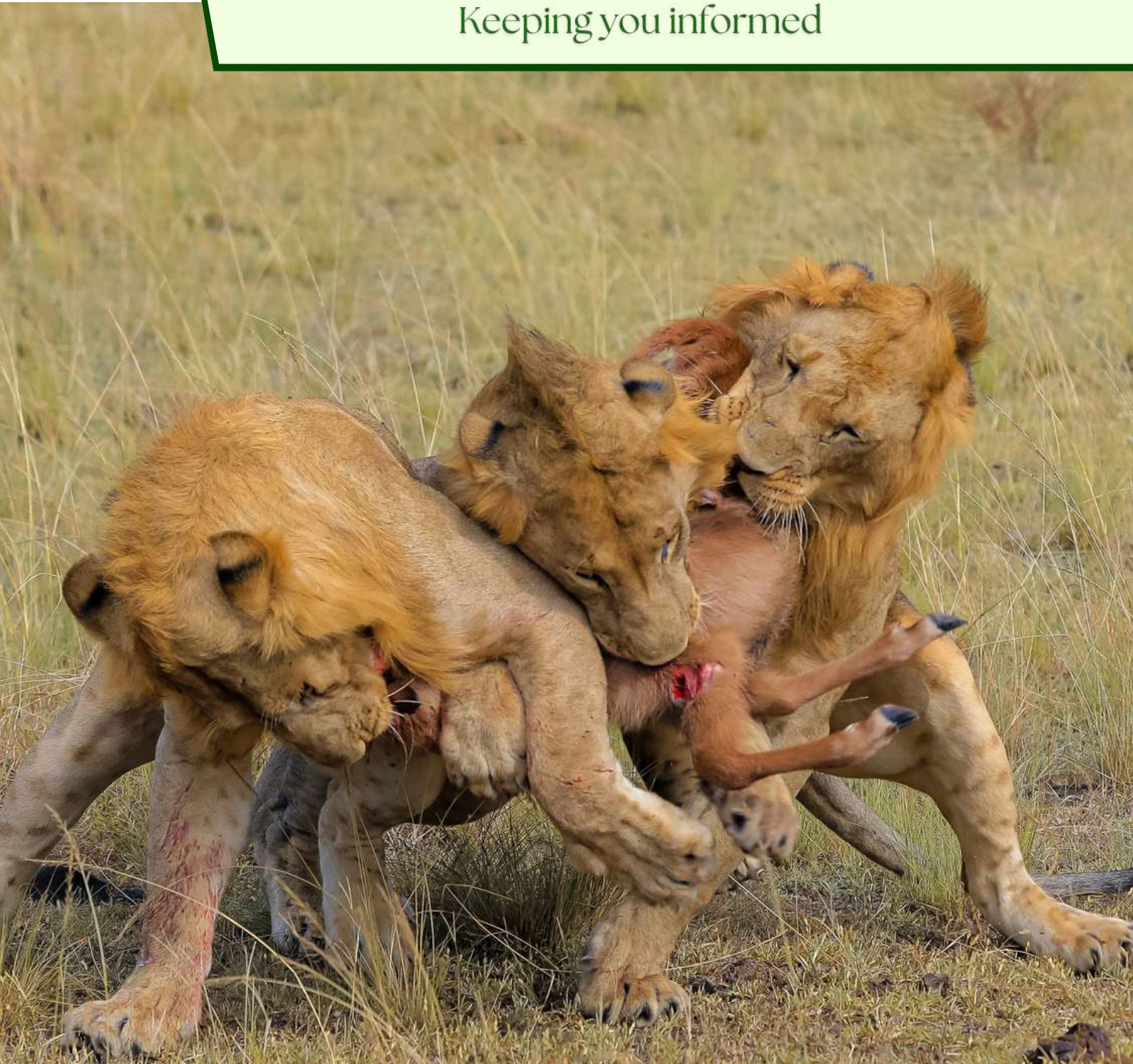


# THE WILDLIFE MIRROR

Keeping you informed



Dr. James Musinguzi takes the Helm at Uganda Wildlife Authority



King Oyo treks Bwindi, adds royal spotlight to gorilla conservation



From Culture to Conservation: Uganda Shines at POATE 2025

## Word from the editor

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up this edition of The Wildlife Mirror. Inside, you'll find accounts that reflect where we've been, where we are, and where we're heading as an Authority entrusted with the guardianship of Uganda's wildlife.



This issue carries stories of transition and continuity. We mark the change in leadership at Uganda Wildlife Authority, salute the contributions of those who have served with distinction, and highlight the efforts of teams working across the country, from remote ranger posts to boardrooms shaping conservation policy. You'll read about the return of the rhino to Ajai, the start of the sixth great ape census, support to schools and families near protected areas, and moments that remind us of the weight and worth of this work.

As always, this newsletter serves one purpose: to keep those who care about conservation informed and connected to what's happening on the ground. Behind these pages are the voices, decisions, and daily efforts of many committed individuals. Through it, we remain open, connected, and accountable.

Your feedback is welcome, it helps us do better, and we're always keen to hear from those who read and engage with us.

### **Bashir Hangi**

Editor, The Wildlife Mirror

Manager Communications

**UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY**

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## Dr. James Musinguzi takes the Helm at Uganda Wildlife Authority

Uganda Wildlife Authority officially transitioned to new leadership on April 2, 2025, as Dr. James Musinguzi took over the role of Executive Director from Mr. Sam Mwandha. The handover, held at UWA's headquarters in Kampala, brought together government officials, board members, conservation partners, and staff to mark the occasion.

Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka, Minister of State for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, presided over the ceremony. In his remarks, he commended Mr. Mwandha for steering the Authority through some of its most critical years, including the COVID-19 disruption and the merger with the Uganda Wildlife Conservation Education Centre (UWEC). "Mr. Mwandha's steady hand helped UWA grow stronger and more credible," the minister said.

The Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Doreen Katusiime, echoed the tribute, describing Mwandha as a reformer who emphasized transparency, accountability, and professionalism. She expressed confidence in Dr. Musinguzi's capacity to build on that legacy.



Former UWA ED Mr. Sam Mwandha gives his speech during the handover ceremony.

UWA Board Chair, Professor James Kalema, thanked Mr. Mwandha for his focus on sound governance and open engagement with stakeholders. "He helped rebuild trust in the institution," Kalema said. "And that trust is now one of our greatest assets."

During his farewell speech, Mr. Mwandha reflected on his long career in conservation, beginning as a Warden for Community Conservation. He recalled the growth in park infrastructure, improvements in protected area management, and strengthened efforts to resolve human-wildlife conflict during his tenure. “I leave with pride, knowing that together we made progress that mattered,” he said

He offered words of support to his successor: “This job is demanding, but deeply meaningful. You’ll find fulfilment in the mission, especially if you keep the team together

and focused.”

Taking the podium, Dr. James Musinguzi thanked the Board and Ministry for entrusting him with the responsibility of leading UWA. He outlined his priorities: boosting revenue from tourism, enhancing community partnerships, restoring degraded habitats, and addressing emerging threats to wildlife, including illegal trade and invasive species.

He also pledged to improve staff welfare and communication across all levels of the organization. “People are the heart of this Authority,” he said. “We will succeed by listening, learning, and working together.”

The event closed with symbolic exchanges: a signed handover report, a warm handshake between outgoing and incoming leaders, and applause from staff who had worked with both men.

Dr. Musinguzi stepped into the role at a time of great opportunity for UWA. With Uganda’s biodiversity increasingly recognized as both a conservation priority and a driver of tourism, the Authority’s leadership plays a central role in balancing protection and progress.

As the ceremony ended, it was clear that while one era had closed, another—with renewed direction and responsibility—had begun.



Minister for Tourism Wildlife & Antiquities Hon. Martin Mugarra decoates new UWA ED Dr. James Musinguzi  
On the left is Dr. James Musinguzi's wife

# UWA celebrates Sam Mwandha at farewell dinner



UWA senior officers pose for a photo with outgoing UWA ED Mr. Sam Mwandha

It was an evening of gratitude, reflection, and heartfelt farewells as the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) bid goodbye to outgoing Executive Director, Mr. Sam Mwandha. The farewell dinner, held on March 28, 2025, at Serena Hotel in Kampala, brought together dignitaries, conservation partners, staff, and close friends to honour seven years of dedicated service.

The event was attended by Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka, Minister of State for Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities, who served as Chief Guest. Also present were members of the UWA Board of Trustees, representatives from the African Wildlife Foundation, Uganda Tourism Board, and Mr. Mwandha's family and colleagues.

In his remarks, Hon. Mugarra praised Mr. Mwandha's leadership, describing it as one grounded in integrity and purpose. He said Mwandha had helped elevate UWA's reputation both at home and internationally,

especially in navigating difficult moments such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent merger process.

Professor James Kalema, Chairperson of the UWA Board of Trustees,



Minister Martin Mugarra hands over a certificate of appreciation to Mr. Sam Mwandha

acknowledged Mr. Mwandha's contributions to the institution's growth. "Under his guidance, UWA's budget grew from 86.8 billion in 2017 to nearly 200 billion today," he said. "But beyond numbers, he helped foster credibility, stability, and professionalism in how we do our work."

Mr. Stephen Masaba, Senior Manager for Tourism and Business Development, spoke on behalf of the staff. He thanked Mr. Mwandha for providing consistent leadership during both calm and turbulent times. "You led us through uncertainty with a steady hand. Your ability to stay grounded, even in challenging circumstances, earned you the respect of many, he said. Masaba noted that Mwandha created an atmosphere of trust, improved stakeholder

relationships, and was committed to team development.

As he gave his farewell speech, Mr. Mwandha reflected on his career journey within UWA—from Warden Community Conservation to the top position. He said the role had been demanding but deeply fulfilling. He expressed confidence in the institution's direction and extended his support to the new Executive Director, Dr. James Musinguzi.

"This is a job that requires patience, resolve, and clarity," he said. "But if done right, it brings immense reward—not just for you, but for the country's conservation future."

He also spoke about the major milestones – achieved during his term: strengthening infrastructure

in protected areas, deepening community involvement in conservation, and reducing human-wildlife conflict through practical interventions.

The evening closed with the presentation of a certificate from the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, honouring Mr. Mwandha for his service. Staff and stakeholders also presented him with gifts and shared personal messages of appreciation.

For many in the room, it wasn't just a farewell—it was the end of a significant chapter in Uganda's conservation story. Mr. Mwandha's tenure was marked by steadiness, clarity of vision, and commitment to results.

His departure left UWA with big shoes to fill, but also a firm foundation for the journey ahead.



UWA Board members led by the Chairperson Prof. James Kalema handover a plaque to Mr. Sam Mwandha



ED Dr. Musinguzi while inspecting parade at Kidepo CA

## **Dr. Musinguzi hits the ground running with field visits across UWA sites**

Less than a week after officially assuming his role as Executive Director of Uganda Wildlife Authority, Dr. James Musinguzi was already in the field, connecting with frontline teams, visiting key conservation sites, and seeing first-hand the work being done on the ground.

His first stop was in Eastern Uganda, where he visited Pian Upe Wildlife Reserve. Dr. Musinguzi was welcomed with a parade at the reserve headquarters and later inspected ranger formations alongside UWA's Senior Manager for Field

Operations, Charles Tumwesigye.

From there, the tour moved through Matheniko and Bokora Corridor Wildlife Reserves, where Dr. Musinguzi held discussions with staff, reviewed ongoing operations, and listened to challenges faced by rangers in remote posts.



Dr. James Musinguzi addresses UWA staff at Paraa Education Centre hall

But it was his visit to Kidepo Valley National Park that highlighted the heart of the tour. Upon arrival at Nataba Gate, he was received by Chief Warden Richard Muhabwe and given a formal guard of honour. Over the course of two days, Dr. Musinguzi visited ranger outposts in Kaekem, Karua, Pire, and Kanatarok—some of which are located in the most remote corners of the protected area.

At Apoka Bandas, he held a meeting with staff, where issues ranging from logistics to morale were discussed openly. Dr. Musinguzi emphasized that listening to the concerns of

staff would be a central part of his leadership. “You are the face of this institution on the ground,” he said. “Your welfare, your input, and your courage are what keep UWA standing.”

Next, he traveled to the Murchison Falls Conservation Area. While there, he officiated the handover of a renovated classroom block at Apala B Primary School in Oyam District—a CSR project recently completed by UWA.

At Karuma Wildlife Reserve, he was welcomed by Chief Warden Fredrick Kizza and local district leaders. He then commissioned a newly constructed ranger accommodation block at Nyamahasa Outpost, before heading to Lugaya to inspect the UWA training school.

In Paraa, he boarded a boat to assess riverside wildlife monitoring efforts and later visited the Joint Operations Command Center to review exhibits of confiscated poaching tools and briefings on law enforcement strategies.

One of the final stops was at the Waiga electric fence project in Bugana Parish, Buliisa. The 2km stretch, part of a longer 12km



Dr. Musinguzi UWA ED while inspecting electric fence at Waiga, Bugana parish

fencing initiative, has already reduced human-wildlife conflict and improved community safety. Local leaders thanked UWA for the intervention, noting that it had even allowed children to safely return to school.

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Throughout the tour, Dr. Musinguzi’s message was consistent: conservation begins in the field. His interactions with staff were informal, practical, and focused on problem-solving. In every meeting, he called for renewed teamwork, improved welfare, and community collaboration.

He concluded the tour at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, where he presided over the launch of the 6th Mountain Gorilla and Chimpanzee Census. The event marked the close of an intense but energizing first tour—one that set the tone for a leadership style rooted in visibility, listening, and action.



ED, Dr. Musinguzi addressing Rangers at Apoka bandas - KVCA

# Gorillas counted, futures protected: Uganda launches 6th great APE census

On May 6, 2025, in the lush heights of Ruhija, Uganda officially began its sixth census of mountain gorillas and chimpanzees in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and the surrounding Sarambwe Reserve. The event, hosted at the Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC), brought together conservationists, scientists, and government officials for a mission that combines research, protection, and international cooperation.

The census aims to track the population trends of two of Uganda's most iconic primate species—mountain gorillas and chimpanzees—both critical to tourism and conservation efforts.

The exercise will be carried out in two phases: the first from May to June and the second in September 2025.

Flagging off the census team was Dr. James Musinguzi, Executive Director of Uganda Wildlife

Authority (UWA). He reminded the audience that gorillas are not only a symbol of national pride, but a major source of tourism revenue. "These apes bring in more than 60% of UWA's internally generated income," he said. "We must understand their status if we are to manage them responsibly."

Dr. Gladys Kalema Zikusoka, one of Uganda's most respected wildlife veterinarians, shared her personal experience with the first gorilla census in 1997, when only 300 individuals were known to exist. She highlighted the role of local communities, veterinary interventions, and revenue sharing in boosting gorilla numbers, which stood at 459 in 2018.

Also in attendance was Dr. Andrew Sseguya, Executive Secretary of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, which oversees cooperative conservation efforts among Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. "This census starts in Uganda, but it is a regional effort," he said. "These animals do not recognize borders."



Irene Murerwa, chief Tourism Officer of Rwanda dev't board flags off the 2025 gorilla & chimpanzee census team alongside UWA ED



Stakeholders at the Mt. Gorilla and first-ever Chimpanzee Census launch

The census is supported by over ten partners, including the Rwanda Development Board, Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature, Jane Goodall Institute, WWF Uganda, Gorilla Doctors, and the International Gorilla Conservation Programme. Each organization brings different resources and expertise to support field teams, data analysis, and training.

The census itself involves tracking nests, vocalizations, and other signs of gorilla and chimpanzee presence, using GPS and standardized survey methods. It is an intensive exercise that requires patience, skill, and physical endurance—especially in the rugged terrain of Bwindi.

“This is not glamorous work,” said one team leader. “You’re up early, on

foot all day, and documenting every clue. But it matters—because it tells us how these animals are doing and where they need more protection.”

Dr. Musinguzi emphasized that beyond science, the census sends a broader message: that Uganda is serious about conservation. “You can’t protect what you don’t monitor. And you can’t fund what you don’t value,” he said.

As the first teams moved into the forest with their gear and notebooks, there was a sense of quiet urgency. The world is watching these numbers—not only as a measure of species health, but as a reflection of how seriously Uganda takes its role as a guardian of global biodiversity.



ED Dr. Musinguzi puts pen to paper to launch the 2025 Mt. Gorilla & inaugural chimpanzee census

# Wildlife Meat Seller Jailed for five years

In a significant ruling on June 5, 2025, Chief Magistrate Kamasanyu Gladys of the Chief Magistrate Court of Standards Utilities and Wildlife in Makindye sentenced Kiyimba John Bosco, a repeat bush meat trader, to five years, ten months, and eleven days in prison for illegally possessing protected wildlife species, in violation of C/S 71(1)(b) of the Uganda Wildlife Act, Cap 315.

Chief Magistrate Kamasanyu stated, "In this case, A1 did not provide evidence of any ownership rights that would allow him to possess the protected wildlife species. Therefore, his possession was illegal. I find Kiyimba John Bosco (A1) guilty of unlawful possession of protected wildlife species C/S 71(1)(b) of the Uganda Wildlife Act, Cap 315 on count 1 and convict him accordingly."

However, the court acquitted Byaruhanga Justus (A2) and Tumusiime James (A3) due to insufficient evidence linking them to the possession of any waterbuck meat.



Kiyimba had claimed during police questioning that he obtained the meat from both Byaruhanga and Tumusiime, who lived together in Akashenshero, Kiruhura district.

The case, SUW-00-CR-CO-0109-2024, was prosecuted by the state, and Kiyimba was found guilty of possessing 80 kilograms of waterbuck meat, along with a head and four hooves of the same animal, without any legal rights to do so. This offense took place on April 6, 2024, along Kitagata Road in Mbarara City, near Lake Mburo National Park. Evidence presented in court indicated that Kiyimba was apprehended around 11:30 PM by the UWA enforcement team while attempting to flee after being suspected of carrying bush meat in a sack on a red Bajaj boxer motorcycle with registration number UEV 803M.

Wildlife crime is an escalating concern in Uganda, with increasing complexity and consequences for both wildlife and humans. The Uganda Wildlife Authority remains dedicated to safeguarding the country's rich biodiversity and tackling wildlife crime. This sentence is intended to deter others involved in illegal wildlife trade and to help mitigate the rampant poaching and trafficking of wildlife species.

The Uganda Wildlife Act, Cap 315, defines wildlife as any native or introduced wild plants and animals, along with their derivative products found in Uganda. According to Section 1 of the Act, a wild animal is any non-domestic animal, whether it lives in its natural environment or in captivity. The ownership of wildlife in Uganda is held by the government for the benefit of the Ugandan people, as stated in Article 237 (2)(b) of the Constitution and Section 3 (1) of the Uganda Wildlife Act. Section 34 of the Uganda Wildlife Act also addresses this matter.



A moment with President Museveni as UWA staff medalist is honored. From (L) Mr. Levi, R, Mr. Kirya, H & Mr. Okiring .M

## **From the Wild to the podium-heroes recognized**

This year's Labour Day celebration on May 1, 2025, held in Nakapiripirit District, brought national attention to the men and women working behind the scenes in conservation. Among those honoured during the event were three dedicated staff members from Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), whose service was recognised with national medals.

Under the theme "Consolidating on the Gains of the Parish Development Model (PDM) for Increased Productivity and Inclusive Job

Creation," the national celebration was presided over by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who used the occasion to highlight the

importance of productive rural labour and local governance.

UWA's medal recipients included:

**Michael Okiring**, Warden Law Enforcement at Pian-Upe Wildlife Reserve

**Kulu Kirya Haruna**, Warden Law Enforcement at Murchison Falls Conservation Area

**Levi Rwamuhanda**, Head Guide at Bwindi

Impenetrable National Park.

Their medals were awarded in recognition of outstanding service in wildlife protection, field operations, and visitor experience. Each recipient has spent years working in some of the country's most challenging environments—ranging from remote anti-poaching patrols to guiding tourists through gorilla territory.

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wildlife protection, field operations, and visitor experience. Each recipient has spent years working in some of the country's most challenging environments—ranging from remote anti-poaching patrols to guiding tourists through gorilla territory.

“This is a proud moment for the UWA family,” said Dr. Musunguzi. “Our work isn't always visible to the public, but today the country has seen it—and honoured it.”

Also recognised were two important conservation allies:

**Mrs. Doreen Katusiime, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities,**

received the Distinguished Order of the Nile (Grand Commander)—one of the highest civilian awards—for her leadership and service.

**Her Worship Gladys Kamasanyu,** a

magistrate known for her firm judgments in wildlife crime cases, was also decorated for her contribution to environmental justice.

For UWA, the day was more than a ceremony—



A moment of honor: Ps Doreen Katusiime with President Museveni

it was an affirmation that the work of rangers, law enforcement officers, and field staff is central to Uganda's national development goals.

The event also served to raise awareness of conservation careers as part of Uganda's broader labour landscape. While most public attention often goes to agriculture, education, or health, the conservation sector

provides thousands of jobs—from rangers and scientists to community liaisons and hospitality workers

As the national anthem played and medals were pinned on uniforms, it was clear that UWA's contribution to the country goes far beyond the forest trails. It's in the safety of species, the growth of tourism, and in days like this—when their work takes centre stage.



Her worship Kamasanyu (2nd from left), honored with medal, shares a proud moment with H.E President Museveni

# King Oyo treks Bwindi, adds royal spotlight to gorilla conservation

On April 26, 2025, the towering trees and mist-covered hills of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park welcomed a royal visitor. His Majesty King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV, Omukama of Tooro, arrived with his family to explore one of Uganda's most celebrated natural treasures—and to send a powerful message about the importance of protecting it.

The King, accompanied by members of his family, was received at the park by Uganda Wildlife Authority's Executive Director,

Dr. James Musinguzi, Senior Manager of Tourism and Business Development Stephen Masaba, and Business Development Stephen Masaba, and Acting Chief Warden Isaiah Bwire.

It was not His Majesty's first visit to a national park, but this one felt particularly symbolic. The Bwindi landscape, home to nearly half the world's remaining mountain gorillas, is not only a global biodiversity hotspot—it is a cornerstone of Uganda's tourism economy and a focal point of its conservation efforts.

As he prepared for the trek, the King was welcomed by the women of Ride 4 A Woman, a local community group based in Buhoma. Their vibrant traditional dance set the tone for a day that blended culture, nature, and national pride.

His Majesty's trek led him to the Nyamishamba area, where he encountered the Binyindo gorilla family. Standing in respectful silence just metres away from the silverback and his group, the King reflected on the rare privilege of such an encounter.



King Oyo receives briefing from UWA ranger on Bwindi trek

“Many people travel across continents to see this,” he said. “But we have it right here. As Ugandans, we must take time to appreciate and protect the beauty around us.”

King Oyo’s visit was also a boost to domestic tourism—an area UWA and the Ministry of Tourism have been actively promoting. His presence reminded Ugandans that visiting national parks is not just for foreigners. It is a right, a responsibility, and a source of national identity.

After the trek, UWA presented His Majesty with a certificate of participation—an acknowledgment of his direct engagement in gorilla conservation. Dr. Musinguzi praised the King’s continued interest in environmental issues and noted that he has also visited Queen Elizabeth and Rwenzori Mountains



Dr. James Musinguzi presenting a certificate to King Oyo following his trek.

National Parks in recent years.

“For conservation to succeed, we need the support of our cultural leaders,” Dr. Musinguzi said. “Their influence can inspire millions.”

The visit also highlighted the close relationship between local communities and the park. Ride 4 A Woman, for example, benefits directly from gorilla tourism through crafts,

accommodation, and cultural performances. Their involvement is a testament to how conservation can drive inclusive development when communities are brought in as partners.

As King Oyo and his entourage left Bwindi, his visit left more than just footprints on a forest trail. It reinforced the idea that Uganda’s protected areas are not only environmental treasures—they are places of learning, pride, and unity.



Group photo moment with the royal



## From Culture to Conservation: Uganda Shines at POATE 2025

The deep resonance of the Entenga drum reverberating along the shores of Lake Victoria, echoing Bakisimba, marked a fresh start at Speke Resort Munyonyo, where a vibrant mix of culture, business, and adventure unfolded with the participation of thousands. Uganda welcomed the world to the 9th edition of the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE) 2025, held from May 21 to 24. This three-day event showcased Uganda's breathtaking landscapes, warm hospitality, and untapped potential, conveying a clear message: Uganda is more than just a

destination; it is a narrative waiting to be shared, with each interaction at POATE contributing to that narrative

A highlight of the event was the introduction of the "Tell Your Story – Explore Uganda" campaign, encouraging Ugandans to share their own stories about their homeland. Set against a backdrop of cultural performances like Ekitaguriro from the west and Larakaraka from the north, the campaign

Imagine a gathering of local school children, tour operators,

conservationists, and international travel writers united by a common goal: to showcase Uganda through their perspectives. This storytelling initiative was not merely symbolic; it was a strategic move to empower locals to document and share their experiences, paving the way for a new era of grassroots tourism that is authentic, inclusive, and



UWA staff engaging a client during POATE



UWA team posing for a photo at POATE



Senior Manager Tourism & Business dev't Stephen Masaba (front left) with former UTB CEO immediately in front, at POATE 2025.

The expo was inaugurated by Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, representing President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Her speech highlighted the government's steadfast dedication to sustainable tourism and innovation, aligning with the Uganda Wildlife Authority's (UWA) mission to promote conservation-driven development.

Throughout the conference, participants engaged in forums and symposiums

that sparked actionable discussions. The Tourism Investment Forum, led by Mr. Masaba Steven, Senior Manager Tourism and Business Development, unveiled investment opportunities in Uganda, attracting environmentally conscious investors eager for new ventures.

The Regional Tourism Forum advocated for open borders and simplified travel within East Africa. In his discussion, Mr. Namanya Briana of

TUBAYO, an online travel marketplace that enables travelers to book unique homes and experiences in Africa, digitalization of the tourism industry and the impact of Artificial Intelligence sparked innovative ideas for enhancing travel experiences.

By the end of the event, as the sun cast a golden glow over the lake awards were presented to the most innovative exhibitors; Best Sustainable Stand award under the category of tourism experience – Kara Tunga Tours, and the Best Sustainable under the category of operators – Loremi Tours. POATE 2025 represented a pivotal moment in Uganda's quest to establish itself as a leading sustainable tourism destination. For UWA, it was a promise fulfilled: to present Uganda not only as the Pearl of Africa but as a vibrant, living masterpiece of nature, culture, and opportunity.



Hon. Tom Butime (left), Hon. Mugarra Martin (center), and Hon. Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja (right) inspecting stalls at POATE.



Renovated classroom block adorned with wildlife art

# UWA's CSR Initiative Transforms Apala B Primary School

In the heart of Oyam District, a once-forgotten school has been given a new lease on life. Apala B Primary School, located near the Murchison Falls Conservation Area, recently underwent a major facelift, thanks to a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

The renovation, valued at over UGX 60 million,

included the refurbishment of a classroom block, installation of solar panels, and the painting of wildlife murals across school walls. In addition to infrastructure upgrades, UWA also donated learning materials, including textbooks and exercise books for learners from Primary 4 to Primary 7.

The project was officially handed over on May 4,

2025, during a ceremony attended by UWA Executive Director Dr. James Musinguzi, Oyam District Chairperson Benson Dila, Resident District Commissioner Shillock James, and the school's head teacher, Tom Richard Ocen.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Musinguzi said the initiative was part of UWA's effort to give back to communities that live near protected areas. "We want the people who live closest to our parks to feel the benefit of conservation," he said. "Education is one of the best ways to do that."

The newly installed solar panels have already made a difference, allowing teachers to work longer hours and pupils to study after daylight hours—something previously out of reach. The wildlife-themed murals painted on the classroom walls have also become a learning tool, sparking curiosity and connecting children to the natural world around them.

The school's head teacher expressed his gratitude, describing the improvements as transformative. "We were struggling with basic infrastructure, unreliable lighting, and limited teaching resources," Ocen said. "Now, our classrooms are brighter, our pupils have books, and there's a renewed sense of pride."

Oyam District Chairperson Benson Dila said the

project had done more than improve a school—it had improved relationships. "This has changed how people view UWA. Communities now understand that conservation isn't just about animals—it's about people too."

Parents and local leaders at the event pledged to support UWA's conservation efforts, particularly in reducing human-wildlife conflict and illegal activities in nearby reserves.

The project was launched earlier during the World Wildlife Day celebrations on March 3, when the first batch of learning materials was delivered. That day, students had taken part in wildlife quizzes and performances that underscored the value of protecting Uganda's natural heritage.



Dr. Musinguzi opens a renovated school block



UWA staff with Apala B community members in a renovated classroom

For Apala B Primary, the support is more than charity. It's a signal that conservation institutions can be allies in improving lives, not just managing parks.

As classes resume and pupils return to cleaner, brighter classrooms with new books in hand, the school's story has become one of resilience and renewal—with conservation at its core.



The block before renovation

# Ajai Wildlife Reserve Ready for Rhinos Reintroduction

Ajai wildlife reserve in Madi Okollo district is getting ready to receive about 22 southern white rhinos, before end of this year 2026.

The Rhinos journey back to Ajai started in 2002 by enlarging the boundaries of the reserve, to start preparing it for the Rhinos from Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, whose populations which is now 50 is surpassing the carrying capacity.

## The Rhino Strategy

Launched on 12th. August. 2015 by the Late Hon. Maria Mutagamba, then Minister for Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities, the ten-year National Rhino Strategy

2018–2028, on which the Rhinos back to the wild journey is being driven, set a robust legal framework for the wildlife species' management, both flora and fauna, in the areas where Rhinos would be introduced, and also addressing other key factors including; habitat loss, security, poaching, disease, human-wildlife conflict and infrastructure development.

The implementation of this strategy requires a tune of about UGX 1.7 Billion per each new Rhino area, for constructions like fences and roads, staff training and remuneration, translocations, capture,

and strategic interventions – This calls for identifying revenue sources from both government and external sources such as local and international NGOs, the private sector, or fundraising opportunities.

The reintroduction process aims at translocating other animal species to the wildlife reserve, in an effort to prepare the ecosystems for the rhinos. Manager Veterinary Services UWA, Dr. Patrick Atimnedi, who is leading the translocation activities, explained that first translocation phase in March 2024, handled 20 Buffalos and 226 Uganda Kobs – In the second phase, March 2025, 211



Uganda kobs released into the wild after translocation

Uganda Kobs were translocated, giving it a total 437 Uganda Kobs, so far being taken to Ajai wildlife reserve from the northern banks of Murchison Falls National Park.

Dr. Atimnedi says that on top of physically clearing the bushes, the translocation of other species, is one of the key biological management activities aiming at improving the habitat through having these animals to keep grazing there because rhinos eat short grass.



Dr. Patrick Atimnedi

“The idea behind this, is that buffalos will be mowing the grass, which will have been manually manipulated by people, meanwhile, the kobs being browsers would be eating on the shrubs and also grazing down. So, that would create a nice environment for the rhinos when they finally go” – expounded Dr. Atimned

The reintroduction of Rhinos to Ajai is part of UWA’s biodiversity enhancement program and it also aims at boosting tourism in the

West Nile region. A part from enhancing biodiversity of making Ajai an area of tourism importance, the feasibility study also looked at; community e engagement through the Asset-Based Community Development approach. The approach involved issues of compensating communities within the park, training in commercial literacy and training of over 50 youths that will act as informants to UWA rangers in case the animals stray in the community.



The reintroduction is planned as a phased approach, starting with a pilot introduction of a smaller group of rhinos, followed by a larger-scale reintroduction. UWA is also considering expanding the reserve's boundaries to

accommodate a larger rhino population.

### **Brief About Ajai Rhino History.**

Formerly known as Ajai Rhino sanctuary in the 60’s, Ajai Wildlife Reserve is an area with unique flora and fauna known for the earlier existence of the Southern White Rhinos in Uganda and was gazetted as a Game reserve in 1965 by Statutory Instrument No. 147 of 1965 – By the time Ajai Reserve was gazetted in 1965, the sanctuary was home to 60 of Uganda's 80 remaining white rhino.

History has it that the former President Theodore Roosevelt of the United States of America (USA) visited in King Ajai's palace during his African expedition in 1910, and during that time he hunted several White Rhinos, which drastically reduced their number in the reserve and finally both Black and White Rhinos went extinct in Uganda in 1983.



Joy in Ajai—local communities celebrate the return of wildlife to their homeland



## Marking World Parrot Day at UWEC

Uganda Wildlife Authority proudly joined the global conservation community in celebrating this year's World Parrot Day, themed "Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities". The event that is observed annually on May 31st was held at UWEC- CA.

The UWEC-CA was joined by schools and the Miss Tourism Kyaggwe-Buganda beauty queen to emphasize the importance of parrots, particularly the African Grey Parrot, in our ecosystem and the urgent need to protect them.

We are inspired by the

passion and curiosity that the young people demonstrated during the two-day activities, which included storytelling about their knowledge of parrots, tree planting, clay modeling, drawing, and painting.

The reigning Miss Tourism Kyaggwe-Buganda, Namyalo Catherine Nakibuye, whose totem symbol is the African Grey Parrot (Enkusu), urged her fellow "Nkusu" members to take action in saving the African Grey Parrot. She



Students learning about parrots



Students learning about African grey parrots at UWEC

emphasized the importance of planting trees, particularly fruit trees, and enforcing laws against the trafficking of this bird, which is among the most trafficked species in the world.

At St. Mary's Seminary Kisubi, both UWA staff and students planted thirty native trees, including *Maesopsis eminii* (Musizi), *Syzigium cuminii* (Jambula), *Canarium shweinfurthii* (Mpaffu), and *Garcinia buchananii* (Wild loquat), all of which serve as food sources for parrots.

Additionally, students and pupils from Balawoli

Secondary School-Kamuli, Chadwick Namate Primary School, St. Theresa Primary School, Marine Base Primary School, and Gilgal Nursery and Primary School, all located in Entebbe, participated in informative sessions about parrots and learned to identify birds by their feathers.

The African grey parrot is recognized as globally endangered, and UWEC-CA serves as a conservation center dedicated to research and conservation initiatives for this species, which faces significant threats from illegal trade and habitat destruction.

In Uganda, African grey parrots inhabit forests in the Central, Western, and Northwestern regions, with sightings reported in locations such as Mabira Forest, Budongo Forest, and Kibaale. Furthermore, some parrots have also been observed in Kampala and its surrounding areas.



# Wildlife Wonders Await at Mbale Zoo



Constructed animal holding facility at Mbale satellite zoo

A new conservation landmark is taking shape in Eastern Uganda. The Mbale Zoo, a facility under the Uganda Wildlife Conservation Education Centre – Conservation Area (UWEC-CA), is now 80% complete and is already drawing attention as a major addition to the region's education and tourism infrastructure.

The zoo was conceived to expand access to conservation education beyond central Uganda. For decades, students, researchers, and wildlife enthusiasts from eastern districts had to travel to Entebbe or further to engage with live animal exhibits and learning centres. That's now changing.

Located just outside Mbale City, the zoo will serve as both a wildlife rescue centre and a learning space. Already, essential structures are up—staff offices and animal enclosures for lions, antelopes, and birds are in place. The aviary is complete, and perimeter fencing is nearly done. Roads and drainage systems are being constructed, laying the groundwork for a fully operational facility.

The next phase will add even more features: a restaurant, visitor accommodation, a veterinary clinic, play areas for children, and additional enclosures for more species. These additions are aimed at turning the zoo into a full-day destination for families, students, and tourists alike.

"The Mbale Zoo is not just a project—it's a statement," said the Chief Warden of UWEC-CA, who is leading the development. "It signals our commitment to reach more Ugandans with conservation education. It also shows our belief that every region deserves the economic and educational benefits of wildlife tourism."

The zoo is expected to provide jobs for locals, both during construction and once it opens. Guides, maintenance crews, educators, food vendors, and security staff will all find opportunities here. Local communities will also benefit from increased traffic through the region, creating new markets for crafts, transport services, and small businesses.



Nearing completion: Office building at Mbale satellite zoo

The facility's educational impact will be just as significant. Schools across the east will now have a closer and more affordable option for field trips focused on Uganda's diverse wildlife. Interactive exhibits, guided tours, and hands-on conservation programs will allow students to engage more directly with the country's natural heritage.

"Mbale and the surrounding districts are full of bright young minds," said the Chief Warden. "Now, they won't just read about lions or rhinos in textbooks. They'll see, learn, and ask questions up close. That's how future conservationists are made."

The project also reinforces Uganda Wildlife Authority's broader goal of promoting domestic tourism and equitable access to wildlife resources. For many Ugandans, especially in rural areas, national parks can feel distant or out of reach. Facilities like the Mbale Zoo help bridge that gap.

When complete, the zoo will stand as a model for regional conservation hubs. It's more than bricks and enclosures—it's a commitment to inclusion, education, and shared stewardship of Uganda's wildlife.



# UWA Targets One Million Visitors by the End of 2026

**“Ambitious drive to boost Uganda’s tourism footprint”**

The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) aims to attract an extra one million visitors to the national parks and other conservation areas by the end of the financial year 2026.

This ambitious but achievable target was set by the directorate of Tourism and Business Development, during the 2025 Tourism Wardens Assembly, which took place at Uganda

Wildlife Conservation Education Centre.

The one million visitor target is to be realized from all conservation areas, including the newly added UWEC- CA. From 2022 to 2023, UWA received 403,393 visitors, and this figure rose to 436,767 in 2024-2025.

Speaking at the closure of the assembly, the UWA Executive Director Dr. James

Musinguzi, reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to tourism development through strategic investment and inter-agency collaboration. “We are committed to providing all necessary logistics to boost tourism and ensure effective conservation – UWA, UTB, and all marketing bodies, public and private, must speak the same language to achieve our national tourism goals”, he said.



ED Dr. James Musinguzi addressing assembly



Tourists Enjoying a Boat cruise on the River Nile in Murchison Falls National Park

One of the key highlights, in UWA's plan is to roll out a fully cashless payment system across all protected areas, that will ease transactions, improve security and streamline tourist experiences, boost efficiency, and improve security.

In addition, UWA unveiled new ecotourism experiences, including walking safaris in Murchison Falls National Park and canopy walks in Sebitoli, Kibale National Park. These offerings are designed to diversify Uganda's tourism portfolio while promoting sustainable, immersive interactions with nature.

Senior Manager Tourism and Business Development, UWA

Mr. Steven Masaba, announced 10 new tourism concessions opportunities which will be expected to attract private investment and enhance visitor facilities across key conservation sites – Over the past three and a half years, thirteen concessions have been finalized.

He also highlighted the importance of financial investment in achieving long-term conservation outcomes. He stated that successful conservation requires significant resources. "We need to gather and prioritize funding to safeguard our natural heritage and promote sustainable tourism"

The assembly featured capacity-building sessions facilitated by leadership development firm Coach Africa, focusing on unity, critical thinking, and collaborative leadership. The assembly was designed to equip wardens with the skills needed to lead Uganda's conservation and tourism efforts effectively.



Participants listening attentively during assembly



UWA Staff marches during World Wildlife Day in Lira

## Lira city leads Uganda's call to invest in People and Wildlife

This year's United Nations World Wildlife Day came alive in Lira City, where Uganda's national celebrations echoed the 2025 global theme: "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet." It was more than a commemoration, it was a call to action.

The day began with a colourful procession through town, led by the Minister of Tourism,

Wildlife and Antiquities, Col. (Rtd) Tom Butime, and State Minister Martin Mugarra. With them were Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) staff, representatives from Uganda Tourism Board, conservation partners, local leaders and school children. The atmosphere was celebratory, but the message was clear: Uganda must take deliberate steps to invest in wildlife and in the people living around it.

Exhibition stalls lined the venue grounds, showcasing local innovations, crafts, and conservation tools. The guest of honour, Minister of Health Dr. Ruth Aceng, representing President Yoweri Museveni, visited each stall and spoke with exhibitors about their work.

Delivering the keynote address on behalf of President Museveni, Dr. Aceng emphasized that conservation is not just about protecting wildlife—it is the lifeblood of Uganda's tourism and a pillar of livelihoods. "We welcomed over 1.3 million visitors last year. That's a



Dr. Ruth Aceng delivers her speech during the World Wildlife Day 2025



Tourism Minister Tom Butime (fourth from Left) leads the way on WWD

number to build on," she read. "But we must grow in a way that protects what we have and shares the benefits more fairly."

The President's message further urged Ugandans to end poaching and illegal wildlife trade and to embrace farming practices that safeguard ecosystems. He stressed the need to protect Uganda's natural treasures for both present and future generations.

Minister Butime expanded on that vision. He reminded the audience that Uganda is home to more than 53% of the world's remaining mountain gorillas, 11% of

the world's known bird species, and 8% of global mammal diversity. He shared positive trends in wildlife populations: buffalo numbers have nearly doubled since the 1980s, and elephant populations have recovered steadily.

"Conservation is working, but it needs more support," he said. "This year's theme reminds us that wildlife and people are part of the same system. When we invest in one, we invest in the other."

UWA's then Executive Director, Sam Mwandha, highlighted the need for partnerships that transcend short-term projects. "Conservation only works

when it includes the people living alongside wildlife and when it's woven into local economies," he noted.

Mwandha pointed to improved park management and stronger enforcement as key factors in stabilizing critical species. "We've seen encouraging trends with gorillas and elephants," he said. "That tells us we're on the right path."

The day wasn't all about speeches. School children took part in wildlife quizzes and debates, while conservation groups distributed educational materials. A wildlife marathon also raised funds for children of fallen rangers.



UWA ED Dr. Musinguzi with Hope Mbabazi and her children

## Honouring the Fallen: UWA Stands by Children of Lost Colleagues

On February 19, 2025, at the Uganda Wildlife Authority headquarters in Kampala, a quiet but deeply moving moment unfolded. Two young boys—Dalton and Edgar—stood beside their mother as UWA’s top leadership reaffirmed the institution’s commitment to support children of staff who lost their lives in service.

Dalton and Edgar are sons of the late Angel Kobusheshe, a former Accounts Clerk with UWA who was killed in an attack at Katooke Gate in Queen

Elizabeth National Park on February 19, 2013. That day, he left behind a young family—four sons and a widow, Hope Mbabazi—whose future was suddenly uncertain.

In 2020, UWA began supporting the children through its internal staff welfare initiative. Five years later, the impact is clear. Dalton and Edgar, both studying at St. Paul's Seminary in Rushoroza, Kabale, had recently received strong O-Level results. They were now preparing to begin their A-

Level studies—with their school fees, books, and basic needs covered by UWA.

Welcoming the boys and their mother, UWA’s Executive Director, Dr. James Musinguzi, said the Authority does not forget those who paid the ultimate price for conservation. “This is more than a policy—it’s our duty. These children deserve a future. Their parent gave their all to this institution, and we will honour that sacrifice by walking with the family they left behind.”

Dalton, speaking with quiet confidence, said the support had changed the course of their lives. “This scholarship gave us hope when we needed it most,” he said. “We are studying hard—not just for ourselves, but for our late father.”

Their mother, Hope Mbabazi, said the support had made a difficult journey more bearable. “You stood by us when we had no one. That’s something I will never forget,” she said. “Because of UWA, my children are not just surviving—they are moving forward.”

Dr. Musinguzi reaffirmed that the Authority would continue to support all four

of Kobusheshe’s children. He also noted that UWA currently supports 60 children of fallen staff across the country—two of whom have already graduated from university.

This initiative, while quiet and personal, is one of UWA’s strongest expressions of solidarity and institutional memory. It speaks to a deeper culture within the Authority: one that understands that conservation is not just about parks and policies—it is about people, including those who gave their lives for the cause.

As the boys posed for a photo with Dr. Musinguzi

and staff, holding their report cards with pride, the moment felt less like a ceremony and more like a family. A family that remembers. A family that honours. And a family that does not let anyone walk alone.

When rangers fall in the line of duty, their families carry the weight of their bravery. UWA is stepping up—turning gratitude into action. Through marathons, fundraisers, and education support, we’re keeping their children’s dreams alive. Because protecting wildlife means standing with the people who protect it. Together, we’re building a legacy that lasts.





UWM25 participants pose with excitement before the official flag-off by Hon. Martin Mugarra

# Running for their future: A marathon for the children of Uganda's fallen Rangers

On March 2, 2025, Akii-Bua Memorial Stadium in Lira City was filled with energy and emotion as athletes, conservationists, and supporters gathered for the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) Wildlife Marathon. But this wasn't just about sport. The runners had a cause: raising funds to support the education of children whose parents died while serving as wildlife rangers.

Themed "Running to Educate the Children of Fallen Rangers," the marathon was part of the World Wildlife Day celebrations, which this

year marked the 50th anniversary of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The starting line was graced by elite runners, including Olympic medalist Winnie Nanyondo, world champion Halima Nakaayi, and distance specialist Ronald



World Champ Halima Nakaayi warming up before the race

Musagala. State Minister for Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities, Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka, officially flagged off the race, which featured distances of 42 km, 21 km, 10 km, and 5 km.

The 42 km men's race was won by Andiema Allan, while Maxmila Cherotich claimed the top spot in the women's 21 km category. Sarah Chelangat and Dismas took first place in the 10 km races. The winners of the 42 km race received UGX 1 million each in prize money. But the true reward was the

knowledge that their efforts were helping children go to school.

Security agencies including Uganda Police, Prisons, and the Defence Forces also fielded strong teams, showing solidarity and support for the families of their fallen comrades.

“This event goes beyond medals and records,” said Bashir Hangi, UWA’s Communications Manager. “These children lost a parent to the dangers of protecting Uganda’s wildlife. Through this marathon, we’re telling them they’re not alone.”



UWA Communications Manager, Hangi Bashir, addresses participants

The event also spotlighted Uganda’s potential in long-distance running. With increasing support and visibility, the country’s future in athletics looks bright—especially when paired with meaningful causes like conservation.



UWA has taken significant steps to support ranger welfare. Over the past few years, it has invested in better training, modern tracking tools, and improved communication systems for rangers in the field. Rangers now have access to self-defence equipment and trauma support. Drones are used to detect illegal activity, and joint intelligence efforts have improved enforcement.

But the work remains dangerous. Many rangers face physical threats from poachers and smugglers, or accidents in tough terrain. For those who don’t make it home, UWA has made it a policy to support their families—especially their children.

The marathon is part of that commitment. The funds raised this year will go towards tuition, school supplies, and other essential support for children who have lost a parent in the line of duty.

“This is how we honour our heroes,” said Hangi. “By helping their children build a future.”



Former UWA ED Sam Mwandha awards a medal to the race winner





**UWA**  
*Conserving  
for Generations*