

This Press Release was issued on behalf of the African Bioacoustics Community committee and SANParks on the 20th of October 2023.

Listening for Life Project comes to Kruger

With spring well and truly underway - there has been a plethora of bird species flocking to the Kruger National Park, and as dawn breaks, the morning chorus resonates through the camps. This Spring, a diverse group of scientists and artists has joined the migration – traveling from Cape Town to Kruger Park as part of an exciting new project to encourage appreciation of the natural world through sound.

The ‘Listening for Life’ project has been initiated by the African Bioacoustics Community – a network of scientists across the continent who integrate sound and acoustic monitoring into their research. By collaborating with Cape Town based Graffiti artists: CareCreative & Sergical One - the Listening for Life project aims to promote active and mindful listening to nature. This Science-Art collaboration hopes to foster a greater appreciation of the natural world and the importance of all creatures in the ecosystem, many of whom are difficult to view, but rely on sound to communicate with each other or find their food. These include many species of birds, bats and insects which are fundamental to healthy and well functioning ecosystems.

Within days of arriving at the Park, the team were able to start installing giant vibrant images of iconic African wildlife. From hoopoes to hippos, these are animals whose calls contribute to the ‘soundscape’ of Kruger Park and part the sonic experience of any visitor – these artworks encourage visitors to pause, close their eyes and experience the park through listening to its natural beat. The director of the African Bioacoustics Community, Dr Tess Gridley says ‘as a bioacoustician, Kruger National Park is an incredibly special space – the diversity of life is astounding and waking up early to record the birds is truly an incredible experience. From the first voices at 4:45am to the full dawn chorus soon after, the sounds can be overwhelming as so many species are singing all at once’. For Gridley, the highlight of the trip wasn’t the traditional Big 5, but rather the Bioacoustics Big 5 she says “Recording the Black-backed Puffback was a real highlight – this is small bird which can be hard to see, but both vocalizes and makes clicking sounds with its wings as it forages through the undergrowth. This combined way of producing sounds is really neat to hear and to record. “

Many have already commented on the vibrance of the art pieces and how lifelike they look - Artist, CareCreative says “It was an honor and privilege to paint and spend time in the Kruger landscape. We loved bringing fresh colour to the walls and enjoyed all the responsive engagements we experienced. We look forward to developing further designs working with local residents, scientists and all the multi-species collaborators, as we imagine the soundscape through paint.”

SergicalOne had this to say, “The power of Graffiti/Aerosol Art has a massive impact in any environment, the scale and positive energy which this artform brings often lifts up spaces and engages directly with the viewer. We create out of the Hip Hop Culture to transform spaces: integrating into our natural environment as one with nature.”

These new art installations have enhanced areas of the Skukuza Rest Camp, breathing life into previously loved areas such as the rest camp amphitheater. The visuals have already generated quite a buzz. General Manager of Scientific services Danny Govender comments “I firmly believe in the power of nature to heal, inspire, and nurture the human spirit, but before a visitor can fully immerse

themselves in all Kruger has to offer, and disengage from their fast-paced lives, they need to take time to slow down, to listen, and to engage all their senses. The artworks remind visitors to stop and listen. They do so through beautiful art, which invigorates and energizes the spaces in which they have been placed. They will form part of a series of paintings, which will hopefully encourage visitors to go out and explore more of what the Park has to offer.”

As well as painting, the team (who received vehicle support through the Ford Wildlife Foundation) spent many hours in the field, making high quality acoustic recordings of more than 80 species of birds as well as the iconic lions, elephants and vervet monkeys throughout the park - they even recorded the sounds of crocodiles mating! The African Bioacoustics team is collating the media generated into an online sound library. This will help global efforts to recognize and monitor species using passive acoustic methods which ultimately can help to conserve rare and threatened species. “Although South Africa has a very high diversity of species, many are poorly studied and bioacoustics is a useful tool to help understand their behavior, distributions, numbers and much more” says Gridley.

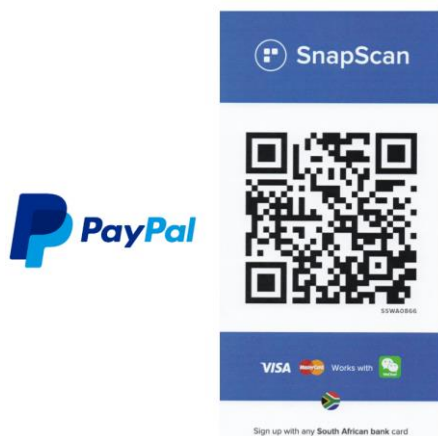
“We hope the public will get involved by taking a moment, or better still, a few minutes to sit, close their eyes and spend time listening to nature. Because in doing this, your sense of hearing starts to tune in to all the life around you. For visitors eager to contribute to the project, recordings can be submitted through the iNaturalist citizen science app and we hope that members of the public will get involved by contributing to these sound libraries” says Gridley.

With more set to come – the team aims to return to Kruger NP in Autumn next year – to continue their work and encourage feedback on these pieces. They are looking forward to visiting in a different season, generating new artworks which reflect the cooler seasons, and building on this collaboration and the changing environment.

This project is funded for a period of 12 months by the Richard Lounsbery Foundation. To support our work, please consider a donation to:

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For **More information** on our **Organization(s)** Visit our **Websites:**

<https://www.africanbioacoustics.org/>

<https://seasearch.co.za/>

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