

December 2022

# Final Report

*“You can teach someone all you know about the art and skill of tracking; however, you cannot teach integrity. This has to come from the core of who you are.”*

*Dr Ian McCallum*

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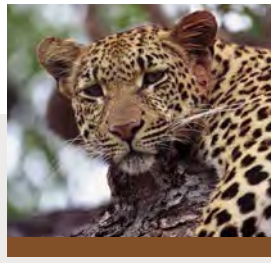
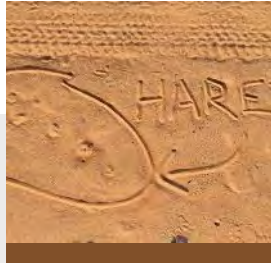
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# 1. Your Support

*“Restoring ancient African animal tracking skills and indigenous knowledge”*

**In 2022, you provided immense support to the work of Tracker Academy - for which we are most appreciative.** This report gives details of the yearlong course.

Tracker Academy’s overarching VISION is to restore ancient African animal tracking skills and indigenous knowledge for the benefit of wildlife conservation. Our MISSION is to demonstrate that the traditional skills of tracking have relevance in modern conservation efforts.

## 2. Programme Update

**Twenty-three (23) sponsored tracker students have completed and passed their final evaluations in 2022.**

Students have trained at Londolozi Game Reserve, Tswalu Kalahari, Lapalala Game Reserve and the Southern African Wildlife College.

*To recap, students were trained in the following subject, among others:*



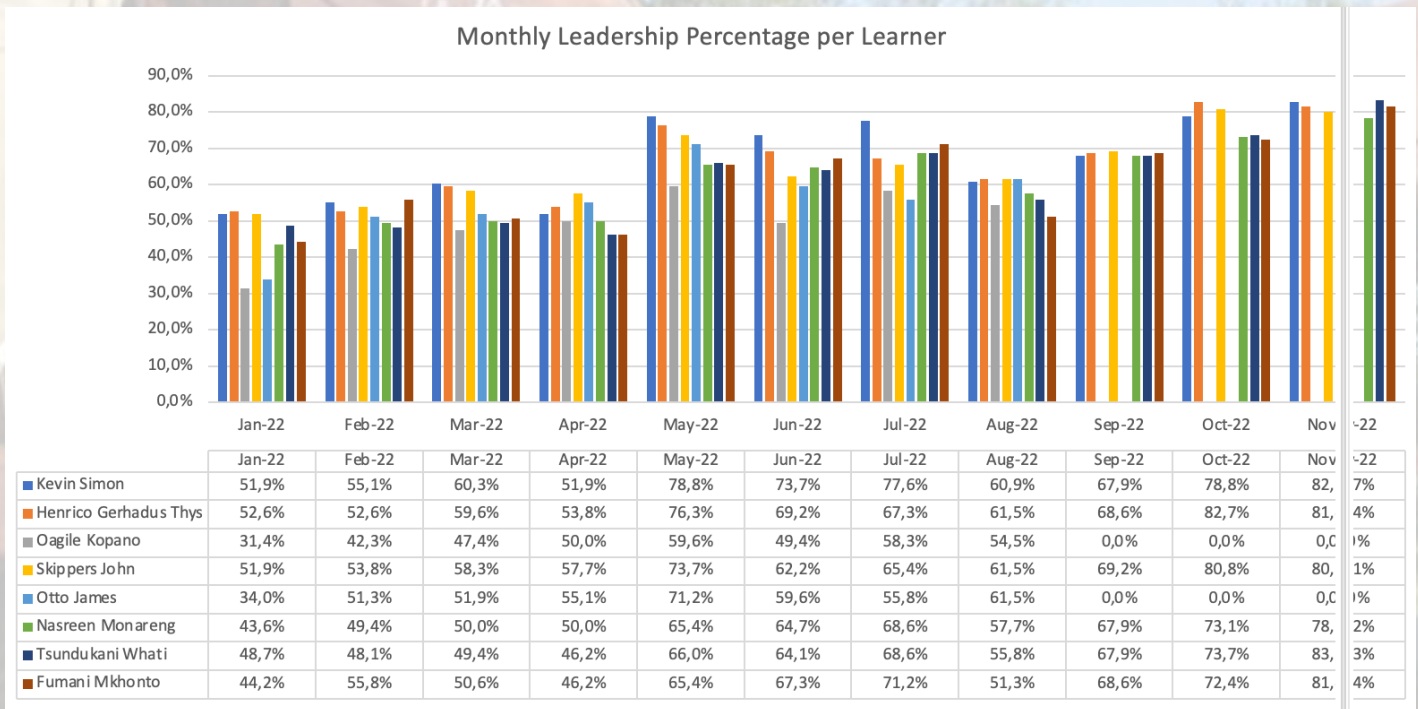
- Animal tracks & tracking (wildlife & man tracking)
- Theory of tracking
- Animal behaviour
- Birds, bird language, trees & plants medicinal purposes
- Basic ecology, geology, astronomy, taxonomy & weather
- Animal monitoring & VPDA (viewing potentially dangerous animals on foot)
- Rifle competence (counter-poaching)
- Life Skills, presentation skills & career readiness
-

### 3. Student Ethics

Monthly, trainers evaluate individual students' general conduct, self-management, leadership skills, communication, lateral thinking, decision-making, conservation and work ethics.

Below is an example of one group's (Group 2022C) performance tracking in respect of work and personal ethics.

It is clear from the graph below that their work and personal ethics have improved over the year of study. This bodes well for the graduates as they enter the conservation job market.



*"Great trackers are disciplined and ethical people. You need excellent skills and a pure heart to be a master. At Tracker Academy we see problems start with the student not greeting us properly in the morning. Small attitude issues very quickly become dangerous problems for us in the bush."*

Renias Mhlongo, Trainer Mentor





## 4. Final Student Results

### Practical Tracking Assessments Explained...

A practical tracking assessment comprises two components:

1. **Track & Sign identification & interpretation** (*study of animal sign*)
2. **Trailing** (*following an animals' trails*)

To achieve the full tracking certificate students must pass **both** components on the same percentage (%) level.

- Tracker level 1 (70-79%)
- Tracker Level 2 (80-89%)
- Tracker Level 3 (90-99%)
- Advanced Tracker (100%)

The above pertains to the entry, intermediate and advanced levels of tracking competence. Different criteria apply to the **Lead Tracker (NQF4)** qualification which is not offered in this yearlong course.

Certificates	Total Graduate Certificate Success (of 23 students)
Tracker Level 1	0
Tracker Level 2	6
Tracker Level 3	17
Advanced Tracks & Sign	3
CATHSSETA NQF2 Tracker Skills Programme	23

### IMPORTANT TO NOTE

**Tracker Academy's internal practical tracking assessments are of an exceptionally high standard.**

70% (17 students) achieved *Tracker Level 3*. We are aiming for 75% in 2023.

100% of graduates were found competent against the basic minimum CATHSSETA NQF2 programme.

### ONLINE TRACKER GRADUATE RESULTS

Starting early 2023 all tracker student results will be published on the Tracker Academy website – [www.trackeracademy.co.za](http://www.trackeracademy.co.za)

Feel free to visit the site and view the monthly results in granular detail, tracking hours logged, encounters, test results, ethics scores, and a whole lot more!

## 5. Student Learning Journey: 2022

**Tracker students are trained in theoretical and practical elements of wildlife tracking, and how these are applied in real world conservation management outcomes, wildlife protection and ecotourism.**

Knowledge components are taught by our trainers (lecturers) in a classroom environment using PowerPoint lectures, videos, textbooks and research materials. This learning is augmented by daily trips to the bush to view and internalise the theoretical lessons.

Students undertake twice daily field excursions to practice traditional skills of tracking: identifying, illustrating and interpreting animal sign, and following the trails of antelope and Big 5 animals (Trailing). The trailing component represents the most complex skillset and therefore requires hundreds of hours of effortful coaching and practice.

Students are introduced to ancient hunter-gatherer techniques. This training exposes students to the infinite and minute relationships that exist in a natural ecosystem. *No animals are harmed.*

Monthly assessments are conducted to closely monitor individual student performance – both practically and theoretically.

Psychiatrist Dr Ian McCallum runs conservation ethics and personal leadership interventions. Additionally, Dr McCallum conducts one-on-one personal counselling for any/all trackers in need of this service, at no cost.



*On average, trackers log **1525 hours** in the bush practising their tracking skills and each record **151 encounters** with high profile animals such as lion, leopard, cheetah rhino & buffalo on foot.*





## 6. Graduate Deployment

Following graduation, it is vital that graduates find employment in the wildlife industry. Their newfound skills are unique, and trackers can make material contributions to various conservation outcomes. The cycle is only complete once the graduates are formally employed.

See deployment statistics below for period: 15 January 2010 to 1 December 2022 (13 years).



*Since 2010, 93% of our tracker graduates have been gainfully employed in the conservation industry.*

*The majority (54%) have found opportunities in eco-tourism.*

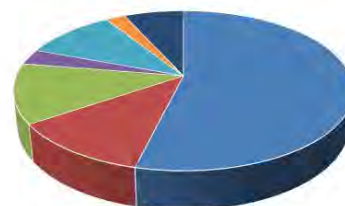
*A growing number (24%) are being absorbed into counter-poaching units to protect and monitor rhino.*

Ecotourism	54%	120
Animal Monitoring	12%	26
Anti-Poaching	12%	27
Predator Habituation	3%	7
Environmental Education	10%	23
Conservation Management	2%	5
Unknown or Unemployed	7%	15
	1	223

### Since 2010

Total Students Enrolled	256
Total Students Trained & Graduated	223
Total Graduates Employed	208
Deployment Success Rate	93,27%
Total Attrition Number	33
Attrition Rate (%)	12,89%

Student Deployment



- Ecotourism
- Animal Monitoring
- Anti-Poaching
- Predator Habituation
- Environmental Education
- Conservation Management
- Unknown or Unemployed

## 7. Rhino Guardians: A New Project



*We use the ancient African craft of animal tracking to create safe havens for endangered species, particularly rhino and elephant.*

Rhino Guardians is Tracker Academy's latest project aimed at preparing professional trackers to protect rhino more effectively by bringing enhanced tracking and bushcraft skills to wildlife protection efforts.

The yearlong formally accredited programme was launched in 2022 in partnership with [Londolozi Game Reserve](#).



*Amos Mzimba (right) head trainer of Rhino Guardians, spent 27 years in Kruger National Park accumulated immense experience in the field of anti-poaching. He made over 300 successful arrests.*

### Curriculum Outline:

- 
- Animal & Man tracking & anti-tracking techniques
- 
- Theory of tracking
- 
- Animal behaviour, birds, trees, plants & basic ecology
- 
- Conservation guardianship & ethics
- 
- Bushcraft, navigation, patrols, combat, self-defence
- 
- Animal monitoring & K9 handling
- 
- Self-loading weapon competence
- 
- Life Skills, First Aid, Presentation Skills & Work Readiness
- 
- PSIRA (Security Regulatory Authority) Grade C, D & E
- 
- Law enforcement basics
-



## 8. Developments at Tracker Academy

Tracker Academy will sadly be closing its doors at Samara Game Reserve in the Karoo. This after 13 years of continuous training at the grace of owner Sarah Tompkins. We would like to sincerely thank Sarah for allowing us to operate on her magnificent game reserve.



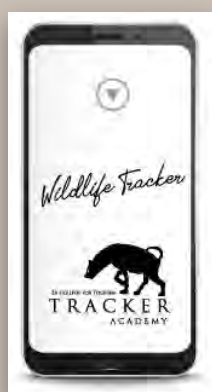
Tracker Academy has started training 16 Rhino Guardians trackers, based at the Southern African Wildlife College field ranger camp. We are incredibly thankful for this relationship, and to AndBeyond for permitting us to train on the vast Ngala concession.

Lapalala Wilderness, its board led by Peter Anderson and Duncan Parker, have generously offered for Tracker Academy to make use of its original Lapalala Wilderness School facilities. In return, Tracker Academy will be assisting Lapalala with a leopard habituation project.



We will be reducing the number of Tourism trackers trained annually, from 24 to **16 students**. The net effect is an increase from 24 to **32 tracker students trained from 2023 onwards**: 16 Tourism Trackers and 16 Rhino Guardians.

Tracker Academy has assisted several game reserves with tracker development, including Gorongosa in Mozambique, Arabian Leopard Initiative in Sharaan & Wadi Nakhlah Reserves in Saudi Arabia with Panthera, and several concessions in the Okavango Delta with Rhinos Without Borders in Botswana.



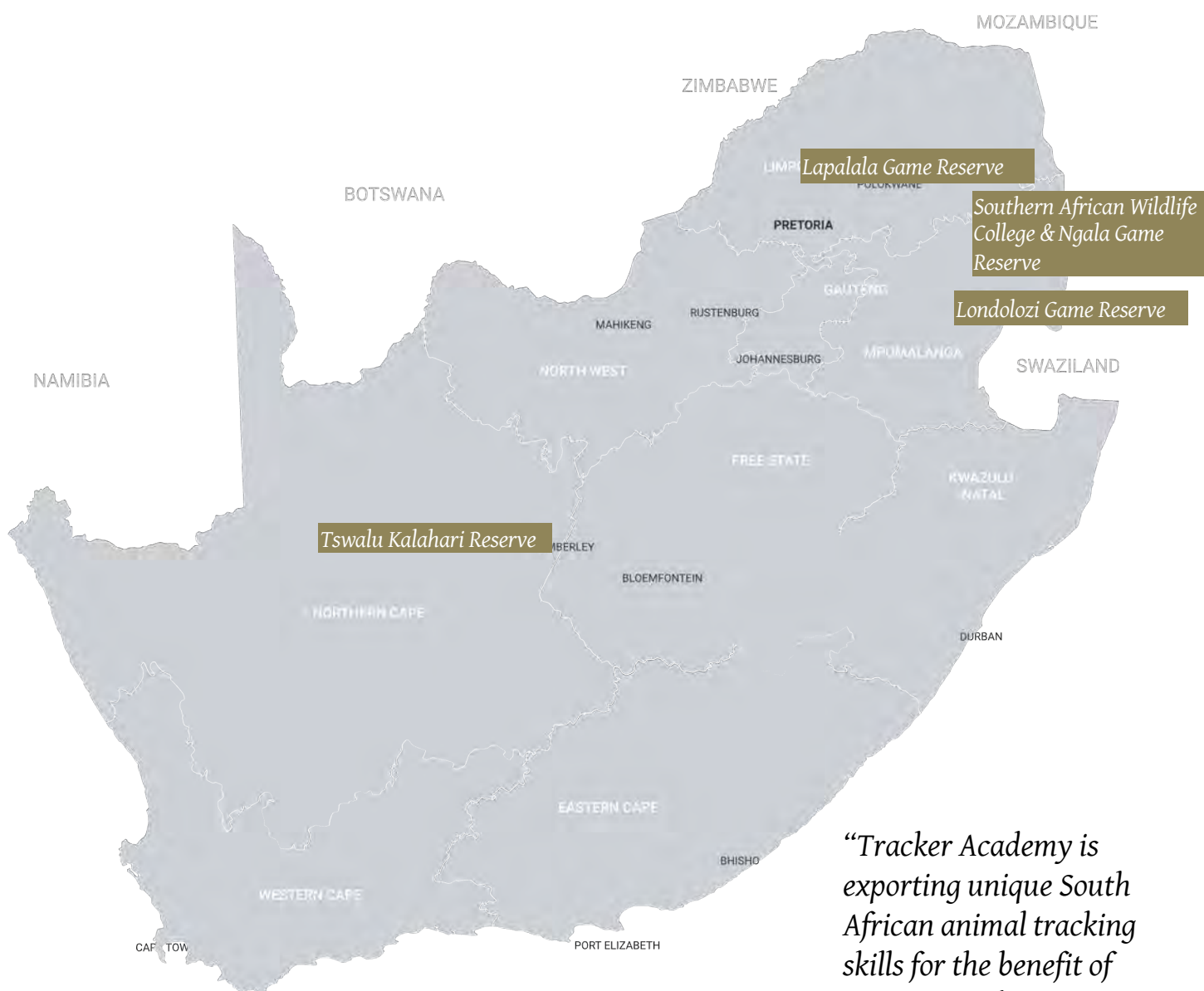
The long-awaited project to develop a Tracking App that uses machine learning (artificial intelligence) took a significant leap forward recently, with Hewlett Packard Enterprise offering its HPE Labs to assist with the development. Watch this space!

## 9. Our Training Footprint

Tracker Academy makes use of various training sites throughout South Africa. All the reserves listed below provide their facilities and land free of charge for our training operations. 🙏

A diverse training footprint allows us to expose our tracker students to a diverse range of habitat and animal species.

Each training site offers unique tracking challenges that trackers must adapt to and overcome as part of their education.



*“Tracker Academy is exporting unique South African animal tracking skills for the benefit of international conservation efforts. A rare example.”*  
**Gaynor Rupert**



## 10. Expense Report

The expense report will be delivered upon finalisation of the SA College for Tourism's audited financial statements by PWC, anticipated in May 2023.





## 11. Conclusion

*We would like to express our sincerest thanks to you for supporting this important project.*

The students have performed well at Tracker Academy. They will be receiving both FGASA and CATHSSETA tracking certificates. Our view is that they are sufficiently prepared, mentally and ethically ready to contribute meaningfully to wildlife conservation in Africa.

We look forward to hosting you at the graduation in 2023 and will be in touch once the dates are finalised.

Please notify us if you would like to meet to discuss the report.

Thank you,

*The Tracker Academy family,*

*Janetta, Karel, Innocent, Norman, Renias, Alex & Mariette.*

