

## FOOD &amp; TRAVEL

# Akashinga celebrates key achievements

AKASHINGA — Africa's first armed, all-female anti-poaching unit currently protecting eight nature reserves across Zimbabwe — has to date made 1 303 arrests in 724 operations since its formation in 2017.

In the last year alone, the unit and its Wildlife Crime Unit, has recovered 24 pangolins, 118 elephant tusks and one rhino horn, as well as over 1 500kg of illegally caught fish. This was revealed last Friday (March 24) at a full parade of its combined operations across the Zambezi Valley to celebrate its growth in the local community and surrounding wildlife areas.

The Akashinga (a Shona word which means the Brave One) programme is a community-driven conservation model which deploys women into frontline conservation roles. It has been a catalyst for change across the Southern African region as a whole, focusing on social impact to achieve conservation at scale, with the empowerment of women central to its strategy. It is operated by the International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF), an independent organisation which delivers tailored training, long-term support and mentoring to develop wildlife crime enforcement leaders and instructors.

During event, held at Nyamakate centre in Hurungwe, Mashonaland West province, 80 rangers celebrated double wins for the community and conservation, demonstrating their skills for local dignitaries, including the guest of honour Chief Chundu; Hurungwe district development coordinator, Andrew Tizora; Hurungwe Rural District Council (HRDC) representative Tamburai Gomwe; councillor Nomatter Murisa; and IAPF founder and Akashinga CEO Damien Mander.

Guests were treated to an array of displays, including a marching drill and a mock raid on poachers with first aid and K9 unit action. This provided onlookers at the parade an up-close look at some of the challenges rangers face while on patrol, such as treating wounds or apprehending non-compliant poachers.

Speaking at the parade, Chief Chundu commended Akashinga for their partnership and sustained involvement in the community.

"Thanks to this initiative, the girl child can now have access to employment opportunities and can also play a vital role in the protection of our environment," he said.

Most recently, a joint project between HRDC, MoveMe Abundant Village and Akashinga, with support from the Australian government, provided essential access to clean water through the installation of solar boreholes at Nyamakate centre and Kilo village in Chundu. Solar power has also been provided to Nyamakate Clinic, and upgrades to Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in nearby Golf and Jinami villages are in progress.

The Akashinga CEO also spoke at the event and emphasised that conservation is not possible without rangers and com-



IAPF founder and Akashinga CEO Damien Mander delivering his speech during a full parade of Akashinga rangers in Hurungwe last Friday.

munity members working together.

"Women have become the conduit through which conservation and the community collaborate. The message these women are delivering throughout Africa is something we can all be proud of, and it began right here," Mander said.

Throughout the remainder of the month, Akashinga will continue to work with the community to complete the ongoing projects, which are at 75% completion.

Speaking about the partnership, Ti-

zora encouraged the community to move forward together and keep up with the global vision on sustainable development, noting that, "It is our collective responsibility to make sure our present challenges do not steal the future from our children."

Hand-in-hand with its conservation achievements, Akashinga continues to prioritise community development, focusing on areas such as education, health and nutrition, infrastructure development and employment.

The Akashinga programme started with an initial group of 16 women, all survivors of gender-based violence and abandonment, many impacted by HIV and Aids.

It has since grown to more than 500 staff and contractors, with a wilderness protection portfolio totalling over 9,1 million acres across four countries. The goal is to increase its portfolio to 30m acres by 2030, empowering hundreds of communities and thousands of women, IAPF says. — Staff Writer.

## IT'S A WEIRD WORLD

### LONG LIVE SECRET HERE

A PERSON claiming to be a time traveller from 2858 has said the secret to 'longer life' will be found this year.

The mysterious social media user said scientists will discover the secret to prolonging human life — giving viewers five key dates to look out for.

The user, who posts under the username @darknesstimetravel, has gained more than 12,000 followers by posting outlandish claims about future events — with everything from wormholes to the creation of mythical creatures.

In their most recent video, the user shared a list of five events they claim will take place this year.

The supposed warnings include scientific discoveries that could both help to change our understanding of humanity's past and help to preserve its future.

In the video, which has gained more than 800 likes, they wrote: "ATTENTION! To everyone who believes I am a fake time traveller, remember these 5 dates in 2023.

In their most recent video, the user shared

a list of five events they claim will take place this year, with one coming as soon as April 2.

"April 2: A new element is discovered that can replace oxygen and add 50 years to lifespan.

"May 4: Human bones are discovered on Mars, showing that humans were originally on Mars.

"August 26: 4 megalodons are discovered in the bottoms of the Mariana Trench.

"October 16: A group of teenagers find ancient ruins and a stone that allows interplanetary travel instantly."

TikTok viewers were left divided over the clip and over whether it could actually happen.

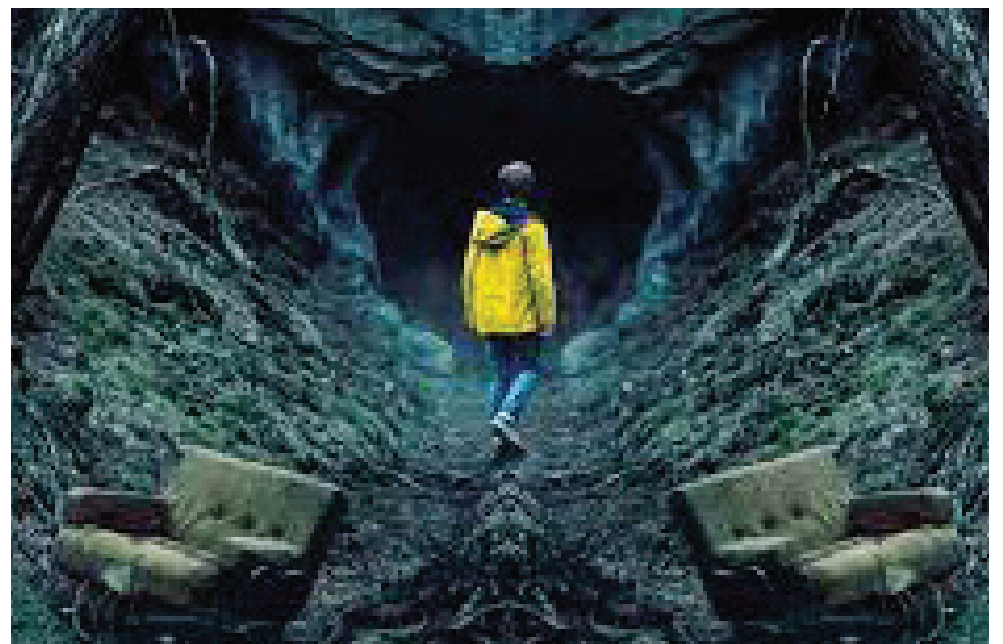
One user said: "Bros a fake."

Another commented: "This stuff better happen or I will be extremely disappointed."

A third wrote: "Not possible about the megalodons.

"They would have been breeding all these years and we would have seen many of them by now."

"Is the mars thing true? Omg," a fourth added. — Mirror.Co.Uk.



Time traveller ravelled Tik Tok users with his photos posted on his @darknesstimetravel handle