



**ETHIOPIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
AUTHORITY (EWCA)**

**STATE CONSERVATION REPORT OF BALE  
MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK (BMNP)  
WORLD NATURAL HERITAGE SITE  
(ETHIOPIA)**



**December, 2024**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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**Name of World Heritage Property:**

**Bale Mountains National Park (Ethiopia)**

**State Party:**

**Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia – Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority**

**Identification Number:**

**N -111 a**

Response to the World Heritage Committee's Decisions adopted during the **45<sup>th</sup>** session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 10-25 September 2023, **8B.27**)

## **1. Executive Summary**

This State of Conservation report is submitted in response to the World Heritage Committee's Decisions adopted during the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 10-25 September 2023, 8B.27). The report is therefore to update the committee on the undergoing activities in the Bale Mountains National Park world heritage property.

The report considers the letter from the World Heritage Centre (Ref. CLT/WHC/AFR/24/204) dated 12 November 2024, which refers to the significance of previous decisions acknowledged by the World Heritage Committee.

The Bale Mountains National Park in Ethiopia, known for its biodiversity and landscapes, is facing threats from overgrazing due to unsustainable practices. The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority is implementing a ten-year General Management Plan to address these issues. The General Management Plan aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of BMNP by addressing overgrazing, integrating park protection, stakeholder engagement, and strengthening conservation regulations. Since 2020, 32 Participatory Natural Resource Management (PNRM) cooperatives have signed Park Cooperative Agreements with national parks, demonstrating increased community commitment to natural resource stewardship and the cooperative model's effectiveness in environmental conservation. Based on the GMP, Core Protection Zones (CPZ) in the BMNP has been established to reduce grazing pressure. Since 2020, a total area of 82,882 hectares (38%) has been included in the CPZ area. The General Management Plan and its Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Program is addressing unsustainable grazing in Bale Mountains National Park. Effective stakeholder engagement, resource management, and law enforcement are crucial for preserving the park's Outstanding Universal Value for future generations.

The Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority has established two steering committees to guide the relocation process. The Federal-Regional high-level committee oversees strategic direction and policy compliance, while the Woreda-Zone committee addresses local community needs. The Multi sectoral Integrated Relocation Action Plan (RAP) outlines actionable steps for voluntary relocation of permanent settlers from the Bale Mountains National Park. A socio-economic survey tool has been developed to understand the local context and support community

livelihoods. A Community Engagement Plan and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Protocol have been established to ensure continuous dialogue with affected individuals and communities. A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been established to foster trust and transparency. Community members are invited to review and provide feedback on the drafted protocols. The relocation preparations are aligned with international standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standards (ESS 5, 7, and 10). This commitment to a rights-based approach ensures that affected communities are engaged, informed, and supported throughout the transition.

## **2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

It can be recalled that Decisions 45<sup>th</sup> COM sessions of the 2023 World Heritage Committee Meeting held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the WHC inscribed the Bale Mountains National Park of Ethiopia as a world heritage property based on the report and recommendations of the IUCN advisory body. As this is one of the great milestones in the history of the BMNP conservation, the State Party would like to acknowledge and appreciate the UNESCO WHC and the IUCN advisory bodies for the continued support and consideration of the site's inscription in the world heritage list

With regards to the Bale Mountains National Park World Heritage property, the World Heritage Committee (45 COM) requested the State Party of Ethiopia to explain the status of ongoing activities related to the property. The request include to continue to address the threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property through the appropriate implementation of the General Management Plan, including unsustainable practices, such as overgrazing by livestock, and to ensure that, in line with the State Party's continued commitments made in the nomination, any proposed relocation of people and communities from within the property follows a rights-based approach, ensuring the free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities and applying international best practices and applicable norms and standards. The committee has requested the State Party to submit a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2024.

## **2.1. Paragraph 4 a**

According to Decision 45 COM 8B.27 the World Heritage Committee requested:

Continue to address the threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property through the appropriate implementation of the General Management Plan, including regarding unsustainable practices, such as overgrazing by livestock.

EWCA acknowledges the serious implications these practices have on both the environment and local communities. EWCA is committed to addressing these challenges through the comprehensive Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP) management plan.

The Grazing Management Plan (GMP) has been developed with the critical objective of ensuring the long-term viability of the BMNP, particularly in the face of environmental pressures associated with overgrazing. Central to this plan are the Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Program, which takes a proactive and phased approach to effectively manage livestock stocking rates. Our goal is to gradually adjust these rates to levels that are sustainable for the ecosystem.

Key elements of this program are designed to strike a balance between the needs of the local community, who rely on livestock for their livelihoods, and the imperative to conserve BMNP's unique ecological resources. To this end, we have incorporated several innovative strategies to align park protection efforts with local development initiatives. These strategies include:

### **2.1.1. Effective Stakeholder Engagement**

We have prioritized communication and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders to foster a cooperative environment and ensure mutual understanding of conservation goals.

### **2.1.2. Enhancing Participatory Natural Resource Management (PNRM) Cooperatives**

By expanding the roles of PNRM Cooperatives, we are working to strengthen community involvement in conservation efforts, leading to improved practices within BMNP.

In this regard, we would like to outline the proactive measures being implemented through our Park Cooperative Agreements (PCAs) with Participatory Natural Resource Management (PNRM) cooperatives.

Since the beginning of 2020, EWCA has made remarkable strides in addressing these challenges through collaboration with local communities. We officially established Park Cooperative Agreements with 11 PNRM cooperatives, setting the groundwork for sustainable management of the park's resources. Recognizing the potential for improved community involvement, our program has rapidly expanded over the years.

As of now, we are pleased to report that the number of PNRM cooperatives engaged with BMNP has grown to 32. This significant increase underscores the deepening commitment of local stakeholders to work alongside us in stewarding the natural resources of the park. The success of this initiative reflects the effectiveness of the cooperative model in fostering collaboration between national park authorities and local communities.

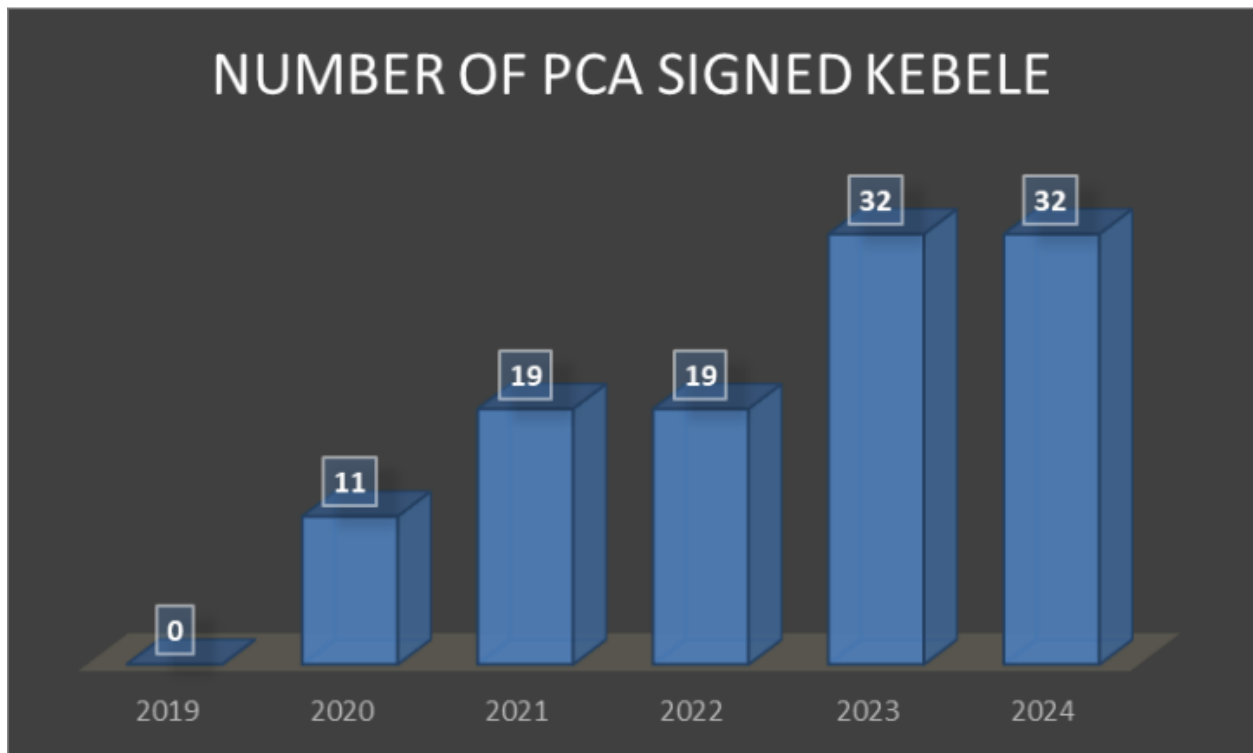


Figure 1: Number of Park Cooperative Signed and Renewed



The 32 cooperatives currently engaged as partners in our conservation efforts are actively involved in monitoring local natural resources, addressing the issues related to overgrazing, and promoting sustainable livestock management practices. Through targeted training programs, workshops, and resource-sharing initiatives, we are equipping these cooperatives with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement sustainable grazing practices that not only protect the park's ecosystem but also support the livelihoods of the local populations.

### **2.1.3. Phased Spatial and Temporal Zonation**

We are implementing a strategic approach to resource management that includes targeted spatial and temporal zoning, tailored to mitigate the impacts of overgrazing while optimizing resource use.

One of key initiative includes the establishment of Core Protection Zones (CPZs). These specially designated areas are integral to our strategy, expanding every year with the ultimate goal of encompassing the entire national park. The primary focus of the CPZs is to mitigate the grazing pressure that poses a significant threat to the park's ecosystems and wildlife health.

Within these CPZs, grazing activities are strictly prohibited. This approach allows the park's natural flora and fauna to flourish without disturbances typically caused by livestock. The enforcement of the park's comprehensive rules and regulations within these zones ensures that conservation efforts are prioritized over human activities.

Since the beginning of 2020, we have made significant progress in the expansion and enhancement of these CPZs. Initially, 27,856 hectares, representing about 13% of the national park, were demarcated as CPZ through the Park Cooperative Agreement (PCA). This monumental step laid the groundwork for our systematic conservation efforts aimed at protecting vital ecosystems.

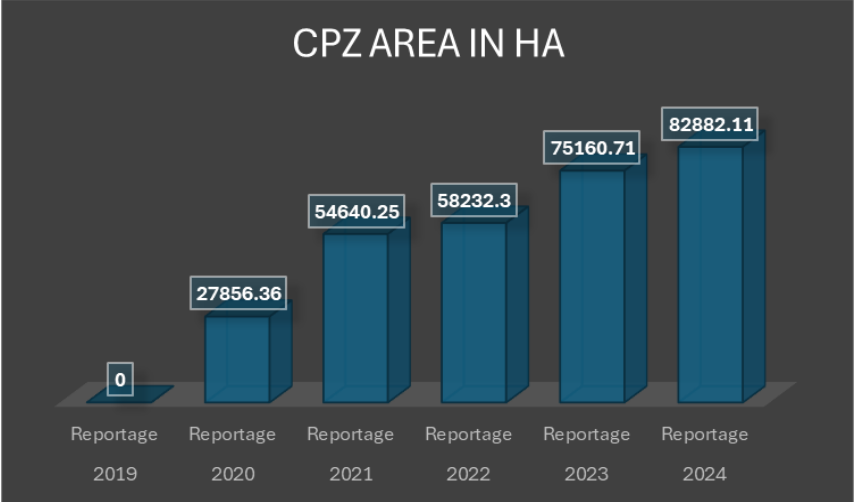


Figure 2: Yearly based Core Protection Zone Expansion

As we look towards the year 2024, we are pleased to report that the Core Protection Zone has significantly expanded to 82,882 hectares, now representing approximately 38% of the national park.

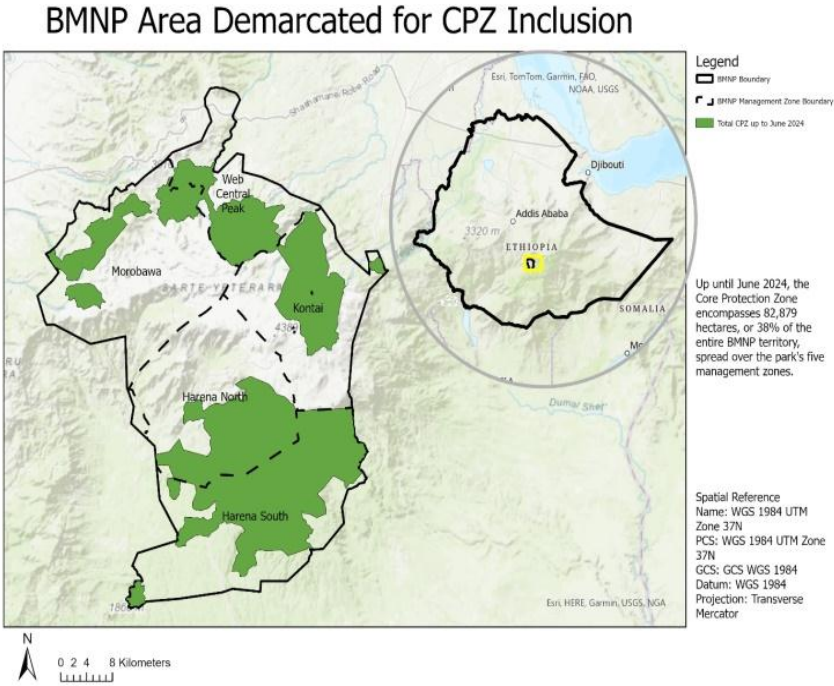


Figure 3: Core Protection Zone (CPZ) Map

#### **2.1.4. Enforcement of Fees and Fines**

To support sustainable practices, we have instituted a system of fees and fines associated with resource use. This helps ensure adherence to the agreed-upon conservation practices and promotes compliance among stakeholders.

#### **2.1.5. Licensing Agreements for Temporary Resource Users**

We are also introducing licensing for short-term resource users, which allows us to regulate access and minimize adverse effects on the park's resources.

#### **2.1.6. Strengthening Law Enforcement**

Robust law enforcement measures are being reinforced to uphold conservation regulations and ensure that all activities within BMNP align with sustainability goals.

### **2.2. Paragraph 4 b**

According to Decision 45 COM 8B.27 the World Heritage Committee requested:

Ensure that, in line with the State Party's continued commitments made in the nomination, any proposed relocation of people and communities from within the property follows a rights-based approach, ensuring the free, prior, and informed consent of the affected communities and applying international best practices and applicable norms and standards.

EWCA has carried out the following work:

In response to the request for detailed reporting on the conservation status regarding the proposed relocation of individuals and communities from within the Bale Mountains National Park, EWCA outlined the proactive measures undertaken that prioritize a rights-based approach. These measures ensure that the free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities is upheld, in line with international best practices and applicable norms and standards.

### **2.2.1. Establishment of Relocation Steering and Technical Committees**

To guide the relocation process effectively, we have established two critical committees at distinct operational levels. The first is the Federal-Regional high-level steering committee, co-chaired by the Vice President of Oromia National regional state and the Director General of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). This committee oversees the broader strategic direction and policy compliance.

In parallel, we have formed a Woreda-Zone steering committee within the Bale and West Arsi zones, which directly will address community needs on a more localized level. Each of these committees is chaired by the respective zone administrators, ensuring that local governance structures are integral to the relocation process.

### **2.2.2. Development of the Multisectoral Integrated Relocation Action Plan**

Under the guidance of our steering committees, technical working groups have crafted a comprehensive Relocation Action Plan (RAP). This plan has undergone extensive discussions, receiving endorsement from the high-level steering committee on two key occasions—May 2023 and November 4, 2024. The RAP outlines actionable steps for the voluntary relocation of permanent settlers from the Bale Mountains National Park to alternative locations, signifying a commitment to transparency and community engagement. Following its approval, orientation sessions on the RAP have been conducted for the Woreda-level steering committee, thus facilitating readiness for implementation.

### **2.2.3. Socio-Economic Survey Tool Development**

Acknowledging the importance of understanding the local context, the RAP includes a socio-economic survey aimed at asset valuation. A dedicated protocol for conducting this survey has been established by the technical working group, ensuring it is tailored to collect comprehensive data that will inform relocation processes and support community livelihoods during this transition.

#### **2.2.4. Community Engagement Plan and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Protocol**

A robust Community Engagement Plan has been instituted to assure continuous dialogue with affected individuals and communities. This plan aims to clearly communicate the resettlement process, its implications, and provide various alternatives available to those affected. Through multiple rounds of consultation, community members will have the opportunity to voice their concerns, preferences, and feedback, which are integral in respecting their rights and ensuring their perspectives are considered in the planning process.

#### **2.2.5. Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)**

To foster trust and transparency throughout the relocation process, a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been set in place. This mechanism offers clear and accessible channels through which individuals or communities can voice concerns or lodge complaints. Our commitment to fairness and transparency is reflected in the design of the GRM, which will be instrumental in addressing any potential disputes effectively.

#### **2.2.6. Consultation and Feedback Loop**

Prior to the implementation of relocation plans, we invite community members to review and provide feedback on the drafted protocols. Input received during these consultations will be critical in refining the Community Engagement Plan and the GRM, ensuring that they meet local needs and are responsive to the expectations of the affected communities.

#### **2.2.7. Alignment with International Standards**

We are committed to aligning our relocation preparations with key international frameworks, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This declaration supports the rights of local communities to participate actively in decisions that affect their land and livelihoods. Additionally, our protocols comply with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standards (ESS 5, 7, and 10), ensuring that our resettlement efforts are carried out in a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable manner.

### 3. Conservation Status Report of the Mountain Nyala: Ongoing Activities and Efforts

The Mountain Nyala, an endemic species native to Ethiopia, holds a unique place within the biodiversity of the Bale Mountain National Park (BMNP). Established in 1971, this park was specifically created to safeguard the Afro-alpine ecosystem and protect the Mountain Nyala, whose existence is closely tied to these distinctive habitats. The most significant populations of this remarkable species thrive within the BMNP, particularly in the Hareenna forest escarpment, the Sanetti Plateau, and the Web Valley. Notably, over 95% of the Mountain Nyala population resides in the northern woodlands and grasslands surrounding the park's headquarters in Dinsho and the Gaysay Valley.

Recent surveys indicate that the Mountain Nyala is expanding its habitat range, with small groups increasingly observed outside their previously established core areas. These observations suggest that the overall population of the Mountain Nyala has remained stable over the past five years, highlighting the effectiveness of recent conservation strategies.

Table 1: Mountain Nyala population number 2020-2024 wet season

Year	Total N	LCI	UCI	Error bars	
				+	-
2020 wet	2017	1491	2729	712	526
2021 wet	1364	1065	1739	375	299
2022 wet	1938	1322	2521	583	616
2023 wet	2067	1628	2412	345	439
2024 wet	2100	1471	2479	379	629

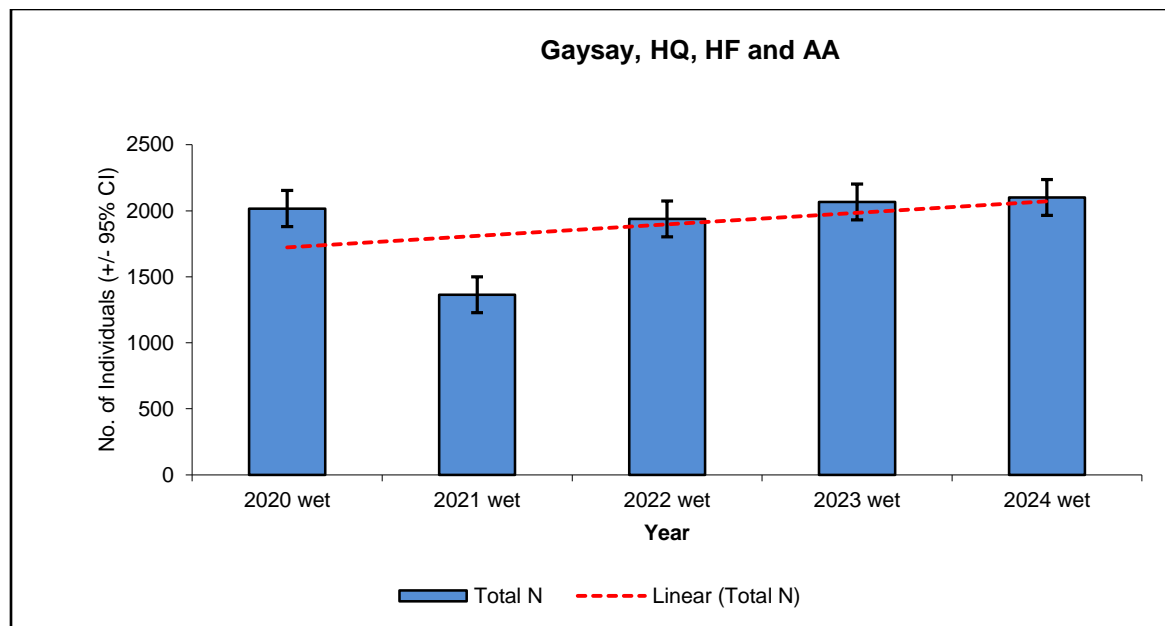


Figure 4: Mountain Nyala population trend 2020-2024 wet season

Table 2: Mountain Nyala Population Number Dry Season 2020-2024

Year	Total N	LCI	UCI	Error bars	
				+	-
2020 dry	2211	1592	3077	866	619
2021 dry	819	607	1105	286	212
2022 dry	1164	898	1509	345	266
2023 dry	1916	1372	2317	401	544
2024 dry	1987	1481	2500	351	668

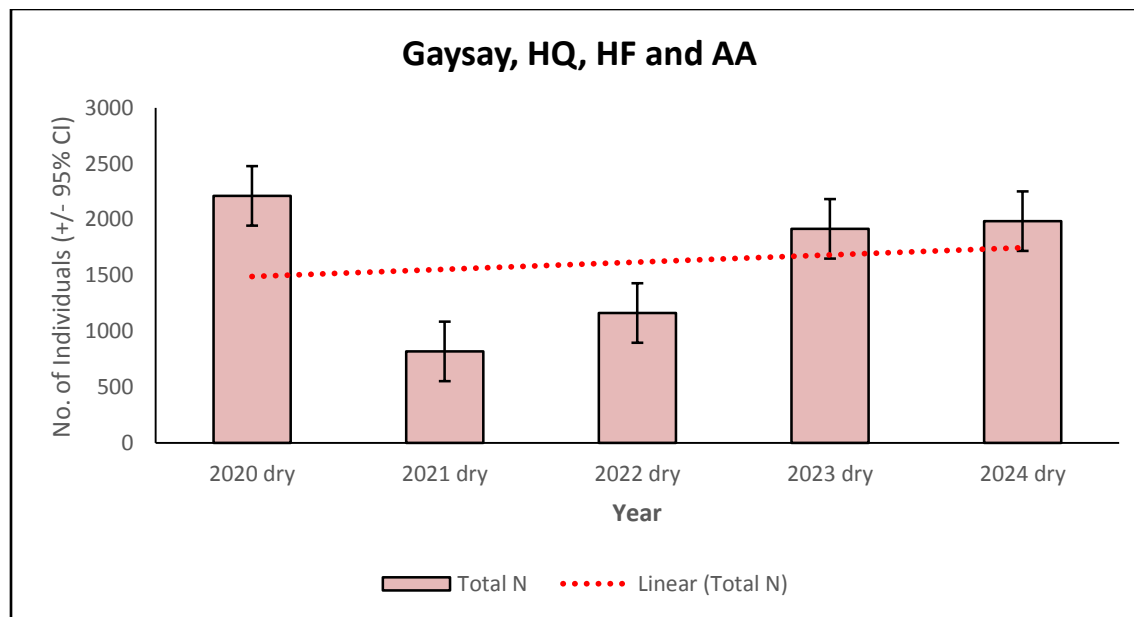


Figure 5: Mountain Nyala population trend 2020-2024 DRY season

#### 4. Status Report on Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Efforts

As part of a comprehensive report on the conservation status of the Ethiopian wolf, an endemic and critically endangered species, we would like to share the ongoing activities implemented in monitoring and preserving this unique population within the Bale Mountains National Park.

Since 1997, the Bale Mountains National Park, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme, has been actively monitoring Ethiopian wolves to gather essential data on their population dynamics and health. Our dedicated team of 6-8 experienced monitors employs standardized protocols to observe Ethiopian wolf packs continuously. Our primary focus centers around two key areas: the Sanetti Plateau and Web Valley, where we have established a consistent observation regime. Additionally, we conduct regular monitoring of neighboring subpopulations in Morabawa and Chafa Dalacha, alongside sporadic observations of packs in other regions, albeit at a reduced intensity.

A crucial aspect of our daily fieldwork involves disease surveillance, which is integral to understanding the health issues impacting the Ethiopian wolf populations. In both the Web Valley and Sanetti Plateau, all wolf packs are closely monitored and documented. Annual total



counts, derived from detailed assessments of pack compositions, allow us to define the demographics of each pack, including the number of males, females, juveniles (1 year or younger), subadults (1-2 years), and adults (over 2 years).

To estimate the total Ethiopian wolf population within the Bale Mountains, we augment the data from these focal areas by extrapolating wolf densities across additional suitable habitats. This estimation considers variations in habitat quality, categorizing areas into optimal, good, and marginal classifications.

Historically, the Ethiopian wolf population in these highlands has fluctuated between 200 and 350 individuals, primarily due to significant mortality events linked to rabies and canine distemper outbreaks, notably during 2014-2015 and again in 2019. Fortunately, over the past four years, we have observed a stabilization of the population. This positive trend is largely attributable to our ongoing vaccination efforts, which include comprehensive initiatives such as oral rabies vaccinations for wolf packs throughout the Bale Mountains, as well as a targeted canine distemper vaccination trial undertaken with select packs.

Through these dedicated conservation actions, we are optimistic about the future of the Ethiopian wolf and continue to adapt our strategies to enhance population resilience against disease outbreaks and habitat loss. We remain committed to the long-term survival of this remarkable species and look forward to keeping you updated on our progress and any further actions taken in their conservation.

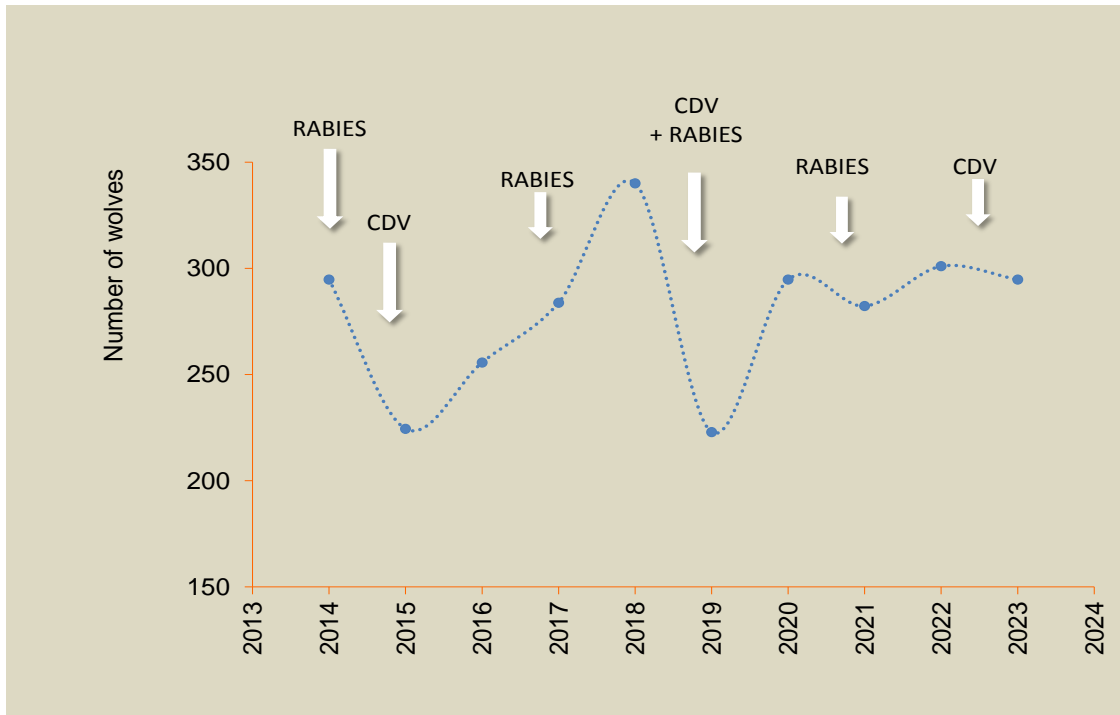


Figure 6: Ten years (2014-2024) population trends of Ethiopian Wolf

## 5. Law Enforcement Status Report

Regarding a status report on conservation efforts related to the implementation of the General Management Plan, we are pleased to share the significant progress we have made in enhancing law enforcement actions aimed at safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value of our property.

### 5.1. Enhanced Monitoring Capabilities

We have successfully deployed SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and EarthRanger data systems to effectively monitor our patrolling activities. These systems enable us to track ranger movements, gather critical data on wildlife and habitat status, and ensure a more coordinated approach to conservation efforts.

### 5.2. Diversified Ranger Team Composition

Recognizing the importance of a diverse and well-equipped ranger team, we have made substantial progress in reshaping our ranger composition. This strategic change is designed to

strengthen our capacity for law enforcement and improve community relations, ensuring that we have the right skills and perspectives in our patrol teams.

### **5.3. Optimized Patrol Roster System**

We have implemented a new patrol rosters system, which is designed to maximize our patrolling efforts across key areas of the property. This optimized approach ensures that resources are allocated efficiently, allowing us to respond more effectively to potential threats to the area's Outstanding Universal Value.

### **5.4. Enhanced Ranger Equipment**

The safety and effectiveness of our rangers are paramount. To this end, we have equipped our ranger teams with the necessary gear and technology to carry out their duties effectively. This includes protective equipment, communication devices, and tools that facilitate their day-to-day operations in the field.

### **5.5. Collaboration with Local Law Enforcement**

We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local law enforcement agencies, fostering collaborative efforts to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of our property. This partnership amplifies our enforcement capabilities and enhances our collective response to threats.

### **5.6. Training and Capacity Building**

To reinforce our commitment to ethical law enforcement, we have conducted training sessions for our rangers focused on human rights and the appropriate use of force. This training emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the dignity of individuals while effectively carrying out conservation responsibilities.

Table 3: Patrol effort for the last three years

Year	Number of Patrols	Number of Days	Man-Days	Distance(Km)	Area Coverage Km <sup>2</sup>
2022	2046	2111	8725	29824.2	808
2023	2718	2751	13538	45354.86	876
2024	1694	1789	9313	25184.07	791

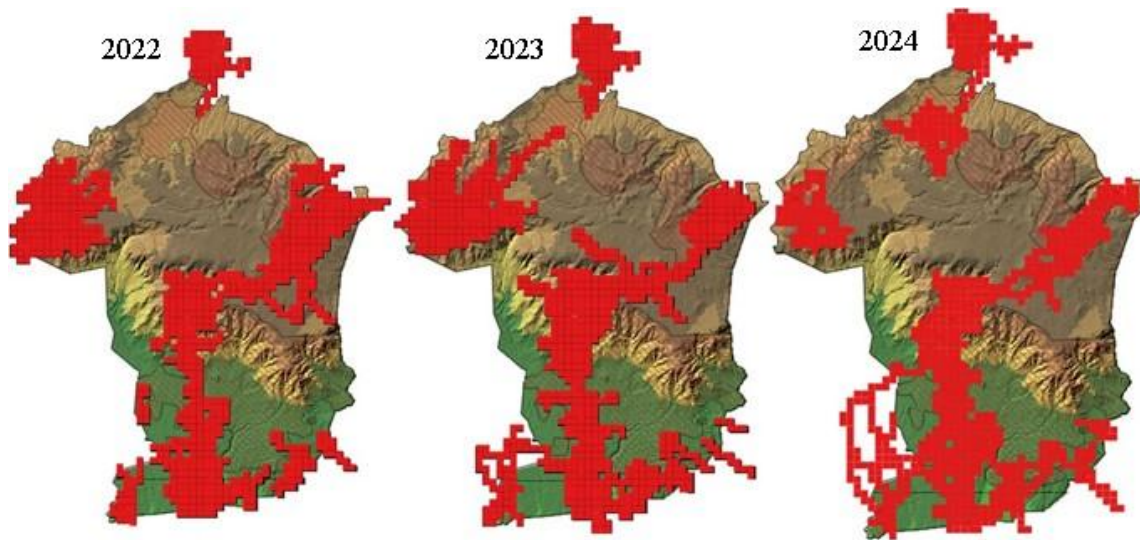


Figure 7: Patrol coverage Map produced by SMART

## 6. Conclusion

The ongoing implementation of the General Management Plan, particularly through the innovative Interim Settlement and Grazing Management Program and the establishment of PCAs, has begun to address the threats posed by unsustainable grazing practices in the Bale Mountains National Park. Continued commitment to effective stakeholder engagement, strict

resource management, and law enforcement will be critical in preserving the park's Outstanding Universal Value for future generations.

The cooperation of local communities, combined with robust conservation strategies, will be pivotal in the sustainable management of this internationally significant natural treasure. As such, the EWCA and its stakeholders remain dedicated to overcoming these challenges and safeguarding the unique heritage of BMNP.

Additionally, our ongoing activities demonstrate a commitment to implementing a rights-based approach in the relocation process, ensuring that the affected communities are engaged, informed, and supported throughout the transition.