

## **UK charity, How Many Elephants, to spearhead the launch of World Female Ranger Day on 23rd June 2021.**

**This ground-breaking global awareness day will celebrate and support female anti-poaching rangers, spotlighting Africa in its first year.**

They're bold, changing the game and paving the way for women to stand alongside men at the forefront of conservation, but they need allies. This is the first time that female wildlife rangers will be recognised collectively on a global interactive and fundraising-focused platform, to tell their stories, have access to peer support, offer and receive advice, and share knowledge. As champions of wildlife conservation, as role models, as educators and as beacons of hope, these women are not only transforming attitudes towards the role of women in Africa and beyond but are also showing the capabilities and success of females in traditionally male roles.

Less than 11% of the global wildlife ranger workforce is female. With women being natural communicators, protectors and investing their earned income in their families, bringing gender equality into the workforce enhances conservation efforts and relationships within communities.

Over the last 12 months, COVID-19 has crippled tourism and funding for conservation projects within Africa and globally. The lack of tourists visiting National Parks has led to many rangers losing their jobs or having significant salary cuts. The knock-on effect of this is huge, as one ranger alone may support up to 16 family members. Additionally, reduced vigilance in tourist hotspots has left wildlife even more vulnerable to poaching. The work of rangers is paramount right now.

As recently as the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Africa's elephant species have been reported to be at an increased risk of extinction due to being poached for their ivory tusks and losing their natural habitats due to human activity. The forest elephant is now listed as Critically Endangered, and savanna elephants are listed as Endangered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. This further proves the need for the presence of anti-poaching rangers in Africa's wilderness areas.

In dedication to supporting female anti-poaching rangers, How Many Elephants (HME) has established this important awareness day and the accompanying online platform - [www.worldfemalerangerday.org](http://www.worldfemalerangerday.org) - which will go live in May.

**Meet some of the African women who are giving their all to protect wildlife from extinction.**

### **Nyaradzo Hoto (Aged 29)**

A ranger from the Akashinga Anti-Poaching Unit in Zimbabwe, Nyaradzo was forced to drop out of school and ended up in an abusive marriage. She joined Akashinga in 2017, thanks to her grit and tenacity. She is currently studying Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the Chinhoyi University of Technology, and her regular income has allowed her to purchase land and build a

house. She is a strong role model for women in her community and around the world. She says, *“women are the face of the future. They are the face of conservation because of their heart.”*

### **Leitah Mkhabela (Aged 28)**

A ranger from the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit in South Africa, Leitah says *“we cannot do it by ourselves. We need more eyes, more people helping us. When I started as a Black Mamba, people were scared of the training we went through. People said this training is for men and we couldn’t do it because we are women. The hardest part was that even women were looking down on us. But people started to come around once the impact of the female rangers was clear. It has helped women in the community to see themselves differently. People have seen how we want to do this and so many women started to support us.”*

### **Sithabile Munenge (Aged 33)**

A Community Scout (Ranger) for National Park Rescue in Zimbabwe, Sithabile used to sell tomatoes on a dusty roadside to make money to feed her children. She says *“it wasn’t enough to look after them. Usually men are the first preference to be employed by companies. But now I have the respect of my community, and I will be able to build my children’s future.”*

Many of these inspirational women have overcome adversity, poverty and marginalisation. Becoming a ranger has empowered them and turned them into breadwinners and property owners, and has given them access to higher education and much-needed healthcare. Their often challenging work on the front line, defending wildlife and protecting wild spaces, is making a difference. To shine a light on the impact, The Black Mambas in South Africa are making; since 2013, more than 1500 deadly snares have been dismantled and seized, and record numbers of poachers’ camps have been destroyed. The number of snaring and poaching incidents in Balule Nature Reserve, where the Black Mambas operate, has fallen by 76%.

**Co-founder of World Female Ranger Day (WFRD), (and founder of HME), Holly Budge, says** *“Having spent time on the front line with multiple all-female anti-poaching units in Africa, it’s evident why the female ranger movement is picking up such momentum. These women are proving to be highly successful as they ease local tension and strengthen relationships within their communities. WFRD will celebrate these women but will also highlight the significant gender imbalance in environmental conservation. Through the WFRD initiative, HME aims to collate gender-specific data about female anti-poaching rangers. This will enable us to identify their needs, find tangible solutions and help build effective policies to contribute towards positive outcomes for female rangers and conservation as a whole.”*

**HME supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** Specifically no.5 - Gender Equality, no.15 - Life on Land and no.17 - Partnerships for the Goals. In keeping with these goals, HME hopes that the launch of WFRD is the start of a long-standing campaign to support female-led conservation efforts across the globe and increase gender diversity in anti-poaching ranger teams.

**HME will share further information about WFRD in the coming weeks.**

HME is seeking out long term strategic partnerships with companies, associations and global citizens to expand the reach of the campaign to ultimately strengthen the support of female rangers. In May, businesses and individuals will be able to set up their own fundraising pages via [www.worldfemalerangerday.org](http://www.worldfemalerangerday.org)

World Female Ranger Day is co-founded by Holly Budge (Founder of HME) and Margot Dempsey (Marketing and Events Manager at HME). To get involved, email [gulp@howmanyelephants.org](mailto:gulp@howmanyelephants.org). For updates, follow @howmanyelephants on Instagram and Facebook, @howmanyellies on Twitter, or use hashtag, #worldfemalerangerday, and subscribe to newsletter updates at [www.worldfemalerangerday.org](http://www.worldfemalerangerday.org)

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### **LINKS:**

**Websites:**                    [www.worldfemalerangerday.org](http://www.worldfemalerangerday.org)  
[www.howmanyelephants.org](http://www.howmanyelephants.org)

**Article images:**        <http://bit.ly/2021WFRDPR1> - (IMAGES MUST BE CREDITED)

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### **About How Many Elephants**

UK registered charity, How Many Elephants (1186238), is a powerful design-led awareness campaign and innovative in its 100% non-gory approach. It showcases the annual poaching rate of 35,000 elephants in Africa in a visual exhibition to inspire and educate a global audience about the devastating impacts of the ivory trade. In essence, it uses design as a powerful communication tool to bridge the gap between scientific data and human connection. How Many Elephants collaborates with and supports female rangers on the front line in Africa, as well as working with direct action NGO's, conservationists, scientists, politicians, academics, creatives, businesses and change-makers who dare to say, "I can make a difference in this world". Read more at [www.howmanyelephants.org](http://www.howmanyelephants.org)

### **About Holly Budge**

HME, founded by world-class adventurer and conservationist, Holly Budge, has been supporting female rangers in Africa for the past seven years. She earned the rare privilege of patrolling on the front lines with the Akashinga Rangers in Zimbabwe and The Black Mambas in South Africa. Described as "one of the UK's most accomplished female adventurers", Holly is the first woman to skydive Everest and has summited Everest. Through her adventures, she has fundraised over £400K. She founded How Many Elephants in 2013 while studying for a Masters in Sustainable Design. Read more at [www.hollybudge.com](http://www.hollybudge.com)