

Biodiversity Day Alarm Raises Stakes for Jeff's 100-Mile Africa Walk in the Wild

With 1 million species at risk of extinction, Jeff de Graffenried will walk 100 miles across one of Africa's most biodiverse parks to fight wildlife poaching.

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, AFRICA, May 22, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As species disappear at the fastest rate in history, International Biodiversity Day on May 22 is taking on urgent meaning as American Jeff de Graffenried prepares for his 100-mile walk across one of [Africa's](#) most important wilderness areas.



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Jeff de Graffenried

"It's hard to believe that day to day we're killing off species on a scale not experienced since an asteroid wiped out the dinosaurs," Jeff says. "The clock is ticking to save places like Kafue National Park in Zambia, keystone of a [wildlife](#) ecosystem that spans five countries."

Jeff, an Alabama native who works in southern Africa, decided that the best way to dramatize the fight to save Africa's iconic animals is to get on the ground with them, eye to eye, and walk. Jeff will raise money to supply brave government rangers with improved gear and fund other conservation measures designed to protect the wild inhabitants of Kafue's dazzling habitats.

The Kafue rangers are facing off against thousands of heavily armed [poachers](#). Relentless attacks on elephants for their prized ivory tusks and smaller animals for bush-meat or, in the case of the shy pangolin, for scales coveted in Asia for aphrodisiacs, are threatening a paradise that belongs to the world.

What's happening in Zambia is part of the bigger assault on biodiversity that has put 1 million species on the brink of extinction worldwide, according to a report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services meeting in Paris this month. The most comprehensive biodiversity assessment ever, by experts in 50 countries, showed that humanity can stop this disaster if we act fast, "at every level from local to global," the group said.

While under threat, Kafue still teems with life. Almost 500 bird species call the park home along with leopards, cheetahs and buffaloes. Hundreds of lions and thousands of elephants roam the land. More antelope species are found in Kafue than anywhere else in Africa, including the endemic red lechwe and roan, sable, eland and blue wildebeest.

"Kafue is one of Africa's most biodiverse wildlife areas, and while the variety of flora and fauna in existence here is impressive, it is not without frailty," says Tyrone McKeith, who runs the Musekese safari camp in Kafue and Musekese Conservation with fellow eco-entrepreneur Phil Jeffery.

Human pressures go beyond poaching. "Every year vast tracts of the Kafue ecosystem succumb to bush fires, decimating habitat for a plethora of species large and small," Tyrone says.

In August, Jeff will set off across the northern tier of Kafue with veteran adventure filmmaker

Craig Adkins. While showing off the rich diversity of Kafue and the astonishing landscape ranging from lush grasslands to thick tropical forests to sparkling rivers and the mystical Busanga swamps, Jeff also will spotlight the dedication of the Zambians who patrol this natural panorama.

Rangers from the anti-poaching unit of the Zambian Department of National Parks and Wildlife march off into the bush outfitted like soldiers heading to battle. Dressed in camouflage fatigues, shouldering heavy backpacks, and toting rifles, these men and women deploy into Kafue for weeks at a time to face off against bands of determined poachers armed with military-grade weapons.

"These rangers are heroes," Jeff says. "They put their lives on the line every time they go into the wilderness, whether facing dangerous animals or poachers pursuing endangered wildlife."

Kafue's 100th anniversary as a protected conservation area in Zambia is approaching, so the 100-mile (160-kilometer) journey is meant to promote the longevity of the park and its significance to conservation.

The funds will go to Musekese Conservation. Phil and Tyrone are dedicated wildlife conservationists and are providing Jeff with valuable guidance as he plans this important journey, one step at a time.

To talk with Jeff for your podcast, article, blog, vlog or broadcast, contact him at: savingkafueonestepatatime@gmail.com

Follow Jeff's adventure for Kafue at: www.savingkafue.com

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