



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Launch of the Mun-Ya-Wana Conservancy Spotted Hyena Project

NEW YORK, NY – August 2, 2018 - Last month, a new phase of the Mun-Ya-Wana Conservancy Spotted Hyena Project (MCSHP) commenced with the collaring of the first of over a dozen spotted hyena with a GPS/VHF collar. Based at E&Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve, the MCSHP has worked to monitor the hyena populations within Phinda and the neighboring uMkhuze Game Reserve since 2014.

The project is led by ecologist Axel Hunnicutt from Wild Tomorrow Fund, who has watched and recorded the decline of spotted hyenas over the last four years. The MCSHP contributed to and authored the 2016 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Regional Red List Assessment for spotted hyena, listing them as Near Threatened in Southern Africa, due to low survival probabilities for the cubs and adults resident at Phinda and uMkhuze, as well as declining population trends.

"Unlike most large carnivores in Africa, spotted hyenas have largely been outside the spotlight for both research and public support. This project is unique in both its intensity and scale, to better understand how spotted hyena utilize the mixed landscape in Zululand," said Hunnicutt. "These collared hyenas will help us answer a variety of questions about how hyena and people interact, and will educate us on how to better conserve these species."

This next step in hyena research was made possible through a grant from the Oak Foundation, along with the support of Wild Tomorrow Fund, E&Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve, and the Mun-Ya-Wana Conservancy. Collaring the hyenas enables Hunnicutt and his team to study how hyenas utilize the landscape both inside and outside of protected areas. Using a cell phone signal, the collars transmit information about the hyena's exact location, speed, and temperature every four hours.

The collared male is the first of 14 spotted hyenas of different ages, social rank and sex to be collared for the project across the Mun-Ya-Wana Conservancy, uMkhuze Game Reserve and the surrounding area. Over the next several years the MCSHP will examine how these animals move through areas with different levels of conservation protection,

what they eat and how they interact with people, learning more about how to help this threatened population.

&Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve, a part of the Mun-Ya-Wana Conservancy, is an ideal study site for spotted hyena since it is situated between local communities and farmlands, which are relatively unprotected habitat for hyenas, and the uMkhuze Game Reserve, a park that has been protected for over 100 years.

“Spotted hyena move across the landscape, with vast territories and home ranges that cover both formal protected parks, private reserves, local communities and farms with commercial livestock in and around &Beyond Phinda,” says Simon Naylor, Reserve Manager &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve. “This study will hopefully reveal more detailed information about the spotted hyena population in this part of Zululand. Outside these protected areas, these animals are coming into conflict with communities and commercial livestock farmers. The information gained will hopefully also advise how best to mitigate these conflicts and assist in the future survival of these much maligned and persecuted animals. I believe it is possible for all the different land users to co-habit the landscape with these animals. This study will assist us in finding the best solutions for this.”

About Wild Tomorrow Fund

Wild Tomorrow Fund is a registered wildlife conservation charity both in the United States and South Africa. Wild Tomorrow Fund is dedicated to the protection of threatened and endangered species and the habitats they depend on for survival. Wild Tomorrow Fund works on the ground in southern Africa with a vision for a world in which wildlife habitats are expanded and protected, and where existing reserves have the resources needed to keep their animals safe.

About &BEYOND

&Beyond designs personalized high-end tours in 15 countries in Africa, five in Asia and four in South America, offering discerning travellers a rare and exclusive experience of the world as it should be. We own and operate 29 extraordinary lodges and camps in iconic safari, scenic and island destinations in Africa and South America. This enables us to positively impact more than 9 million acres of wildlife land and 3,000 kilometers of coastline.

Established in 1991, &Beyond strives to leave our world a better place than we found it through our care of the land, wildlife and people, and the delivery of extraordinary guest experiences. We have established an intimate relationship with some of the world’s last remaining unspoiled natural places and the communities that surround them. In combination with our highly-skilled guides and rangers, this allows us to deliver extraordinary guest experiences that feel profoundly meaningful.

Additional information:

For more photos, see the online gallery [in dropbox here](#)

A project overview video: <https://youtu.be/xNWSyt74694>