**Ford Donates 1 100 COVID-19 Face Shields to 25 Ford Wildlife Foundation Projects**

* 25 Ford Wildlife Foundation projects receive a total of 1 100 COVID-19 face shields to support their important environmental conservation, research and education programmes
* Projects focus on threatened animal species including the African penguin, cheetah, SA cranes, Ground-hornbill, black and white rhino, Cape leopard, amphibians and marine mammals
* Protection of natural habitats is also a cornerstone of the FWF-backed initiatives, including the establishment of a grasslands park in the Eastern Cape, Overberg Renosterveld in the Western Cape, Knysna estuary, wetlands and coral reefs
* Watch the video detailing Ford’s COVID-19 face shields production at its Silverton Assembly Plant in Pretoria: <https://youtu.be/Il1ZdcvwSsg>

**PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, 26 June 2020** – In support of the wide-ranging conservation and environmental projects backed by the Ford Wildlife Foundation (FWF), Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa (FMCSA) is distributing 1 100 COVID-19 face shields to 25 partner organisations located across the region.

“It’s fantastic to see our Ford employees making a difference in their communities through the production of the face shields, and we’re equally proud of our partner Ford Wildlife Foundation projects continuing to have a positive impact on conservation programmes during these challenging times,” says Neale Hill, MD of FMCSA.

“Protecting our precious endangered species and habitats is crucial, and the education programmes that support these initiatives is equally important,” Hill adds. “By equipping all of the FWF projects with the face shields we’re producing, it enables the teams to continue their commendable work while providing them with an additional layer of protection from COVID-19.”

To date, Ford has produced over 260 000 face shields at its Silverton Assembly Plant for frontline medical workers, essential services personnel, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are at the coalface of this global health crisis. Almost 140 000 face shields have been donated directly to the Department of Health.

“Thank you to Ford for the donation of the face shields for all our Ford Wildlife Foundation projects,” says Lynda du Plessis, FWF manager. “These organisations are very excited to be receiving the face shields, as it will help keep them safe while interacting with communities and numerous role-players in their specialised fields.”

Since it was launched in 2014, Ford has assisted the numerous Ford Wildlife Foundation partner organisations through the loan of Ford Ranger Double Cab 4x4s for a period of two years, to ensure that they are able to carry out their work in even the most remote and hard-to-reach locations. A total of 25 Rangers are currently on loan, with a further 12 vehicles having been donated since the FWF was launched in 2014.

On the conservation front, the FWF partner organisations across the country include the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) which specialises in African penguins and sea birds; Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) that runs various projects on cheetahs and other carnivores, amphibians, as well as SA cranes and their wetland habitats; BirdLife South Africa which looks after threatened bird species; the Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project; Cape Leopard Trust; Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust; the Saving the Survivors rhino project; and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) which is establishing a national grassland park in the Eastern Cape, and also runs the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project. FWF also supports the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) and its environmental projects in two conservancies in Khaudum North.

The FWF research projects include Sea Search which focuses on all types of marine mammals; the Oceanographic Research Institute’s coral reefs project which falls under the SA Association for Marine Biological Research (SAAMBR); the Knysna Basin Project; Southern Mozambique Sea Turtle Research Project; as well as the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s School of Life Sciences projects on vultures and hippos.

Although most of the initiatives incorporate education elements in their work, the specific FWF education projects comprise the Wildlife & Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) which has programmes running in Gauteng, the Western Cape and Eastern Cape Wild Coast; the Lapalala Wilderness School in Vaalwater, Limpopo; as well as the Delta Environmental Centre in Randburg, Gauteng.

The FWF also donated face shields to the Buffalo Kloof Private Game Reserve located near Grahamstown. Buffalo Kloof has its own conservation projects for several endangered species, and is a partner to the WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project. The horns of its black and white rhino population have been infused with a red dye that is toxic to humans when consumed, which forms one element of its multi-faceted protection and anti-poaching efforts.

It also has wildlife relocation and reintroduction projects in place for elephants, cheetahs, leopards, as well as smaller species such as the Cape grysbok, spotted genet and honey badger.

**Feedback from recipients of face shields donations**

“WESSA thanks the Ford Wildlife Foundation for the generous donation of face shields, which will allow us to meet the requirements of protecting our youth workers as they contribute to reviving South Africa’s marine and coastal ecotourism through our Blue Flag Programme.”

**Vincent Shacks, WESSA General Manager, Sustainable Tourism**

“Our rehabilitation and conservation staff wear plastic goggles to protect themselvesduring seabird rehabilitation and conservation work, but the goggles usually fog up. Now we also wear the prescribed protective masks. The donated Ford face shields don’t cause our goggles to fog up, so they are very helpful to protect ourselves from COVID-19 whilst we continue with our rehabilitation and seabird conservation efforts safely.”

**Dr David Roberts, SANCCOB Veterinarian**

“The Ford Ranger from the Ford Wildlife Foundation is the only vehicle in our fleet that can seat more than two people during COVID-19 times. We can travel with up to three people from our centre to the seabird colonies which assists us greatly during the transportation of rehabilitated seabirds that are to be released back into the wild. Using the Ford Ranger, we have enough hands on deck and at the same time we adhere to COVID- 19 regulations, and the face shields offer an additional level of protection when our staff are working together, for which we are grateful."

**Hedwich Tulp, SANCCOB Relationship Manager**

“The Endangered Wildlife Trust would like to thank the Ford Wildlife Foundation for its incredible support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The donated face shields will be used by our staff in the field when they are doing their conservation critical work, and specifically the EWT’s Cheetah Metapopulation Project. We do a lot of travelling across Southern Africa in the capable Ford Ranger monitoring and managing the genetics of our cheetah population. It is worth noting that this area has the only growing population of wild cheetah in the world. We deal with staff within the reserves that are part of this project and the Ford face shields will help us to continue doing conservation work while keeping ourselves and others safe in the process.”

**Vincent van der Merwe, Cheetah Metapopulation Coordinator, Endangered Wildlife Trust**

“Not only has the Ford Wildlife Foundation helped us keep safe and comfortable in the field by providing the strong, capable and dependable Ford Ranger for our researchers to use, but it has also looked after our health by providing us with face shields as well. Anyone who has had to labour in a face mask knows how difficult it can be to breathe sometimes. The clear Ford face shields provide us with an alternative to staying safe and healthy when working hard in the field.”

**Larry Oellermann, SAAMBR CEO**

“Our team works outside, clearing aliens, under difficult and sometimes hot conditions, so wearing a cloth mask is really not viable. Providing the team with face shields is a far safer option, as the team often work in close proximity to one another, and face shields are the only option for keeping them safe – particularly for those who are immune-compromised and need to be protected against COVID-19.”

**Dr Odette Curtis-Scott Director, Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust**

“At this time of huge societal change in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s great to have the support of the Ford Wildlife Foundation and its innovative approach to conservation. As our teams are often in the field, the Ford face shields are extremely valuable to protect them, but more importantly to reassure the farmers and landowners that we have taken the best possible precautions when we engage with them. Leopards have no understanding of lockdown, and therefore conflict situations will continue despite the virus, and need swift resolution. If farmers on the scene of a predation incident feel comfortable and safe with us, the delicate and highly charged situation is likely to be resolved much quicker. Thank you, Ford Wildlife Foundation!”

**Helen Turnbull, Chief Executive Officer, The Cape Leopard Trust**

“As ever, Ford looks after our safety - not just by providing a super safe vehicle, but even going so far as to support us with personal protective equipment so we can continue working to keep our Southern Ground-Hornbill population safe.”

**Dr Lucy Kemp, Mabula Ground Hornbill Project**

**How can you help?**

Donations to support the production and donation of face shields are welcomed from individuals and businesses. Any donations, big or small, will help protect our valued medical and essential services personnel and limit the spread of COVID-19 to those most at risk.

Ford has partnered with the Gift of the Givers Foundation, which has kindly provided the banking facility for all donations, which can be made as follows:

**Account Name: Gift of the Givers**

**Institution: Standard Bank**

**Branch: Pietermaritzburg**

**Account number: 052137228**

**Branch Code: 057525**

**Deposit Reference: Ford**

Any queries regarding making donations can be e-mailed to: socialme@ford.com, using the reference: **Ford SA COVID-19**.

Watch the video on Ford’s COVID-19 face shields production at its Silverton Assembly Plant in Pretoria: <https://youtu.be/Il1ZdcvwSsg>

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