



For Immediate Release

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THE LIVING DESERT ZOO AND GARDENS' CONSERVATION PARTNER RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS RANGER AWARD RECOGNITION FROM LEADING CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit received a Highly Commended recognition at the International Ranger Awards presented by the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA – August 3, 2022 -- The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is proud to share that a key conservation partner, the Northern Team of the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit of South Africa, received Highly Commended Recognition by the [IUCN's International Ranger Award](#) for their commitment to protecting black rhinos and other wildlife in Balule Nature Reserve. This prestigious award from the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognizes the extraordinary dedication of individuals and teams in their commitment to protecting nature and helping local communities.

The [Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit](#) was recognized for their tireless efforts to reduce poaching of black rhinos and other animals via a multi-faceted approach. The unarmed, all-female group of Black Mambas have helped reduce overall wildlife poaching, snaring, and poisoning activities by over 89% and rhino poaching by 63% by directly patrolling active poaching areas. Furthermore, to help address a core motivator for bushmeat poaching – food scarcity – the Black Mambas have established a community vegetable garden whose yields are regularly distributed to the community. Additionally, their Bush Babies Environmental Education Programs brings the Mambas into schools and communities to inspire the next generation to support habitat and species conservation.

“We are honored to receive this international recognition for the work of our dedicated team of Rangers, and we recognize and mourn our fallen colleagues who have sacrificed their lives” noted a joint statement from the Northern Team of the Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit. “Rangers and their support team are doing critical conservation work in the most remote areas of our planet. We are grateful that Dr. James Danoff-Burg of The Living Desert nominated us for this much appreciated award.”

The Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit has been a key conservation partner of The Living Desert since 2017. The Living Desert nominated The Black Mambas for this award recognition from the IUCN – the global authority on the status of the natural world. The Black Mamba's recognition was announced via the IUCN's Africa Protected Areas Congress held in Kigali, Rwanda in July.

“The Black Mambas are a brave and courageous group of women who are committed to saving wildlife, helping their communities thrive, and building the next generation of conservationists,” noted Dr. James Danoff-Burg. “By using a diverse set of approaches to help combat wildlife poaching including active, unarmed patrolling, coupled with socio-economic development efforts, food distribution, and community and educational outreach the Mambas truly are making a difference.”

The Living Desert's support of the Black Mambas is rooted in helping them measure, and thereby understand, the social impacts and behavior changes their programs have facilitated within their respective communities. In addition, The Living Desert provides interpretive and educational programming, curricula, and suggestions of other educational best practices for their Bush Babies Environmental Education Program.

About The Living Desert:

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit, accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, ensuring the highest standards of all aspects of animal care, education, conservation, public service, and operations. The Zoo is active in conservation research, habitat protection, breeding programs and education initiatives around the world, as well as in its own community. The Zoo has been a top destination in the Palm Springs area for more than 50 years. The Living Desert is located at 47900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert, CA 92260. For more information: (760) 346-5694 or visit livingdesert.org.