



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**I've seen a world without elephants.** It's how I found the Chyulu Hills when I arrived 30 years ago. It was a time following the last poaching crisis of the 1970s and 80s, when we didn't see so much as a single elephant track. But nature is impatient, and things can change quickly.

The Amboseli elephant population has since rebounded, and giants have filled the space, including some who carry the largest tusks on the continent. One of my favourites has a name—One Ton—so called because of the size of his ivory. Beautiful to look at, but a curse to carry. Big Life rangers have managed to keep him alive through the worst of the recent times, and with **only one confirmed elephant poaching** in our area of operation in 2017, I feel as though we're giving him the best anti-poaching protection that we can.

Despite the tremendous success that we've had against poachers in the greater Amboseli ecosystem, Big Life rangers can only cover so much ground. Elephants are still dying elsewhere, so we've been targeting the supply of ivory further up the chain.

Incidentally, 'One Ton' of ivory (over 2,000 pounds) is how much Big Life's intelligence unit confiscated this year, working closely with Kenya Wildlife Service. Our network of informants has greatly expanded our reach and influence, and in addition to making life difficult for elephant poachers, we're also working to make it difficult for ivory traffickers.

Another piece of exciting news, and a huge step in the fight to reduce demand for ivory, is that of China's move this year to finally close its ivory markets, followed soon after by Hong Kong. Things won't change overnight, and we can expect ongoing circulation on the black market, but the importance of these commitments and the statement they make cannot be overstated.

However, it's no longer the thought of poachers that keeps me awake at night. These days, I know that I will wake to reports of overnight raids of farmers' crops by elephants, and occasionally of a retaliatory spear that has found its mark. This is now the biggest threat to One Ton and his

kind, and without a viable solution for coexistence between animals and people, all our efforts are worth nothing.

The good news is that our actions are making a difference. The completion in 2017 of Phase 1 (53 km) of crop-protection fencing has hugely reduced incidents of crop-raiding, thus reducing human-elephant conflict. This success has spurred us to move ahead with the next 60 km of fencing, and thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Phase 2 will be completed in 2018.

But there is more to this ecosystem, and to Big Life, than elephants. In collaboration with local partners, we have achieved what must be one of the most remarkable lion recoveries on community land anywhere in Africa. Ironically, this success means we are running out of space for lions, testing the limits of pastoralist tolerance of these costly animals.

The immediate solution is to expand the protective coverage provided by Big Life's Predator Compensation Fund, which we began to do this year. If we are able to secure the necessary funding, then we plan to continue these efforts in 2018, incentivizing greater tolerance of livestock predation.

The issue of space is a good note on which to end, because it will be increasingly important as the ecosystem continues to develop. There are some critical areas that must be protected, discussed within this report.

As usual, there is not a dull moment here in Kenya. What we are doing is vitally important, and time is of the essence. Thanks to all of you who make it possible, both through financial support and through action on the ground. This truly is a cumulative effort, and one we shall continue.



**Richard Bonham**  
*Co-Founder & Director of Operations*

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We envision a world in which  
conservation supports the people  
and people support conservation.



# 2017 YEAR IN REVIEW



**300+**

Total Field Staff

**38**

Ranger Units

**4**

Mobile Units

**3**

Tracker Dogs

**2**

Airplanes

**220**

Trained Rangers

**30**

Permanent Outposts

**12**

Land Cruisers

**1**

Rapid Deployment Unit

**311**

Aerial Patrol Hours

**TOTAL KILOMETERS PATROLLED** | ON FOOT: 79,420 km | BY VEHICLE: 255,150 km



**304**

SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN  
138 INCIDENTS



**20**

WILDLIFE CRIMINALS  
SENTENCED



**53 KM**

FENCING CONSTRUCTED



**637**

CROP-RAIDING  
INCIDENTS PREVENTED



**1114 KG (1 TON)**

IVORY CONFISCATED



**0**

RHINOS KILLED



**93**

SNARES DESTROYED



**0**

LIONS KILLED IN  
VIOLATION OF PCF



**205**

STUDENTS' SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED



**32**

TEACHERS' SALARIES PAID



**8**

MOBILE HEALTH CLINICS  
SUPPORTED



**\$179,299**

COMPENSATION PAID  
TO LIVESTOCK OWNERS

## WHERE WE WORK

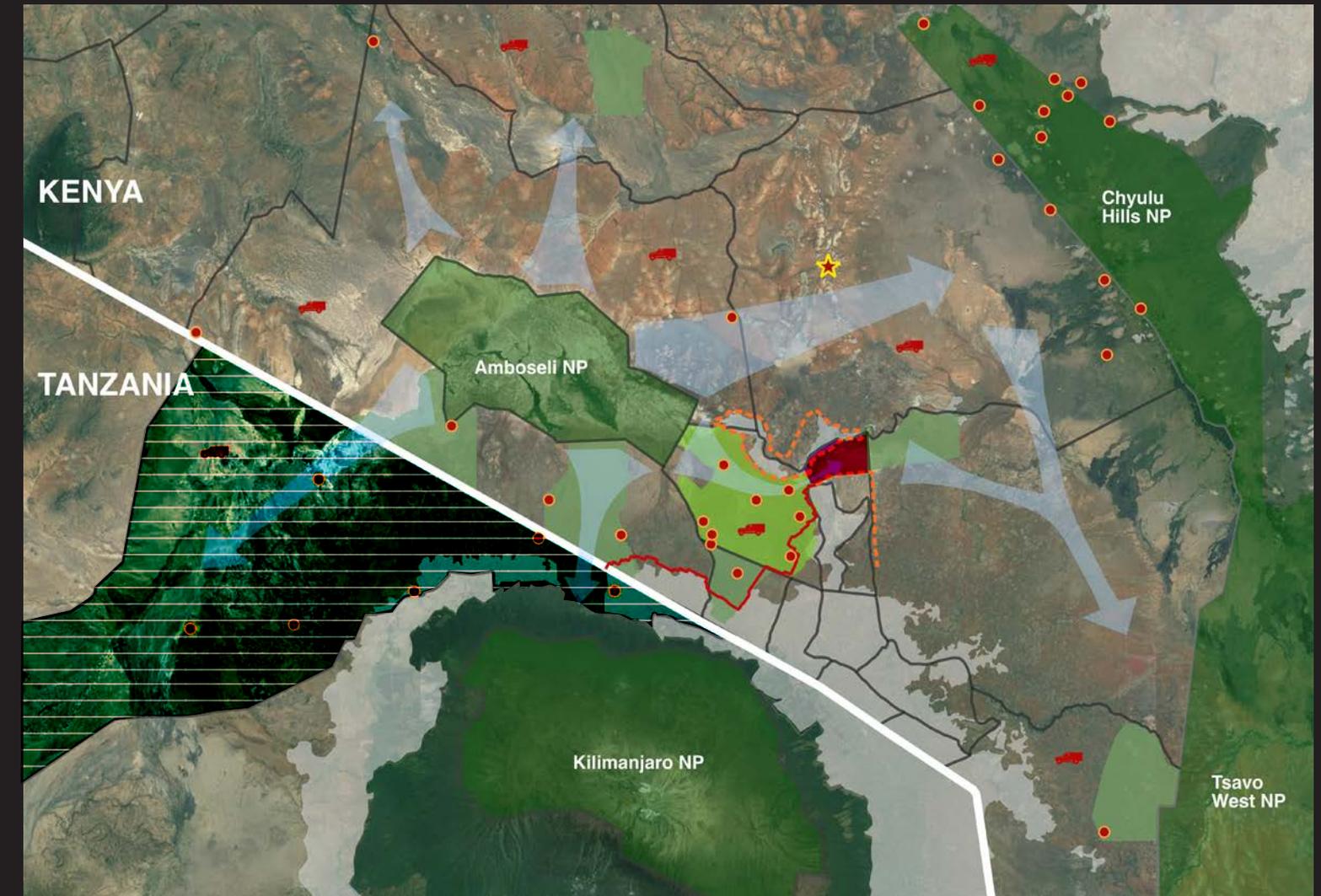
Big Life Foundation's area of operation (AOO) covers nearly two million acres across the Amboseli-Tsavo-Kilimanjaro (greater Amboseli) ecosystem in East Africa. Big Life's rangers help to protect and secure wildlife and critical habitat stretching from the rangelands west of Amboseli to the Chyulu Hills and Tsavo West National Parks in the east and south to Kilimanjaro National Park. The area is a central connection point for migrating wildlife and contains some of the most important wildlife habitat areas left in Africa. Big Life was the first organization in the region to conduct coordinated cross-border patrols between Kenya and Tanzania.

**Our AOO is divided into a core area with a permanent security presence, a non-core area that is actively patrolled by mobile units, and adjacent areas where we provide support as needed.**

**Core AOO (permanent security presence):** Kimana Group Ranch, Mbirikani Group Ranch, Olgulului Group Ranch, Rombo Group Ranch, Amboseli National Park, Chyulu Hills National Park

**Non-Core AOO (patrolled by mobile units):** Eselengei Group Ranch, Mailua Ranch, Merrueshi Ranch, Taveta Area

**Adjacent Area (support provided as needed):** Enduimet Wildlife Management Area, Kuku Group Ranch, Tsavo West National Park



**Green hatched area:** Big Life will expand to manage wildlife security in the Enduimet Wildlife Management Area in Tanzania, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and Honeyguide Foundation.

**Red line:** The first phase (53 km) of elephant-proof crop-protection fence was constructed in 2017 and is already helping to drastically reduce human-wildlife conflict.

**Pink area:** In late 2017, Big Life was asked by the local community to secure and manage the Kimana Sanctuary. In partnership with The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and The D.N. Batten Foundation, Big Life now protects the sanctuary, which will continue to be a critical wildlife dispersal area, particularly for the region's large male elephant tuskers.

**Yellow star:** Headquarters  
**Red circle:** Ranger Outposts

**Red line:** Current Fence  
**Orange dashed line:** Future Fence

**Blue arrow:** Elephant Migration Routes  
**Red truck icon:** Areas Commonly Patrolled by Mobile Rangers Units



On the ground  
in East Africa,  
partnering with  
local communities  
to protect nature for  
the benefit of all.

## Elephants

Elephants across Africa are in crisis, facing extinction due to ivory poaching and human-elephant conflict. The number of African elephants once reached upwards of 30 million; today, only an estimated 350,000 remain. In Big Life's AAO, more than 2,000 elephants live in the ecosystem, their movements largely driven by rain. While Big Life protects all wildlife in the ecosystem, protecting elephants continues to be one of the core focuses of our work.

### Elephant Mortalities

Within Big Life's **Core AOO**

#### Causes

Natural: **15**  
Unknown: **1**  
Human-Elephant Conflict: **4**  
Poaching (suspected): **2**  
Poaching (confirmed): **1**  
Ivory Recovered: **95%**

Within Big Life's **Non-Core AOO**

#### Causes

Natural: **3**  
Unknown: **3**  
Human-Elephant Conflict: **2**  
Poaching (suspected): **0**  
Poaching (confirmed): **0**  
Ivory Recovered: **88%**

**31 Elephant Mortalities**

### Elephant Rescues

**4 Elephant Rescues**

### Elephant Injuries

**9 Treated**  
*All due to spear wounds*

**18 Not Treated**

**27 Elephant Injuries**

*Rescues and treatments are done in collaboration with our partners at The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and Kenya Wildlife Service*

## Rhinos

There are seven known Eastern black rhinos in Big Life's AAO. They spend most of their time in the densely-forested Chyulu Hills, protected by dedicated Big Life and Kenya Wildlife Service rangers.

This year, Big Life was able to accomplish several security improvements that included upgrading the internal road network within the rhino habitat and installing new water points.

Big Life is still working to achieve Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ) status for the area, which will allow for the inbound translocation of rhinos from other territories. IPZ status is contingent upon the completion of Kenya's five-year strategic plan for black rhinos, expected in 2018.

### Rhino Statistics

Direct Sightings: **23**  
Indirect Sightings (via camera traps): **274**  
Spoor Sightings: **353**  
Rhino Protection Rangers: **51**  
Dedicated Rhino Outposts: **5**  
Rhino Snares Destroyed: **4**

**0 Rhino Mortalities**

Bushmeat

Bushmeat poaching spikes in the dry seasons when farm laborers are out of work and rely on bushmeat poaching for subsistence and/or commercial purposes. Big Life rangers arrested an increased number of bushmeat poachers in 2017, due to multiple crop failures and erratic rains, but also as a result of improved intelligence gathering. Species targeted for bushmeat included: bushbuck, dik-dik, eland, giraffe, Grant's gazelle, hartebeest, impala, lesser kudu, porcupine, reedbuck, and zebra.

79

Animals Killed

51

Suspects Arrested

60

Bushmeat Poaching Incidents

Habitat Destruction

In addition to protecting wildlife, Big Life rangers also enforce laws to prevent and deter habitat-related crimes, such as illegal charcoal production, sand harvesting, water extraction, and logging, including of high-value protected species, such as sandalwood.

72

Suspects Arrested

24

Habitat Destruction Incidents

Wildlife Rescues

In addition to elephants, Big Life rangers also lend a helping hand to other species of wildlife, including: dik-dik, eland, Grant's gazelle, lesser kudu, oryx, pangolin, python, wildebeest, and zebra.

29

Wildlife Rescues



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) takes three primary forms across Big Life's AOO: crops raided by wildlife, particularly elephants; livestock killed by predators, such as lions; and humans injured or killed due to living in close proximity with wildlife.

Crop-Raiding

Poaching poses a significant threat, but many animals face an even bigger challenge: conflict with humans. As the human population increases, so do competing land uses, such as farming and cattle grazing. As humans compete for limited resources like water, land, and grass for livestock, we further encroach onto what were once wild lands. With less space to share, people and animals now come into direct contact at an alarming rate and often with deadly results.

Big Life works strategically to mitigate HWC, such as by employing rapid-response ranger teams to chase elephants away from farms, and by building crop-protection fences to deter elephants from entering farmed areas in the first place.

- Crop-Raiding Incidents: 568
- Incidents Involving Elephants: 529
- Acres Damaged: 354
- Acres Damaged by Elephants: 317
- Crop Raids Prevented: 637
- Retaliatory Elephant Hunts Prevented: 4
- Crop-Protection Rangers: 24

Crop-Protection Fence

In 2016, Big Life began an ambitious project to construct an electric fence that would establish a hard boundary between farmers' crops and hungry elephants. In 2017, the first phase of the fence was completed, now totaling 53 km. The fence has already drastically reduced conflict along its boundary, saving farmers thousands of dollars and saving countless elephants from being speared. This success demonstrated the urgent need to extend the fence to other critical areas still experiencing high volumes of crop-raiding and HWC incidents. Phase two of this life-saving project is now underway.

- Fence Constructed: 53 km
- Fence Maintenance Workers: 20

Predator Compensation Fund

Big Life protects vulnerable predators in the ecosystem in collaboration with partners and local communities. The core component of Big Life's predator protection program is livestock compensation, which reduces the motivation for retaliatory killing in response to livestock depredation.

The Predator Compensation Fund (PCF) pays Maasai livestock owners for a portion of the value of their livestock lost to predators, on the condition that no predators are killed in retaliation. Big Life Verification Officers are dispatched to the scene to confirm all depredations, and penalties are applied for poor animal husbandry practices. The community provides 30% of the total compensation paid, and payments are withheld if any predators are killed by members of participating communities.

Big Life currently manages the PCF on Mbirikani and Olgulului Group Ranches, and is expanding into Eselengei Group Ranch. Given the amazing success of this program, Big Life's goal is to extend the PCF across the entire ecosystem. The lion population in Big Life's AOO is one of the few lion populations in all of Africa that is growing, not declining.

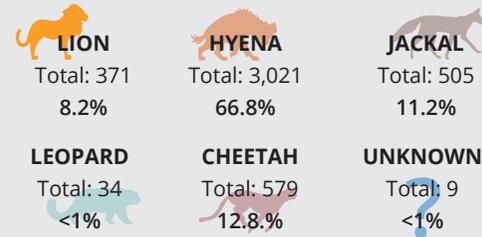
Compensation Issued for Predation of:

-  **1,055 Cows**
-  **3,384 Sheep/Goats**
-  **78 Donkeys**
-  **2 Camels**

**TOTAL LIVESTOCK KILLED:**  
**4,519**

**TOTAL COMPENSATION VALUE:**  
**\$179,299**

Depredation by Species



Lion Statistics

- Lion Population in Big Life's AOO: 193**
- Lions Killed in Big Life's AOO: 6**
- Lions Killed in Violation of the PCF: 0**
- Retaliatory Lion Hunts Prevented: 5**

*Population numbers documented by Lion Guardians; hunts prevented in coordination with both Lion Guardians and Kenya Wildlife Service*



No lions were killed in violation of the PCF in 2017.



### Maasai Olympics

In 2012, at the behest of the local community, Big Life established the Maasai Olympics. As a replacement for the traditional killing of lions to compete for recognition, express bravery, attract girlfriends, and identify leaders, a cultural-shifting alternative was created: an organized sports competition based upon traditional warrior skills. Every two years, participating villages select teams through a series of tournaments leading up to the finals across six categories: rungu and javelin throwing, high jump, and 200m, 800m, and 5,000m races.

2017 was an off year for the athletic competitions, but a valuable year during which Big Life implemented conservation education programming. A complementary component of the sporting events and the driving method for conservation education, community meetings were held throughout the year across the entire greater Amboseli ecosystem. The overarching theme of these meetings was conservation, specifically lion conservation, as the preferred way forward for the Maasai people and their long-term relationship with the ecosystem.

**The next Maasai Olympics finals event will take place on December 15, 2018.**



*In loving memory of Kior Kulwa*

### Threats to Humans

Living in the African bush is challenging, in part due to conflict with wildlife. The following tragic events occurred in Big Life's AOO in 2017:

**20**

Humans Injured by Wildlife  
*Species Responsible: buffalo, elephant, hyena, lion, zebra*

**7**

Humans Killed by Wildlife (Community Members)  
*Species Responsible: elephant*

**1**

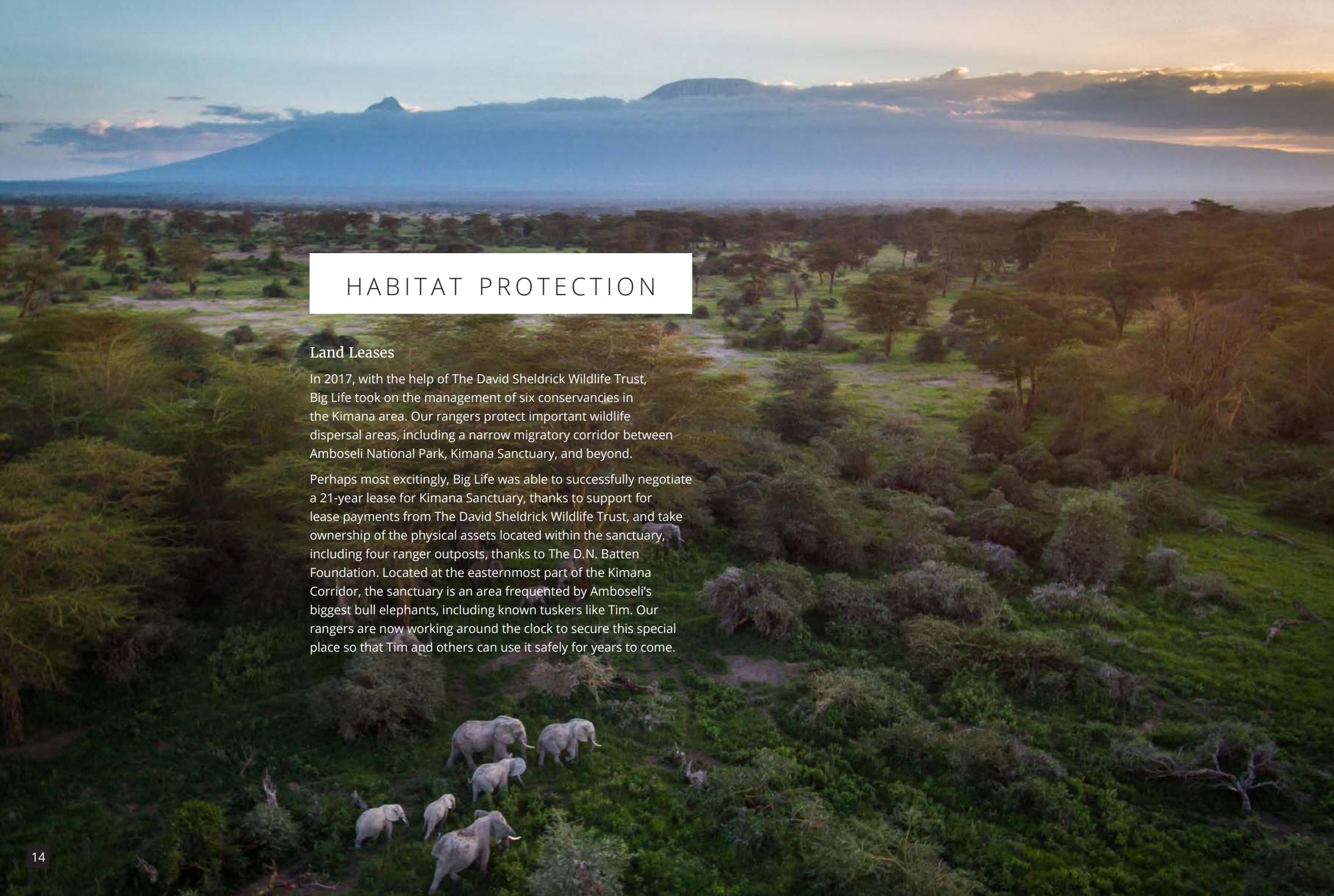
Humans Killed by Wildlife (Big Life Rangers)  
*Species Responsible: elephant*

### Search & Rescue

Big Life rangers and tracker dogs often help to search for people who have become lost in the bush.

**18**

People Rescued



## HABITAT PROTECTION

### Land Leases

In 2017, with the help of The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Big Life took on the management of six conservancies in the Kimana area. Our rangers protect important wildlife dispersal areas, including a narrow migratory corridor between Amboseli National Park, Kimana Sanctuary, and beyond.

Perhaps most excitingly, Big Life was able to successfully negotiate a 21-year lease for Kimana Sanctuary, thanks to support for lease payments from The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, and take ownership of the physical assets located within the sanctuary, including four ranger outposts, thanks to The D.N. Batten Foundation. Located at the easternmost part of the Kimana Corridor, the sanctuary is an area frequented by Amboseli's biggest bull elephants, including known tuskiers like Tim. Our rangers are now working around the clock to secure this special place so that Tim and others can use it safely for years to come.

### Chyulu Hills REDD+ Project: Carbon Credits

*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)*

The Chyulu Hills, in the heart of Big Life's AOO, is the catchment area of Mizima Springs, which produces nearly 90 million liters of water per day. This densely forested and protected area is also home to a diversity of species, and acts as a critical link between the Amboseli and Tsavo ecosystems. Despite the area's importance, it's at risk from overgrazing and deforestation. To help protect this area, Big Life has joined forces with local communities, government, and partner NGOs to implement a carbon credit program, which is being marketed by Conservation International. Revenue from the sale of two million credits will be re-invested back into local community development and conservation efforts, including employing Big Life rangers.

### Grazing

Improved land management has become an important need across the ecosystem. The Maasai are traditionally pastoralists. However, customary land management systems have broken down, and high numbers of livestock combined with poor grazing practices have led to rangeland degradation. As a first step, Big Life has supported the community to establish a grazing plan for Mbirikani Group Ranch. Enforced properly, this plan will guide sustainable use and support the recovery of the area's finite grazing resources, benefiting both people and wildlife.

Big Life also sponsored the training of 11 leaders and grazing committee members on holistic rangeland management at the Mara Training Institute, and facilitated additional community meetings across Mbirikani Group Ranch. The new grazing plan will be implemented in 2018.

### Sustainable Farming

The shift from an exclusively pastoralist lifestyle, to one that increasingly includes agriculture, has led to some unique challenges. Unsustainable water use, intensive and improper application of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and degraded soils have hurt crop yields and are harmful to humans and wildlife alike. Thus, Big Life's sustainable farming project—One Heart Farm—was created to help establish holistic and regenerative farming practices through demonstration sites.

**Sustainable Farming Sites: 3**

**Sustainable Farming Staff: 2**

**Students Fed\* at Enkijape School: 700+**

*\*using organic vegetables from one of the sustainable farms*

# PROSECUTIONS

Following arrest, suspects are formally charged by the Kenya Police Service. The judicial process may either be relatively immediate, or may extend for months to years, depending on the nature of the crime. Big Life tracks the progress of its cases in the local justice system to ensure that laws are properly enforced and to encourage maximum penalties upon sentencing.

**25**  
Concluded Cases

**18**  
Suspects Sentenced

**3**  
Trophy Poaching  
Convictions

**15**  
Bushmeat Poaching  
Convictions

**90 Ongoing Cases involving 180 Suspects**



Big Life arrests suspects for crimes including bushmeat poaching, elephant spearing, habitat destruction, trespassing, lion poisoning, attempted poaching, ivory possession, pangolin trafficking, and more.



## EDUCATION & HEALTHCARE



Winning the hearts and minds of the local community, and providing a mutual benefit through conservation, is the only way to protect wildlife and wild lands far into the future. Big Life invests in the future of participating communities by funding teachers' salaries, providing scholarship funds for local students, and implementing conservation curriculum in classrooms and communities.

**205**  
Scholarships Awarded

*Girls: 114*

*Boys: 91*

**32**  
Teachers'  
Salaries Paid

**6**  
Degrees Supported

**4,606**  
Teachers & Students  
Reached by  
Conservation Curriculum

### Other Notable Highlights:

In 2017, Big Life organized quarterly field trips into Amboseli National Park for 30 students and 6 teachers, none of whom had ever visited a national park, and many of whom may never before have had a positive wildlife experience.

Big Life sponsored three new teachers for special needs students at Enkijape Primary School.

Big Life hosted 25 students, teachers, and parents from the Highland School of Warrenton, Virginia, families from which are long-time supporters of the students in our AOO. Conversely, our education program officer, Samar Ntalamia, was hosted by the Highland School in the United States for an outreach exchange.

### Healthcare

Throughout 2017, Big Life partnered with Dandelion Africa, funded by Chase Africa and the Ministry of Health at Loitokitok Sub-Country Hospital, to facilitate mobile clinics focused on healthcare and family planning. Additional services provided included cancer screening, HIV testing, and counseling.

**8**  
Mobile Healthcare  
Clinics Conducted

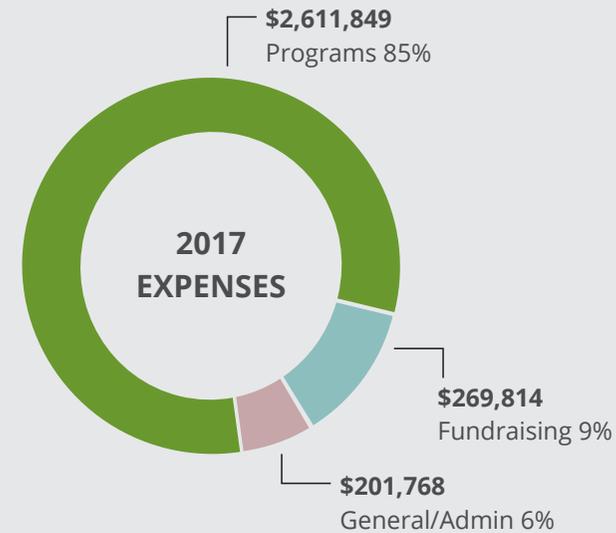
# FINANCIALS & SUPPORT

Organization: Big Life Foundation USA | Report: Financial Report | Period: January to December 2017 | Country: USA | Currency: US Dollars

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

INCOME	2017	2016
Contributions & Grants	\$3,015,980	\$2,857,893
In-Kind Contributions	\$155,164	\$237,086
Other Income	\$10,739	\$12,982
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$3,181,883</b>	<b>\$3,107,961</b>
EXPENSES		
Programs	\$2,611,849	\$2,126,672
General/Admin	\$201,768	\$163,637
Fundraising <sup>1</sup>	\$269,814 <sup>2</sup>	\$269,864 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,083,431</b>	<b>\$2,560,173</b>
Change in Net Assets	\$98,452	\$547,788
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$2,120,814	\$1,573,026
Net Assets, End of Year	\$2,219,266 <sup>4</sup>	\$2,120,814

At Big Life, we **maximize every penny** of your contributions. **85¢** out of every **\$1** donated goes directly towards our mission of protecting wildlife and wild lands for the benefit of all.



<sup>1</sup>Big Life receives up to \$120,000/yr of **free online advertising** from a Google Ad Grant. Auditing standards require us to categorize this donated advertising as a fundraising expense, which inflates our numbers slightly, but **we do not spend a penny of your donations on Google AdWords.**

<sup>2</sup>Includes \$107,479 in **free online advertising** via Google Ad Grants.

<sup>3</sup>Includes \$94,439 in **free online advertising** via Google Ad Grants.

<sup>4</sup>Big Life approves its first distribution of grant funds at the beginning of each calendar year, which significantly decreases our available net assets. Subsequent to year-end, Big Life approved grants totaling **\$1,601,529**. The funds were **disbursed during the first quarter of 2018.**

Our Form 990 tax filings and audited financial statements are available online at [www.biglife.org/about-big-life/financials](http://www.biglife.org/about-big-life/financials).

Thank you to all of our Board of Directors and Advisory Board members, who invest considerable amounts of time, resources, expertise, in-kind donations, and financial contributions towards achieving our mission.



We are grateful for the support of our partners, including:

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 Amboseli Landowners Conservancy Association  
 Amboseli Trust for Elephants  
 Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries  
 Chyulu Hills Conservation Trust  
 Conservation International  
 Dandelion Africa  
 The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust  
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 Kilimanjaro Community Conservation and Development Trust  
 Kinetic Six  
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 Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust

Porini Eselengei Camp  
 Ranger Campus  
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- Ranger Club member
- \* Donation received by Big Life Canada, Kenya, or UK

*We also wish to thank our wonderfully generous anonymous donors for making our work possible. You know who you are.*

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## \$5,000+

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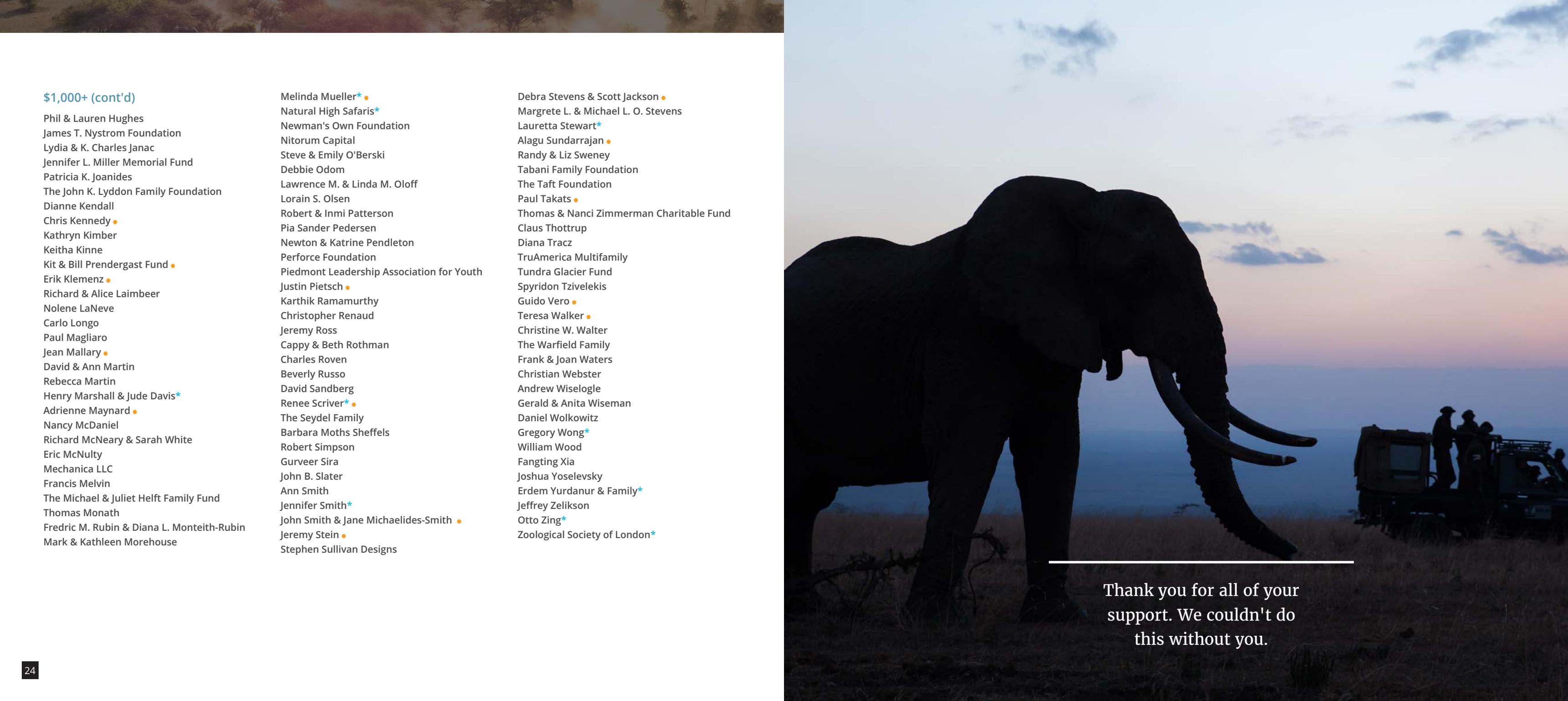
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