



AWE NATURE MID YEAR IMPACT REPORT 2026



*As the aircraft crossed into
Chewore South, cultivated
fields gave way to an
uninterrupted canopy of
woodland stretching
to the airstrip.*

MYRIAM FERNÁNDEZ
BARNOSÉLL

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Executive Summary

“Working with our conservation partners gives us a much clearer picture of wildlife populations and movements across the wider landscape.”

- DR PARADZAYI TAGWIREYI.
CCT CONSERVATION AND
RESEARCH MANAGER

The first half of 2026 was an incredibly busy time for Awe for Nature Foundation and our implementation partner, the Chewore Conservation Trust (CCT). We have recruited some brilliant new personnel to strengthen our teams in Europe and Zimbabwe, greatly stepped up our conservation work and field operations, further developed our community projects and partnerships, and continued building out our innovative finance work across Chewore South and Mbire Ward 11.

We also increased our engagement with the Government of Zimbabwe, presenting our proposed biodiversity credit model at a national technical workshop in Kadoma in May and continuing conversations with the government to establish Chewore South and Ward 11 as official national biodiversity financing pilots.

It was also a busy period for Awe Nature’s public presence. We unveiled a full rebrand and new logo, launched new Facebook and Instagram pages to build our public profile, and more than doubled our audience on LinkedIn.

On the ground, our major construction projects are up and running, our flagship community projects are underway, and the team in Chewore has begun the programme of operations that will protect and grow our wildlife populations, and ultimately enable us to return black rhinos to the region for the first time since the 1990s.

Our partnership with the African Parks Incubation Programme has greatly helped shape what CCT has achieved, and that relationship has deepened in the first half of the year with visits to Chewore and sites across the African Parks Network.

Going into the second half of the year, our priority is to accelerate our programmatic development in Chewore and begin scaling the innovative finance pilots into their next phase.

Impact at a glance

WORLD CLASS CONSERVATION

200,000 ha
under collaborative
management with ZimParks

1,266
anti-poaching patrol
man-days logged

17
new rangers recruited and in
Basic Field Ranger training

Digital Radio
Communication System installed

210 km
of roads and fireguards cleared
(50% of annual target)

USD 70,000
Lion Recovery Fund grant secured
to tackle snaring and lion poaching

Chenje Camp opened
– Chewore South's first
photographic safari camp

Inaugural safaris
launched in May

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

22 km
Masoka elephant and predator-
proof fence under construction –
11 km complete

USD 300,000
in annual crop and livestock
losses targeted for reduction

Water storage
in Masoka quadrupled –
5,000 to 20,000 litres

Water collection distance
for Masoka women cut from
over 5 km to under 1 km

50+
community members
gained employment

FINANCIAL INNOVATION

**Biodiversity and ecosystem
service baselining**
work started to develop
biodiversity credits in Chewore
South and Mbire Ward 11.

Groundbreaking ACC research
shows elephants boost soil
carbon – opening a new
climate finance pathway.

Zambezi Valley credit model
presented at Zimbabwe's national
Biodiversity Credits Framework
workshop, following an invitation
from the Government of Zimbabwe.



Dwain Strydom



Niall Carroll



Alistair Graham

New Faces

Since the start of the year, we have welcomed several new faces to our teams in Europe and Zimbabwe.

At Board level, we are honoured that **Niall Carroll** and **Alistair Graham** have joined our Swiss and UK Boards respectively, bringing a wealth of expertise to their roles, and greatly strengthening our governance and reach. Awe Nature also welcomed a new Director of Philanthropy, **Sarah Slavin**, and a Communications Lead, **Ndanatsiwa Tagwireyi**, whose expertise will be critical to fundraising and strategic communications respectively.

In Zimbabwe, the CCT is now led by our Project Director **Dwain Strydom** and Head of Law Enforcement **Nicholas Chinembiri**. Both Dwain and Nicholas have a huge amount of experience in conservation, and have both worked under collaborative agreements similar to that which we have between CCT and ZimParks.

We are very fortunate that they now bring their experience, professionalism and leadership to Chewore.



Ndanatsiwa Tagwireyi



Sarah Slavin



Nicholas Chinembiri

DONOR AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Donor Safari: Seeing Chewore South First-hand

In May 2026, Awe for Nature Foundation welcomed donors and trustees to Chewore South, showing them how the landscape has changed since we began managing the area in January 2025.

Donors and trustees enjoy a sundowner in Chewore South, capping off a day exploring the landscape they help protect.



Guests take in the view from Chirambakudoma Mountain during the May 2026 donor safari.

In May 2026, **Awe for Nature Foundation** welcomed donors and trustees to Chewore South, showing them how the landscape has changed since we began managing the area in January 2025.

Dubbed **Zimbabwe: Dinosaurs, Wilderness & Conservation**, the expedition took guests through the protected area and introduced them to local communities and the sites where Awe Nature and CCT carry out their conservation work.

The landscape is also home to an unusually large and diverse collection of dinosaur footprints, estimated to be around 140 million years old.

Until recently, the area operated as a hunting concession. CCT's long-term goal is to facilitate the area's transition towards non-consumptive management. Central to this ambition is developing a tourism product built around the wilderness value of Chewore South and its extraordinary biological and geological assets, combined with the rich culture of

the surrounding communities.

We hosted several groups of guests throughout May, who were treated to an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the work we are undertaking in this incredible landscape, which forms roughly one third of the Mana Pools, Sapi and Chewore Safari Areas World Heritage Site.

"When arriving with the plane from Harare, all we could see were planted fields. No forests or groups of trees in between, all ploughed soils," recalled Myriam Fernández Barnosell.

As the aircraft crossed into Chewore South, cultivated fields gave way to an uninterrupted canopy of woodland stretching to the airstrip.

"If Chewore South Safari Area were not there, all that green would be substituted by agriculture," she added.

Zoe Butt's moment came on a rocky escarpment.

"Looking out from a rocky escarpment and seeing this dense forest of trees, stretching out as far as the eye could see... I felt, at that moment, that this was a very precious and unique environment, and should be protected and nurtured in the years to come," she said.

"It took my breath away," she added, recalling the view framed by distant hills and the peak of Chirambakudoma Mountain.

Zoe had visited Chewore South about a year earlier, when wildlife sightings were, in her experience, still limited "Apart from seeing some hyenas and honey badgers at night and a large herd of elephants in a water pan, those were the only animals we saw in two weeks," she recalled.

On her return this year, she noticed a marked difference. Wildlife was becoming more visible around Chenje Camp, which officially opened during the first half of 2026 as Chewore South's photographic safari camp.



Some of Chewore South's dinosaur footprints, believed to be around 140 million years old.

"They are definitely coming back now, and Chenje Camp seems to be quite an attraction for them, with even a resident elephant spending time around the camp," she said

Myriam also noted the amount of animal spoor:

"On every single dry riverbed through which we walked, all types of tracks from very diverse species were present," she said.

The safari also took guests to Masoka, a community neighbouring

the Chewore South Safari Area. Trustee Mark Griffiths went to meet the community.

"The lottery of where you grow up has such an enormous influence on your life chances," he reflected.

CCT's community development projects here are helping reduce human-wildlife conflict while improving local livelihoods.

Guests also saw the newly completed water scheme and the elephant- and predator-proof fence going up.

"I found that the community was happier, more relaxed, with a feeling of joyousness, knowing that they were safe... They could be more productive with their crops, and have more to eat to feed their families, now that they were protected by the new fence," Zoe reflected.

Maintaining roads, supporting ranger operations, responding to illegal activities and working alongside neighbouring communities all require sustained investment and close collaboration between CCT, ZimParks and local stakeholders.

For Myriam, one of the most valuable aspects of the visit was seeing how these different pieces fit together. "I understood that CCT is building a solid foundation for enduring action," she said, reflecting on the partnerships being developed with communities, government and conservation organisations.

Mark left with a renewed appreciation of the challenge of financing conservation over the long term. While philanthropy remains essential, he believes initiatives such as biodiversity credits could help create more sustainable funding for protected area management.

He described Chewore South as "a living lab for innovation." For Zoe, the visit reinforced the importance of bringing more people to experience the landscape for themselves.

"There is so much in Chewore to see and experience," she said. "It's different from other game parks."

Over the course of the safari, supporters saw first-hand what 18 months of investment has produced on the ground.

For Myriam, that is the value of experiencing Chewore South in person.

"It looks like a unique initiative with the right size and complexity to be representative of best practice conservation and small enough to remain manageable," she said.



“““

Through the African Parks Incubation Programme, our team has been able to learn directly from people managing some of Africa's leading protected areas,”

- DR NIALL MCCANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AT AWE FOR NATURE FOUNDATION

The partnership between the African Parks Incubation Programme (AP-IP) and Awe Nature's implementing partner, Chewore Conservation Trust (CCT), remained active throughout the first half of 2026.

Between January and June, staff from Awe Nature and CCT took part in four key engagements aimed at strengthening the team's ability to manage Chewore South.

These included a practical strategy session in Chewore focused on law enforcement and community development; a week-long workshop at AP's Head Office in Johannesburg focused on technical park management; an AP-IP management meeting for park managers in Akagera National Park, Rwanda, where managers from across the network shared operational lessons; and a conservation science meeting in Odzala-Kokoua National Park that explored the use of conservation data to support management decisions.

These exchanges provided the Awe Nature and CCT teams with practical ideas, technical support, and invaluable opportunities to learn from AP staff and from peers facing comparable challenges across Africa.

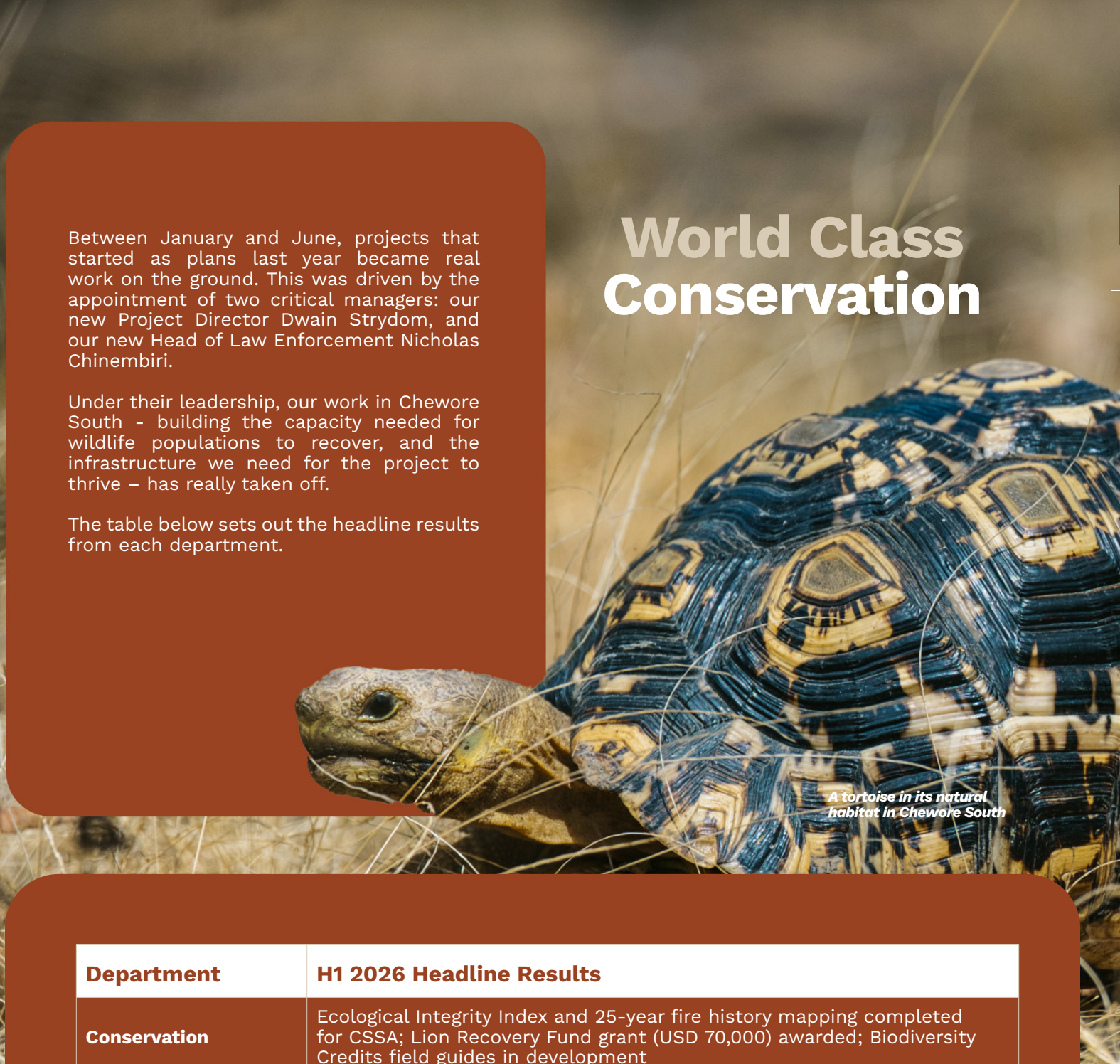
"Through the African Parks Incubation Programme, our team has been able to learn directly from people managing some of Africa's leading protected areas," Dr Niall McCann, Executive Director of Conservation and Communications at **Awe for Nature Foundation** said.

"Those conversations and shared experiences are helping us strengthen our operations, make better management decisions and build Chewore South into a resilient protected area that benefits both wildlife and the communities living alongside it."

Institutional capacity building



A bird spotted in Chewore South



World Class Conservation

Between January and June, projects that started as plans last year became real work on the ground. This was driven by the appointment of two critical managers: our new Project Director Dwain Strydom, and our new Head of Law Enforcement Nicholas Chinembiri.

Under their leadership, our work in Chewore South - building the capacity needed for wildlife populations to recover, and the infrastructure we need for the project to thrive – has really taken off.

The table below sets out the headline results from each department.

A tortoise in its natural habitat in Chewore South

Department	H1 2026 Headline Results
Conservation	Ecological Integrity Index and 25-year fire history mapping completed for CSSA; Lion Recovery Fund grant (USD 70,000) awarded; Biodiversity Credits field guides in development
Community	22 km Masoka fence nearing completion; water access points cut from 5+ km to under 1 km; Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes completed for fence and Early Childhood Development Proposal.
Law Enforcement	1,266 patrol man-days recorded, 40 arrests made, and 210 km of the 420 km annual roads and fireguards target achieved (50%).
Field Operations	Chenje Camp renovation completed; Mkanga Block 5 and Area Manager's house renovations underway
Procurement and Tourism	Chenje Camp equipped and operational; three guest groups hosted in May including the Awe Nature Board
Finance	Total assets grew to USD 1.89 million by June 2026 (up from USD 1.73 million in May); total income of USD 1.23 million recorded year-to-date, driven primarily by Awe Nature (87%); USD 591,090 invested in capital infrastructure and fleet during the period

CCT IMPACT IN MOTION



CCT researcher Prince Chikwara alongside personnel from the Great Plains Foundation and ZimParks during a joint wildlife monitoring survey in Chewore

In March, Chewore Conservation Trust completed its first comprehensive ecological health assessment of Chewore South using the Ecosystem Integrity Index approach.

The assessment found that 72% of the reserve falls within the high to very high ecological integrity category, providing CCT with a strong benchmark against which future changes can be measured.

Between 15 and 25 May 2026, CCT researchers teamed up with the Great Plains Foundation and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife

Management Authority (ZimParks) in a joint wildlife monitoring survey of carnivore spoor and scat as well as road counts of wildlife across Sapi, Chewore North and CSSA. The general aim was to monitor large predator populations and movements across the Greater Mana Pools Ecosystem.

“Because wildlife moves freely across the Greater Mana Pools Ecosystem, we need to understand what’s happening beyond the boundaries of Chewore South. Working with our conservation partners gives us a much clearer

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The assessment found that **72% of the reserve** falls within the high to very high ecological integrity category, providing CCT with a strong benchmark against which future changes can be measured.

Conservation: Assessing Ecological Health in Chewore South

picture of wildlife populations and movements across the wider landscape,” said CCT Conservation and Research Manager Dr Paradzayi Tagwireyi.

The collaboration continued in June when Great Plains Foundation donated 100 camera traps to CCT to support a 55-day species monitoring survey across Chewore South.

We also secured a USD 70,000 grant from the Lion Recovery Fund in June for the *Lions of Chewore* project. Lions are an indicator of ecosystem health, and the funding supports building the capacity and capability in our ranger team to tackle and prevent illegal activity such as snaring of prey animals and the targeted poaching of lions.

Stable or increasing lion numbers will demonstrate that our efforts are working.



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The Law Enforcement Department continues to suppress illegal activity in and around the Park, arresting suspects and recovering weapons and equipment used in the commission of these crimes.

Nicholas Chinembiri, Head of Law Enforcement at CCT, leads a foot patrol through Chewore South

Law Enforcement

The Law Enforcement Department continues to suppress illegal activity in and around the Park, arresting suspects and recovering weapons and equipment used in the commission of these crimes.

Between January and June, the Law Enforcement Department conducted 1,266 anti-poaching patrol man-days, resulting in 40 arrests.

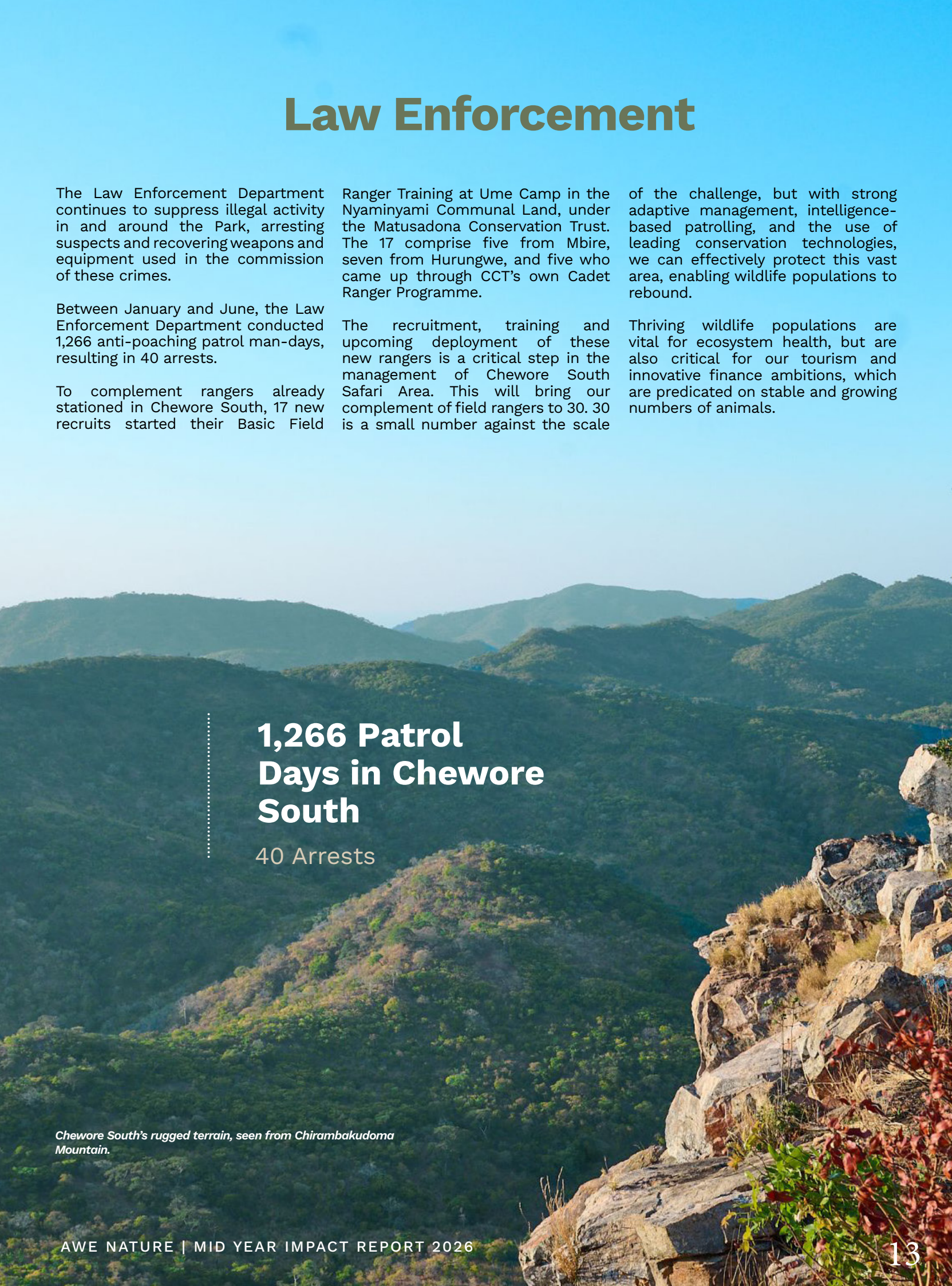
To complement rangers already stationed in Chewore South, 17 new recruits started their Basic Field

Ranger Training at Ume Camp in the Nyaminyami Communal Land, under the Matusadona Conservation Trust. The 17 comprise five from Mbire, seven from Hurungwe, and five who came up through CCT's own Cadet Ranger Programme.

The recruitment, training and upcoming deployment of these new rangers is a critical step in the management of Chewore South Safari Area. This will bring our complement of field rangers to 30. 30 is a small number against the scale

of the challenge, but with strong adaptive management, intelligence-based patrolling, and the use of leading conservation technologies, we can effectively protect this vast area, enabling wildlife populations to rebound.

Thriving wildlife populations are vital for ecosystem health, but are also critical for our tourism and innovative finance ambitions, which are predicated on stable and growing numbers of animals.



1,266 Patrol Days in Chewore South

40 Arrests

Chewore South's rugged terrain, seen from Chirambakudoma Mountain.



A guest tent at Chenje Camp, Chewore South's newly opened photographic safari accommodation.



Inside one of the guest tents at Chenje Camp.



Chenje Camp fire pit lounge area

Chenje Camp: Chewore South's Photographic Safari Camp Opens

The completion of the beautiful Chenje Camp was the biggest win of the first half of 2026. Renovations were completed in April, turning what had been an old hunting camp into Chewore South's flagship photographic safari accommodation.

It was timed for the CCT May Inaugural Safaris and a real step toward developing photographic tourism as a revenue stream. Three groups visited in May, among them the Awe Nature Board, all of whom thoroughly enjoyed staying in the beautiful camp, with delicious food served in our new restaurant, complete with a wooden viewing deck under the famous old tamarind tree.

Roads were harder going. An unusually rainy wet season slowed the team down, but they still got 210 km of the 420 km annual target done by the end of June. After the slow start, in June, four sections were completed in one push: Shamrock Road, Shamrock–SV Ranger Post, SV–Pope Road, and Pope Road–Kachowe River. Firebreaks along the Shamrock–Kachowe corridor went in at the same time, ahead of the dry season.

Meanwhile, the Mkanga Block 5 accommodation and the Law Enforcement housing are both close to done – plumbing, wiring and baboon-proofing are finished, with just solar and the exterior paint left. Good accommodation for our staff isn't just a nice-to-have, it is critical for maintaining morale and workplace performance in a remote and challenging place like Chewore South.

These investments are building the infrastructure needed to effectively manage Chewore South, and support conservation-based tourism and long-term protection of the landscape.

Field teams also need to constantly communicate with each other during field operations. In June, CCT installed a new digital radio communication system on Chirambakudoma Mountain, with the technical installation carried out by Kamba Communications.



William Stancer and Mark Griffiths, Awe Nature Trustees, and an Awe Nature staff member on safari during one of the CCT May Inaugural Safaris.



Awe Nature Board Members and members of staff at the original discovery site of dinosaur footprints on the Ntunbe River.



CCT Technology Officer Simbai Mutematembi on Chirambakudoma Mountain during installation of the new digital radio communication system

The new system gives field teams secure radio coverage across Chewore South and Mbire Ward 11. For teams on patrol, that means

being able to call for backup, report an incident, or flag illegal activity the moment it happens.



COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS

CCT
Strengthening
Community
Partnerships

Over the past six months of 2026, Awe Nature and CCT have greatly strengthened our partnerships with local communities.

CCT created employment opportunities for more than 50 community members through conservation and development activities across Chewore South Safari Area (CSSA) and Mbire District.

Alongside these activities, CCT strengthened collaboration with local authorities through a five-year Memorandum of Understanding with Mbire Rural District Council.

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Local residents chosen by the community are building the porcupine wire section by section, with technical expertise from the team at Robin Fencers. Each village head is responsible for managing a kilometre through bush clearing. Once the fence is complete, they will continue checking and maintaining their sections.

Mbire Rural District Council has also accepted a proposal from CCT to construct five Early Childhood Development centres in Ward 11, Masoka, for children aged three to six in communities living alongside wildlife.

The centres are expected to reduce the distance children travel to access early childhood education from 7–8 km to approximately 3 km, with construction planned for the second half of 2026.

Members of the Masoka community gather to discuss CCT’s community partnership projects.

22km Fence Nears Completion. Taps On. Masoka Takes on Human–Wildlife Conflict

Human–wildlife conflict has been costing the community an estimated USD300,000 each year through damaged crops and livestock losses. We aim to reduce this to USD Zero from this year onwards.

The elephant- and predator-proof fence protecting Masoka's people, livestock and fields from wildlife.



Stenzeni Dzomba (right) near a section of the new fence. She says she can now sleep peacefully since elephants no longer pass through



Promotion Dzomba (left) with Martin Sande, Chief Installer at Robin Fencers, inspecting progress on the porcupine fence at Masoka



CCT Community Manager Simba Sandram discusses fence installation progress with the lead fence installer and Promotion Dzomba, Masoka Ward Secretary

A 22-kilometre elephant- and predator-proof fence is nearing completion around Masoka Ward 11 in Mbire District. It is intended to protect people's lives and reduce crop and livestock losses caused by wildlife. Human-wildlife conflict has been costing the community an estimated USD300,000 a year in damaged crops and livestock losses, and has in some cases resulted in fatalities. Upon completion, the elephant- and predator-proof fence will significantly reduce those losses from this year onwards. Promotion Dzomba, Masoka Ward Secretary, knows those losses firsthand. In 2025, elephants destroyed his sorghum crop, while

lions killed 11 of his goats, some in broad daylight. "Sometimes you farm two acres, and the harvest ends up being half an acre – the rest destroyed by animals," he said. "Once an animal enters a field, it is hard to chase away." Stenzen Dzomba also lost her maize crop to elephants. Since the fence was installed near her home, she says she has heard elephants reach the fence, turn away, and move on. "Now we can sleep peacefully," she said. Ten residents chosen by the community are building the fence themselves, working section by section with technical expertise from the team at Robin Fencers.

Each village head is overseeing bush clearing along a kilometre of the fence route. Before construction began, Masoka residents took part in a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. The fence is being built at the community's request. AWE for Nature Foundation thanks an individual donor whose funding made construction possible. In May, the AWE for Nature Foundation Board, CCT leadership, and ZimParks Director of International Conservation Affairs Professor Patience Gandiwa visited Masoka to see the fence installation progress on the ground.

The upgraded water storage tanks at Masoka's solar piped water scheme, now holding 20,000 litres



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“In the past five years, we have lost almost 390 lives to human-wildlife conflict in Zimbabwe. Thirty-eight percent of those deaths were due to crocodiles, and we know crocodiles are in water. When water is made available to people close to home, you can imagine the difference that makes,”

- PROFESSOR PATIENCE GANDIWA
ZIMPARKS DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION AFFAIRS

More Water, Less Risk



Awe Nature Board members and staff, CCT staff, community members and a ZimParks representative gather in the shade of the solar panels powering Masoka's piped water scheme

In April, we added three additional 5,000-litre tanks to increase the water reservoir storage capacity of Masoka's solar piped water scheme to 20,000 litres.

This project is bringing clean water much closer to people's homes, and

the upgrade benefits around 1,500 people across five villages: Tizirai, Fakero, Chenjerai, Dumba and Mubairakuenda.

For many families, the walk to collect water has dropped from more than five kilometres to about one. Fenny Murarakwa, an elderly woman

in her late 70s, says the difference has been life-changing.

“I now spend less than five minutes walking to the nearest water point with my five-litre container. It has become much easier for me to get water because of the nearby supply,” she said.



An Awe Nature team member speaks with Fenny Murarakwa, a Masoka resident, about the water scheme's impact

The water project isn't just about saving time and energy collecting water, it is also about saving lives:

“In the past five years, we have lost almost 390 lives to human-wildlife conflict in Zimbabwe. Thirty-eight percent of those deaths were due to crocodiles, and we know

crocodiles are in water.

When water is made available to people close to home, you can imagine the difference that makes,” Professor Gandiwa, ZimParks Director of International Conservation Affairs said.

Read more about how the Masoka Community is tackling human-wildlife conflict: [Masoka Community Takes on Human-Wildlife Conflict – AWE](#)



A CCT staff member and community representatives during a corridor mapping exercise in Masoka, Ward 11.



CCT's Nesia Mhaka leads a Hukama Project community consultation meeting.

CCT Kicks Off DCA-Led, EU-Funded **Hukama Project** with Mbire Land Use Plan Review

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This work reflects CCT's broader approach to conservation in Mbire District: one that treats community partnership as central to long-term outcomes. CCT will continue working alongside these communities to ensure that conservation gains translate into tangible benefits for the households who share the landscape with wildlife.

Implementation of the EU-funded Hukama Project, led by Danish Church Aid (DCA), began in June with a review of the Mbire Integrated Land Use Plan (2020–2030). The Hukama Project aims to directly contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of Zimbabwean citizens while improving the management of natural resources in Mbire District in the Mid Zambezi Valley.

CCT brought together the Mbire Rural District Council, ZimParks, traditional leaders and communities from Ward 11 to map wildlife corridors. Using GIS mapping alongside community consultations in Angwa, Ikira, Masoka and Hungwa, residents identified where wildlife still moves freely, where movement has become more restricted, and where human–wildlife conflict has increased. Their local knowledge helped verify the mapping and provided a clearer picture of how the landscape is changing.

The review also strengthened coordination between the authorities responsible for land and wildlife management. By comparing local priorities with regional conservation initiatives such as the Lower Zambezi–Mana Pools (LOZA-MAP) and the Zimbabwe–Mozambique–Zambia (ZIMOZA) Transfrontier Conservation Areas, the process helped ensure that future land-use decisions support wildlife connectivity while meeting the needs of local communities.

The land use review marks the first milestone in CCT's role under the 36-month Hukama Project. CCT is part of a consortium led by the Danish Church Aid (DCA), alongside the Community CAMPFIRE Association of Zimbabwe, Wildlife Conservation Action and the Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre. Together, the consortium is working in Mbire District to strengthen natural resource management and improve the resilience of more than 7,500 households.

During the visit to Masoka, the CCT team also discussed a potential site for a Community Conservation Hub, which is intended to serve as a centre for community meetings, training and ecological monitoring.

This work reflects CCT's broader approach to conservation in Mbire District: one that treats community partnership as central to long-term outcomes. CCT will continue working alongside these communities to ensure that conservation gains translate into tangible benefits for the households who share the landscape with wildlife.



A CCT team member leads a community consultation session as part of the Hukama Project's land use review.

Financial Innovation

Policy and Strategic Engagement

Protecting a landscape as large and important as Chewore South requires more than effective field operations. It also depends on the policies, partnerships, and financing mechanisms that allow conservation efforts to be sustained over the long term.

In the first half of 2026, Awe Nature focused on bringing lessons from our work in Chewore South into wider conversations around conservation finance and protected area management.

Contributing to Zimbabwe's Biodiversity Credit Framework

In May, experts from Awe Nature and CCT participated in a two-day technical workshop in Kadoma convened by the Government of Zimbabwe to support the development of the country's Biodiversity Credits Framework.

During the workshop, the Awe Nature and CCT teams presented our proposed Zambezi Valley biodiversity credit model, using Chewore South as a practical example of how biodiversity finance can be applied within a real conservation landscape. The experience of managing a 200,000-hectare protected area provides valuable insight into the opportunities and challenges involved in designing mechanisms that can deliver measurable biodiversity outcomes while supporting conservation operations.

As Zimbabwe continues to develop its national approach to biodiversity credits, Awe Nature aims to provide the lessons from CCSA as a practical model to inform discussions that will eventually shape Zimbabwe's biodiversity credits landscape.



Awe Nature and CCT teams were among participants at the Developing Zimbabwe's Framework for Biodiversity Credits workshop in Kadoma.



Awe Nature's James Egremont-Lee presenting on 'Biodiversity Finance: Market Design with a Pilot in the Zambezi Valley'



Aaron Murphy, Awe Nature's Executive Director of Innovative Finance, at the Business of Conservation Conference in Nairobi.

Connecting Regional Learning with Local Experience

Our engagement began in March, when Aaron Murphy, Awe Nature's Executive Director of Innovative Finance, attended the Business of Conservation Conference in Nairobi. The conference brought together conservation organisations, investors, and policymakers to discuss some of the challenges facing protected areas across Africa, including the need for more sustainable financing models.

The discussions around emerging biodiversity credit mechanisms were particularly relevant to our work in the Chewore South Safari Area, where Awe Nature and our implementing partner, Chewore Conservation Trust, are exploring how biodiversity finance can support long-term conservation outcomes. The lessons shared during the conference helped inform our thinking as we continue developing a practical biodiversity credit model for the landscape.

Strengthening Conservation Finance Partnerships

Later in May, Awe Nature joined conservation and development partners at the Zimbabwe SPACES Funders' Roundtable in Victoria Falls. Held around the UN's International Day for Biological Diversity and under the theme "Acting Locally for Global Impact", the three-day meeting brought together organisations working to strengthen conservation financing across the country.

The roundtable provided an opportunity to discuss the realities of financing protected area management, and engage with partners on opportunities for collaboration. These conversations are important as conservation organisations navigate a changing funding environment and look for new ways to support long-term protection of Africa's remaining wild spaces.

"Through these engagements, Awe Nature and CCT continue to connect the realities of managing Chewore South with broader policy and financing discussions," Aaron Murphy, Executive Director of Innovative Finance, said.



Delegates, including Aaron Murphy, Executive Director of Innovative Finance, at the Zimbabwe SPACES Funders' Roundtable in Victoria Falls.

Innovative Finance in the Field

During the first half of 2026, Awe for Nature's Innovative Finance Department advanced two linked programmes: the development of high-integrity biodiversity finance in Chewore South and Mbire District Ward 11, and Animating the Carbon Cycle (ACC), which seeks to recognise the climate value created by wildlife.

The work has moved beyond initial research and partner identification towards field implementation, government engagement and the design of mechanisms that could eventually generate long-term, non-philanthropic finance for conservation and communities.

Biodiversity finance

Awe Nature formed a partnership with Zimbabwe's Ministry of Environment to establish Chewore South and Ward 11 as official national pilots for the development of a national biodiversity financing framework. This work is being advanced with the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and several other public, financial and technical partners.

The pilots will provide real-world evidence to support decisions on national standards, natural capital accounting, project governance, benefit sharing, verification, fund administration and the development of a biodiversity offset and/or compliance mechanism for the mining, tourism and agriculture sectors.

In Chewore South, the objective is to develop projects that generate sufficient revenue to dramatically reduce the reliance on philanthropy for funding the management of the protected area, and that explicitly link conservation outcomes with improved livelihoods in the communities.

In Ward 11, the objective is to develop a financing model that can complement or, over time, replace declining Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) revenues while retaining strong community control over how benefits are used. New income tied to biodiversity performance could reduce dependence on activities that damage ecosystems, particularly illegal artisanal gold mining, deforestation, and unsustainable agricultural practices. It could also help fund improved land management, human-wildlife conflict mitigation, water security and alternative livelihoods, creating a direct relationship between biodiversity improvement and greater financial stability for communities.

The two pilots are intended to test more than the issuance of standalone biodiversity credits. They will help determine how measurable biodiversity outcomes can be connected to different sources of demand, including voluntary corporate offsets, outcome-based philanthropy, conservation-linked financial instruments and a possible future national compliance market.

Animating the Carbon Cycle (ACC) is a new scientific field that studies the role and impact of wild animals in carbon sequestration.

Initial desk-based research using data from Chewore was released in April. Developed with the Global Rewilding Alliance, with IFAW supporting the policy pathway, the research found that elephants can play an enormous role in increasing carbon sequestration through their effects on vegetation, nutrient cycling and wider ecosystem processes.

The findings provide an evidence base for treating healthy wildlife populations not only as biodiversity outcomes, but also as contributors to climate mitigation and the maintenance of functioning carbon cycles. The technical team is now preparing the ACC model for a published scientific manuscript, and planning field work to test the theory on the ground in Chewore.

Building on this research, Awe Nature has begun engaging the Government of Zimbabwe on a pathway to include the carbon value created by wildlife in the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (the national climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions).

The longer-term objective is to enable verified wildlife-driven carbon outcomes to contribute to Article 6 carbon transactions (the transfer of carbon credits from carbon-producing nations to carbon-sequestering nations), creating a source of climate finance that rewards the protection and recovery of large mammal populations and the ecosystems they support.

In parallel, Awe Nature began canvassing established carbon methodology providers to assess their interest in formally developing, validating and hosting an ACC methodology. This is an essential step between the underlying science and a financeable carbon mechanism. The next phase will require further scientific refinement, agreement on monitoring and accounting requirements, a recognised methodology-development process and continued engagement with ZimParks and the relevant government authorities.

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During the second half of 2026, the department will focus on completing the field guides and baseline programme; formalising government recognition and governance arrangements for the two biodiversity finance pilots; developing benefit-sharing and fund-administration options; assessing potential voluntary and compliance demand; and advancing ACC with both government and prospective methodology providers.

The early development of this work has been made possible through core support from Mocoh SA and funding from Danish ChurchAid (DCA) for the Ward 11 programme. Awe Nature is continuing to pursue grants and strategic partnerships to finance the 2026 baselines, community consultation, field monitoring, methodology development and the wider national policy process.

Methodology documents were received and reviewed in March and refined through April and May with the Conservation and Research team. This work clarified the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification requirements for both pilots and identified the ecological and social evidence needed to establish credible baselines.

By June, the team had begun drafting Biodiversity Credits Field Guides: practical, standardised protocols that will translate the methodology into repeatable field activities. Data generated through the Ecosystem Integrity Index, vegetation classification, satellite fire history, connectivity mapping, camera trapping and wider species monitoring will feed directly into this process, alongside local ecological knowledge and community-based monitoring in Ward 11.

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Together, these workstreams are intended to connect the practical realities of managing Chewore South and supporting Ward 11 with national systems capable of directing substantially greater and more durable financial flows to nature.

Animating the Carbon Cycle (ACC)

Funding and next steps

FINANCE

First Half of 2026:Financial Outlook

Every dollar takes the same journey. Donors fund **Awe Nature Foundation**, which grants most of what it raises to the **Chewore Conservation Trust (CCT)** , the entity that delivers conservation work on the ground in the Chewore South Safari Area (CSSA) and Masoka Ward 11.



CCT FINANCIAL POSITION - 30 JUNE 2026

USD 1,893,143

total assets

Most of CCT's value now sits in assets built or bought for conservation work; continued grant funding in the second half of the year is what keeps operations running.

FUNDRAISING MOMENTUM

- Sarah Salvin appointed Director of Philanthropy in June 2026 to build a stable, diversified base of funders.

- USD 70,000 Lion Recovery Fund grant secured in June - an early sign of recognition within the conservation donor community.

- Active conversations under way with several major Trusts and Foundations interested in supporting ongoing work in the CSSA.

Priorities for July-December 2026

- Conservation and Research**
 - Analyse and report the Greater Mana Pools Ecosystem carnivore monitoring data
 - Complete full biodiversity and socio-economic baselines for Chewore South and Ward 11
- Law Enforcement and Field Operations**
 - Maintain patrol presence across CCSA
 - Complete Block 5 renovation, finalise PM house exterior and solar works
- Community**
 - Complete the 22km Masoka elephant- and predator-proof fence installation
 - Progress ECD Centre construction in Mbire (first phase of the seven-year kindergarten plan)
 - Operationalise the grievance redress mechanism
- Innovative Finance**
 - Build partnerships with institutions such as Yale University to translate the Animating the Carbon Cycle (ACC) research into a recognised carbon methodology.
 - To deliver against our North Star: value for nature
 - Launch a government-backed process to develop Zimbabwe's biodiversity compliance market framework
- Tourism**
 - Grow Chenje Camp into a USD100,000 tourism business by 2027, with increased tourist numbers driving that growth.
- Organisational Development**
 - Build out the AWE for Nature Foundation team, strengthening middle office talent and continuing to recruit strong people who can help grow and deliver our vision
- Communications**
 - Strengthen our storytelling and communications

About Awe for Nature Foundation

Awe for Nature Foundation is a non-profit organisation advancing practical, scalable finance solutions to support the long-term protection of critical ecosystems and help shape a new model for conservation. Our mission is to deliver high-integrity nature finance solutions in real-world conservation settings. Through long-term partnerships on the ground – beginning in Zimbabwe's Protected Area Network – we aim to create scalable models that protect biodiversity, support livelihoods, and shape the future of global conservation finance. Awe for Nature Foundation supports the protection of Chewore South Safari Area through its implementing partner, the Chewore Conservation Trust, in partnership with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and African Parks.

Awe Nature's Mission

To deliver high-integrity nature finance solutions in real-world conservation settings. Through long-term partnerships on the ground – beginning in Zimbabwe's Protected Area Network – we aim to create scalable models that protect biodiversity, support livelihoods, and inform the future of global conservation finance.



The Awe for Nature Foundation, African Parks and CCT teams in Chewore South

About Chewore South Safari Area

Forming approximately 30% of the Mana Pools, Sapi and Chewore World Heritage Site, Chewore South is the largest single concession within the Lower Zambezi Protected Area complex. Historically a hunting concession, the area is now under a 25-year lease from Zimparks by the CCT, with the ambition to explore a diversity of revenue opportunities. The Chewore South Safari Area has been managed by the Chewore Conservation Trust in partnership with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority since January 2025.

Guide Mackenzie Ziota and AWE for Nature Foundation's Gregor Pipan birdwatching in Chewore South

Key funders and partners who make our work possible



We are grateful to all individual donors not listed here for their enormous support of Awe Nature and CCT projects