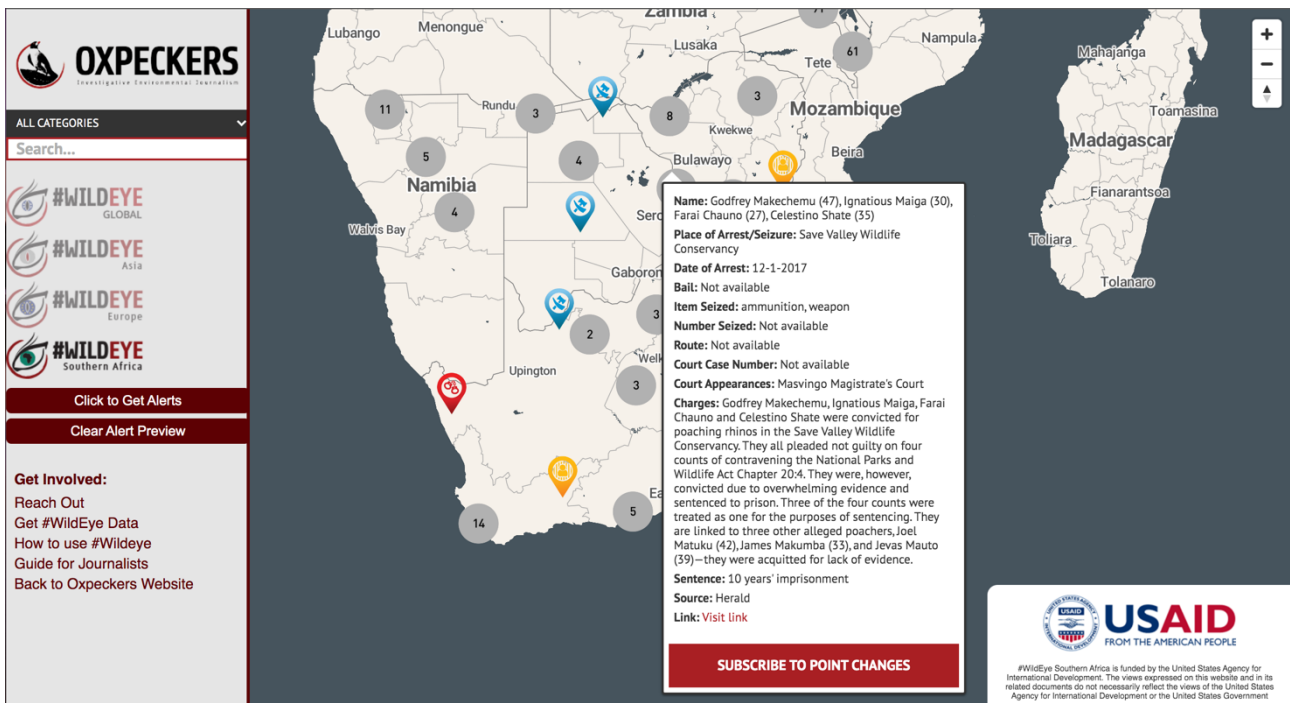


News story

#WildEye Southern Africa is launched!



OXPECKERS
Investigative Environmental Journalism

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Name: Godfrey Makechemu (47), Ignatious Maiga (30), Farai Chauno (27), Celestino Shate (35)
Place of Arrest/Seizure: Save Valley Wildlife Conservancy
Date of Arrest: 12-1-2017
Bail: Not available
Item Seized: ammunition, weapon
Number Seized: Not available
Route: Not available
Court Case Number: Not available
Court Appearances: Masvingo Magistrate's Court
Charges: Godfrey Makechemu, Ignatious Maiga, Farai Chauno and Celestino Shate were convicted for poaching rhinos in the Save Valley Wildlife Conservancy. They all pleaded not guilty on four counts of contravening the National Parks and Wildlife Act Chapter 20:4. They were, however, convicted due to overwhelming evidence and sentenced to prison. Three of the four counts were treated as one for the purposes of sentencing. They are linked to three other alleged poachers, Joel Matuku (42), James Makumba (33), and Jevus Mauto (39)—they were acquitted for lack of evidence.
Sentence: 10 years' imprisonment
Source: Herald
Link: [Visit link](#)

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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SUBSCRIBE TO POINT CHANGES

Origin: Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

Project: #WildEye: a wildlife crime tracking tool and training for investigative journalism in Southern Africa

30 November 2021



Wildlife crime in Southern Africa has become easier to track and harder to hide, as Oxpeckers Investigative Journalism launches Africa's first geomapping tool designed to follow seizures, arrests, court cases and convictions in the region.

Author

Dianne Tipping-Woods

For Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism

With the launch of [#WildEye Southern Africa](#), journalists and investigators finally have a single place to access data on wildlife crimes that will help drive investigative reporting and expose criminal syndicates.

Developed by [Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism](#), with the support of USAID's VukaNow Activity, the powerful new data-driven tool addresses a major challenge facing wildlife crime reporters and investigators: the fact that information on these types of activities is hard to find and even harder to track over time, and across borders. This has allowed criminal activity to remain hidden from public scrutiny and hindered reporting on the multi-billion-dollar illegal wildlife trade.

"We're proud to have developed a digital tool that anyone can use to find data on seizures, arrests, court cases and convictions relating to wildlife crime in Southern African countries," said Oxpeckers co-founder Fiona Macleod, explaining how the tool highlights trends, gaps, and questions that journalists can use to build stories through court records, or freedom of information requests.

"Using data adds accuracy, credibility and transparency to wildlife crime reporting," she noted, highlighting the media's role in bringing criminal activity to light.

Oxpeckers supports journalists to investigate environmental issues by combining traditional reporting techniques with data analysis and geo-mapping tools. The unit's journalists have helped expose eco-offences and organised criminal syndicates in Europe and Asia, where the #WildEye platform first launched.

The Southern African iteration of the tool builds on these successes. For the launch, it was populated with data from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique.



Journalists have the responsibility of reporting wildlife stories accurately and within the confines of the law

Developed *by* journalists *for* journalists, once the data is on the #WildEye Southern Africa map, anyone can use it. And the more information that is added, the more powerful the tool becomes. Data sets have been and will continue to be collected and collated on cases relating to wildlife crime in the region. Users can subscribe to alerts on specific cases or themes to receive updated information and track new developments.

“The work Oxpeckers has undertaken with USAID’s support will strengthen the capacity of journalists to investigate and report on wildlife crime, supported by the exciting open-source digital resource that is being launched today – #WildEye Southern Africa,” said Deborah Kahatano, Chief of Party at USAID’s VukaNow Activity to reduce poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and to enhance law enforcement capacity. Working with journalists in the region is one of these activities.

Over the past five months, Oxpeckers has also provided crucial mentoring and training on how to report wildlife crime to selected journalists. While it is no secret that species like rhinos, pangolins and lions are killed and illegally traded, tracking and reporting on these crimes is challenging because information sits in dusty court files in different countries with different access laws. People gathering data face bureaucracy, intimidation and other challenges even as globally, large-scale, transnational wildlife crimes threaten species, security and the well-being of local communities.

“The data already suggests wildlife crime is on the increase in certain regions,” notes Sean Ndlovu, a Zimbabwean data journalist who worked on the team collating data for #WildEye. He hopes other



journalists, researchers, officials and non-profit organisations support #WildEye in making wildlife crime-related data easily available and publicly accessible, because “there is still a lot of work to be done in the region”.

Globally, the media industry is under pressure and faces harsh economic realities that often result in fewer resources in general, specifically when it comes to specialised reporting on issues such as wildlife crime. Many newsrooms end up relying on wire copy, and often only stories that have national appeal make the cut. This situation is also not helped by the fact that environmental journalism is one of the most dangerous areas of reporting.

“USAID has long shown an interest in improving the capacity of regional media to report on several issues, and combating wildlife crime is certainly one of these priority areas. It is clear that as much support as possible is needed,” said Angela Hogg, Director of the Regional Environment, Education and Democracy Office at USAID/Southern Africa.

Author

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Oxpeckers Background

Oxpeckers is Africa’s first journalistic investigation unit focusing on environmental issues. The unit combines traditional investigative reporting with data analysis and geo-mapping tools to expose eco-offences and track organised criminal syndicates in Southern Africa, and their links across the globe.

Oxpeckers is a non-profit company with a proven track record in managing multinational journalistic collaborations. Its aims include building capacity for and improving the impact of African environmental journalism, inter alia by providing a home for investigative journalists interested in environmental issues. Journalists working with Oxpeckers have conducted indepth, award-winning, transnational investigations into wildlife trafficking, poaching and law enforcement in the following landscapes in which the UVN project is operating: Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the GLTFCA (South Africa and Mozambique). The journalists have spent many years building up unrivalled networks, insights and reputations in these regions.



VukaNow Background

Wildlife crime is a multi-billion-dollar illicit business that is decimating Africa's iconic animal populations and undermining the economic prosperity and sustainable development of countries and communities throughout Southern Africa. It threatens the region's natural capital and undermines sustainable development from legal nature-based enterprises such as tourism. Wildlife crime also threatens social stability and cohesion as it robs and impoverishes citizens of their cultural and natural heritage, while its organized criminal networks threaten regional peace and security.

In response to these threats, USAID/Southern Africa has embarked on a multi-faceted regional program to address wildlife crime. In March 2018, USAID launched the "USAID's VukaNow" (UVN) activity a multi-faceted, five-year regional activity, operating in Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, with the goal of significantly reducing wildlife crime in southern Africa. It complements four USAID-funded combating wildlife crime (CWC) landscape projects in three Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) namely the Great Limpopo (GLTFCA), Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA), and Malawi-Zambia TFCAs, and collaborates with landscape partners and stakeholders, including the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, governments, and the private sector.

VukaNow's role in achieving the goal of significantly reducing wildlife crime in southern Africa is to catalyze learning and sharing of information and best practices and to enhance collaborative efforts to combat wildlife crime in the region. In so doing, VukaNow – together with its partners – works to coordinate learning across USAID/Southern Africa's landscape-based combating wildlife crime (CWC) activities and to support strategic regional activities that are necessary to address the wildlife crime challenges that fall outside any discrete landscape. This includes working with international, regional, national, and local stakeholders to garner an integrated and collaborative approach to CWC in the region. VukaNow supports novel and innovative approaches to combating wildlife crime, particularly through the use of purpose-built technology and wildlife forensics. The Activity oversees a robust grant facility to accelerate specific, targeted interventions to address wildlife crime, including community engagement, and also works to leverage partnership opportunities with the private sector. In addition, VukaNow works with journalists and other media actors to facilitate improved transparency and reporting on wildlife crime.