds, tastes and experiences of life in the wider forest in a safe environment where humans or other gorillas do not pose a threat.

The islands are utilised to provide safe homes for older animals and launching pads for the rehabilitation and eventual release of animals being prepared for rewilding.

Regular river patrols and camera traps allow our teams to monitor the gorillas on their island sanctuaries without disruption.



MPASSA RIVER



MOVING GORILLAS



KELLE

SETTLING IN FOR RETIREMENT

Kelle is a 30-year-old silverback gorilla. His advancing age means he is entering a phase of his life where additional support from our team would be highly beneficial for his ongoing welfare. A team of more than 20 people were assembled in winter 2025 to relocate the impressive male to his new home: a 100-acre island comprised of dense forest with wild savannah around the edges.

The move allows our team to monitor Kelle every day, ensuring that any age-based concerns can be swiftly treated. He has settled in perfectly. He has found wild sources of his favourite foods and has taken to patrolling the savannah to keep an eye on our own patrols. **He is clearly keeping as close a watch on our team as they are on him!**

KEBU



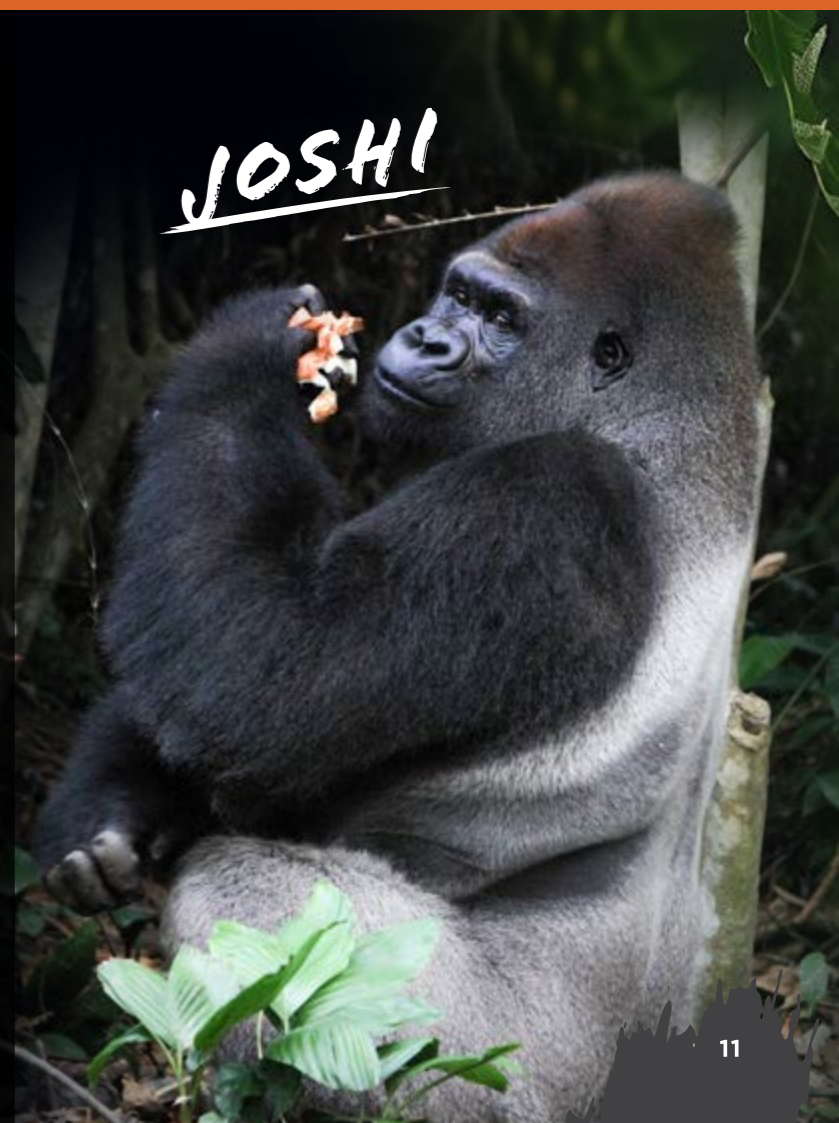
NEW FRIENDS AND NEW FOODS

Kebu began his rewilding journey in 2017, when he departed Port Lympne Reserve in the UK for a new life in the forests we protect. He is a shy and sensitive gorilla who has identified many of the wild foods the forest has to offer but can be slow to trust new food sources.

Kebu has been moved to a 65-acre island currently occupied by Joshi, who began his own rewilding journey in 2021. Joshi is a far more confident gorilla who has quickly adapted to wild foods and is always interested in discovering new and tasty treats in the forest. By mixing the two boys together, we hope that Kebu follows Joshi's lead and grows in food confidence.

Over time, **we expect a bond to develop between the two and we hope that as this brotherhood grows, the pair will be ready for release into the wider forests together.**

JOSHI

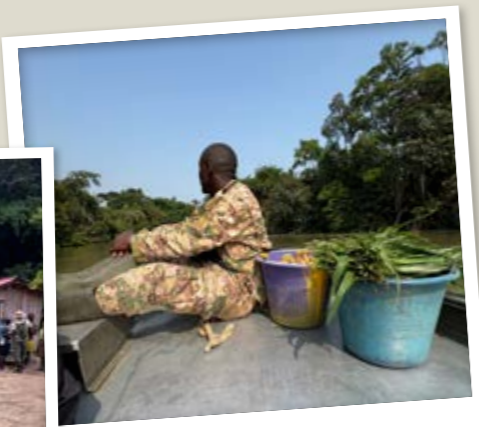


DIARY OF A RANGER CONGO

Ever wondered what our Ranger team gets up to in the forests of Congo? Sophia, our Overseas Projects Manager, caught up with them on a recent visit...



SOPHIA FAGAN
OVERSEAS PROJECT MANAGER
THE ASPINALL FOUNDATION



07:30 AM

Our day starts at around 7:30am when we prepare breakfast for the gorillas who require supplementary feeding as part of their rehabilitation. Fresh fruit and vegetables from local villages are used and carefully weighed to ensure the gorillas are receiving the correct nutrition and calories.

As part of preparing the breakfasts, we will gather grasses, branches and leaves from around the camp. **We call this 'browse' and it is basically gorilla salad, which they love.**

Once the meals are assembled, a group of Rangers will climb into a boat and head down the river to feed and monitor the gorillas. We assess their weight and condition, known as 'Body Score', take notes and photos for our colleagues around the world. We stay in contact with camp and each other via radio: mobile phone signal is a challenge and internet connections are sporadic, even with the huge satellite dish at camp.

Once breakfast has been served and we are confident that all the gorillas are happy and healthy, we collect footage from camera traps for later analysis.

12:00 PM

Lunch in the field is normally quick - fresh fruits and vegetables grown around camp or, if it's fruiting season, grabbed directly from the trees as we pass. A fresh mango is always a treat for us or the gorillas!

When we arrive back at camp, the footage from the camera traps is analysed. We watch for species sighted and absolutely anything that gives us insight into the lives of the gorillas. **How they interact, which individuals are travelling together, what they eat - any sighting gives us new information that would not be possible to capture without our camera traps.**

While we analyse footage, other members of the team are constantly carrying out maintenance of the camp and surrounding areas. We clear the river of fallen trees, maintain and repair our vehicles and equipment, gather additional browse for the gorillas and ensure that everything is running smoothly. When the nearest city is more than three and a half hours drive away (if the roads are clear and the weather is good), it's very important to keep on top of little jobs before they become big problems.



EVENING

In the evening, we often gather in the communal area of camp and share updates from our day. Internet is unreliable, so Netflix is out of the question, but sharing stories of the gorillas we've seen that day and **the unexpected species we spotted on our monitoring trips as we share a meal is always an enjoyable end to a day at camp.**



SHOPPING LIST

- CAMERA TRAPS
- BUCKETS
- RADIOS
- CHAINSAWS
- BRUSH CUTTERS
- STRIMMERS
- GARDENING TOOLS

EXCITING NEW PROJECT IN MADAGASCAR



LOWLAND RICE FIELD, BEZAMBA



PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



PROTECTING RAINFOREST, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES:

In July, with generous support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), we launched an exciting new multi-year project in and around the lowland rainforest of Andriantantely, Madagascar. Building on our existing work in the area, this programme allows us to expand protection and mapping by an impressive...

2,442 
HECTARES
OF VITAL HABITAT

At the heart of the project are local communities. Three new community associations (known as VOIs) will help identify healthy and degraded forest areas, while two existing VOIs will continue managing more than 400 hectares of rainforest. Together, they play a crucial role in safeguarding this unique landscape, which forms part of the Ankeniheny-Zahamena Corridor – one of Madagascar’s most important biodiversity areas.

WHY COMMUNITIES MATTER:

Our mission is simple but urgent:

TO STOP SPECIES FROM DISAPPEARING AND HELP THEM THRIVE IN THE WILD

Habitat loss is one of the biggest threats to wildlife, and in rural Madagascar, people often rely on environmentally damaging practices just to survive. Climate change is making life even harder, with stronger cyclones, floods and droughts putting extra pressure on both people and nature.

By working alongside communities, we aim to replace this damaging cycle with positive, lasting change. **Together, we support livelihoods while protecting forests and the animals that depend on them.**

LEARNING, GROWING AND RESTORING NATURE:

The project focuses on practical, community-led solutions. Adults will receive training in agroforestry and climate-smart farming, helping them grow food more sustainably. Alongside this, we are launching a school programme that introduces children to environmental education and market gardening,

...inspiring the next generation of forest guardians.

School gardens will also provide fresh produce for meals in a win for both health and learning.

We’re also supporting the creation and strengthening of VOIs, which manage land use locally. By clearly defining areas for conservation and cultivation, communities can protect wildlife habitat while meeting their own needs. **Fourteen local rangers** will be trained to patrol protected zones, and **five tree nurseries** will help restore degraded forest.

LOOKING AHEAD:

This holistic approach which supports people, protects habitats and restores forests has already delivered positive results elsewhere in Madagascar.

We’re excited to see it take root in Andriantantely and look forward to sharing updates as the project grows.



Our heartfelt thanks go to CEPF and its partners for making this vital work possible. Together, we’re helping Madagascar’s rainforests – and their remarkable wildlife – stand a fighting chance for the future.



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