

New wildlife documentary series celebrates African conservation heroes

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A new wildlife documentary series, [Wildlife Warriors](#) promises to revise the ownership of wildlife histories in Africa. While the world has hungrily devoured exquisite wildlife documentaries on Nat Geo and BBC, none of them have ever considered Africa the audience for such productions and so the messengers have never been Africans. Season 1 of Wildlife Warriors is exclusively filmed in Kenya, a country with a proud heritage of conservation advocacy but where local heroes are rarely propelled into the public limelight. This new series shines a light on the local heroes so that their remarkable stories will inspire a future generation of conservationists. Why is this important?



Kenya and most countries in Africa are at a cross roads. In many ways our great continent is living in the past and the future at the same time. We have innovated technologies like mobile money that are now being adopted elsewhere, and yet some of our communities live as they have for thousands of years, depending on and living in harmony with nature. But unavoidable is the rapid pace of development with every country aspiring for middle income status through industrial development and to be a relevant player in the globalized world. All this requires infrastructure, energy and industry, and it comes with habitat loss and pollution. This is translating into rapidly declining wilderness and wildlife numbers. Governments are clear - they need to create jobs for the millions of young people entering the job markets each year. At 17 % unemployment in Kenya, it's easy to understand why job creation is the obsession of our government, but are we sacrificing too much?



As the creator, producer and host of **Wildlife Warriors**, I didn't want to replicate what others had done. I wanted to tell the stories of our remarkable young heroes in Kenya - so that the world will know that we are not all poachers, corrupt officials or ignorant environmental polluters. But that we have some of the worlds finest scientists, the most courageous heroes, and that WE are saving OUR wildlife. It is a truth whose time has come.



Wildlife Warriors premiered on 7th April at 5 pm on East Africa's largest free to air channel, Citizen TV which reaches 4 million Kenyans each hour. To us it's just the beginning of a new future revealing that across the continent of Africa, a new generation of conservationists are taking hold. Fighting grave battles, breaking new ground and risking everything to preserve what they hold most dear, the land of their ancestors and the animals they have lived closely with for generations. This series provides perspective on conservation from Africa in her own eyes.



*Director of Photography Steve Waguwa had never filmed wildlife before he joined the crew of **Wildlife Warriors***

Told through the stories of Africa's own conservation heroes, front line soldier, and cutting edge scientists, **Wildlife Warriors** is a vicarious journey into their lives to find out what inspires them, and how we can infect all people with the same passion. The series is filmed in some of Kenya's wildest locations and many of our heroes have never before been seen on screen. Each story will inspire young people to take action to save what they love. Viewed on TV or in Wildlife Warriors Kids clubs in schools, this series will inspire students to have **ownership**, take **actions** and build **pride**.



Filming snakes required the crew, like Laban Loita, to get close though clearly uncomfortable

I will not pretend that it was easy to make the series. Fun, challenging and incredibly educational yes. But not easy. We faced many challenges from selling the idea to donors, accepting many rejections from local companies and even government agencies whom we felt should have been the front runners in supporting the project. We also faced other kinds of challenges, some organizations were uncomfortable about us showcasing individuals. Some of our locations were incredibly difficult to get to and work in - we got stuck, camped rough, were held up in storms, got sunburned, and were stuck at sea for 5 hours on a fishing boat with a crew suffering from severe sea sickness. We had such limited funding that we could only be in the field for a few days for each episode so every second mattered. We had short nights and very long days which was very trying. But none of that mattered in the end because our heroes and their animals were outstanding. We have heard of crews spending years trying to get footage that we were able to get - the combination of local knowledge, being able to understand local languages, outstanding support from the local communities, and of course our main advantage, we had good background scientific information. But it was the familiarity with our heroes that put many first timers to TV at ease. It allowed us to play. In one episode a grandmother welcomed us into her mud hut and we sat in the smoky room sipping sweet tea as she proudly enjoyed the attention we were giving her grandson.

For me it has been much more than a wildlife documentary series - it's a journey into the unknown. From the outset everyone has witnessed small miracles along the way, a behind the scenes interview with one hero led to a scholarship for a local girl to go to high school donated by a viewer half a world away in Canada. One scholarship interrupted early marriage and could be the seed of a new wildlife warrior. It was the seed for ten scholarships, and then other donations including a wheelchair for a child with hydrocephaly and food to a needy school. Connections opened doors for our heroes before they even hit the silver screen. All of this because we were simply trying to create awareness about our own local conservation heroes.



NAIROBI, April 6, 2019: A new weekly series called *Wildlife Warriors* will premiere on East Africa's largest channel, Citizen TV, on Sunday, April 7, 2019 at 5PM. Development of this series was funded by the U.S. Government, through USAID, in partnership with U.S. Department of the Interior, Wild Lives Foundation, and National Geographic.

The series provides an African perspective on conservation through the stories of Africa's own conservation heroes, front line soldiers, and cutting edge scientists. The first season features 13 Kenyan conservation heroes and the endangered animals they are working to protect. The TV series also celebrates Kenya's iconic landscapes.

“Across the continent of Africa, a new generation of conservationists are taking hold. Fighting grave battles, breaking new ground and risking everything to preserve what they hold most dear, the land of their ancestors and the animals they have lived closely with for generations. *Wildlife Warriors* provides perspective on conservation from Africa in her own eyes. ” commented Paula Kahumbu, WildlifeDirect CEO and series producer.

Wildlife Warriors aims to bring wildlife conservation into the homes and classrooms of every African, with the ultimate goal of moving people to action. Schools across Kenya are already creating *Wildlife Warrior* clubs ahead of the launch of the TV series. The clubs will educate youth through books, teacher trainings, films, science projects, and field trips.