



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**ISSUED BY: THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE**

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**256 UNEMPLOYED YOUTH TRAINED AND PLACED IN JOBS OVER TWO YEARS**

A project awarded by the National Treasury's Jobs Fund to the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) will ensure that 256 unemployed youth are trained and placed in permanent employment. The majority of the learners will, on graduation from a year-long skills development programme, have completed a National Certificate in Nature Conservation: Resource Guardianship, with ten of the learners - all females - completing the Skills Programme Dangerous Game Site Guide.

Year one of the project, comprising the training of 136 youth, kicked off on 22 March 2015 and has now closed out, with 136 of these learners having graduated at NQF 2 this month (February 2016). They will now be placed in Nature Reserves and Wildlife areas in three provinces, namely Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal.

The graduation ceremonies took place at the SAWC, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's Midmar Training Centre and at the Somkhanda Game Reserve managed by Wildlands Conservation Trust.

All 136 graduates will be placed and employed in various reserves within Limpopo and two community-owned reserves in KwaZulu Natal, Somkhanda and Mayibuye Game Reserves, as well as within the Kruger National Park, who will take up 16 of the learners including the 10 female Site Guides.

Mr. Ruben de Kock: who heads up the Protected Area Integrity African Field Ranger training services division at the SAWC emphasized how, adequate training and discipline is vital if protected areas and threatened species such as rhino are to be sustained. "A high priority must be placed on community-based natural resource management, poverty reduction, alternative livelihoods and biodiversity economy strategies to contribute to biodiversity conservation, socio economic and tourism development," he said

Mr. John Matjie, the Manager of Human Resource Development for LEDET who attended the graduation ceremony at the SAWC, expressed his gratitude by thanking all involved in the project. "Our thanks is extended to the Jobs Fund, the SAWC and its donors who provided the matched funding requirement, for the opportunity given to these young men and women.

This funding has enabled these learners to acquire the knowledge and skills, which will empower them not only to be placed in employment but to become the guardians of our protected areas and threatened species,” he said. “Thanks must also go to the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism’s (LEDET) team for the constant support in arranging workplace training for these students. The commitment and perseverance shown by the learners must also be commended as a lot of fortitude was required during the training,” he added.

LEDET will take up 60 of the students trained for deployment within their various provincial reserves. The employment contract of these students will commence on 1 April 2016 as will the employment contracts of the learners placed in other nature reserves and community-owned reserves including Somkhanda and Mayibuye which are taking up 20 and 15 field rangers respectively.

The selection process for the balance of the students, who will be trained during Year two of the project, will commence in March 2016. These 120 learners will go on to complete their training including their work based practical training during the year. Their year-long training programme will culminate in 2017 when they graduate and are placed in employment.

Ends

Issued by: The Southern African Wildlife College  
Direct Line | +27 (0)15 793 7300 | Fax: +27 (0)15 793 7314  
[www.wildlifecollege.org.za](http://www.wildlifecollege.org.za)

Contact: Jeanné Poultney | Marketing & Fundraising  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE  
PO Box 2193 | Cramerview | Johannesburg 2060  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)11 704 4386 | Mobile Tel: +27 (0)82 45 828 45  
Fax: +27 (0)86 670 8687 | [jpoultney@sawc.org.za](mailto:jpoultney@sawc.org.za)

***The primary objective of the Southern African Wildlife College, which is located 10km west of the Orpen Gate to the Kruger National Park, is to provide people from Africa with the required motivation and the relevant skills to manage and conserve their protected areas and associated flora and fauna on a sustainable basis in cooperation with local communities. In doing so, the College aims to ensure that the region’s rich biological diversity, and its threatened species are conserved and that the parks, if well managed, become focal points for rural development and economic growth thereby breaking the poverty cycle and making a substantial contribution to the economic activity in the region.***

**CAPTIONS: SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE JOBS FUND PROGRAMME 2016 GRADUATION**  
(Included are 3 visuals)



(1) Mr. Takalani Ramashinga: Assistant Director of LEDET (right) handed out certificates to 66 graduates who were declared competent. One of the learners, Lufuno Matodzi (left) is pictured receiving his certificate.



(2) A group photo of all the learners with their trainers and instructors after the passing-out parade



(3) Pictured above are some of the jubilant parents celebrating their children's achievements.