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AFRICAN CONSERVATION VOICES MEDIA LABS EQUIP AFRICAN VIDEOGRAPHERS WITH EXPERTISE AND ACCESS TO GRANTS FOR CONSERVATION STORYTELLING

African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) partners with Jackson Wild to deliver training program to build conservation awareness and appreciation for conservation efforts on the continent

NAIROBI, KENYA/JACKSON HOLE, WY/WASHINGTON, D.C. (29 March 2021) – A new series of media workshops organized by AWF and Jackson Wild will provide hundreds of mid-level videographers in Africa with the opportunity to learn from experienced wildlife film and conservation experts to help elevate voices on the continent and create powerful conservation stories. The groups announced today the creation of “African Conservation Voices Media Labs” – a new program that will draw on Jackson Wild's deep connections within the nature and conservation filmmaking community, and integrating customized workshops led by AWF experts from various fields of wildlife and wildlands conservation alongside some of the most experienced filmmakers in the nature, conservation and science storytelling genres. “The program has accepted 26 applicants into the inaugural lab, each of whom impressed us with their talent and commitment to making a difference in conservation”, said filmmaker Lisa Truitt, who is spearheading the curriculum with AWF and JW. The kick-off workshop, Communities & Conservation, was held on 31 March, 2021.

AWF engaged mid-career African filmmakers in Kenya, following a competitive application process, to participate in the series of sessions. In addition to tutorials on conservation models, practices and rising challenges, wildlife research and visual storytelling, select participants will be able to develop their film concepts with a stipend for video production in a pre-selected field location. Some participants will be eligible for future AWF production grants, and for an expense-paid invitation to attend the Jackson Wild Summit, in the US or in Europe.

AWF CEO Kaddu Sebunya said: **“We are proud to partner with Jackson Wild on this effort to help build African filmmakers and strengthen their capacity in visual storytelling, but also to teach the unique discipline of conservation storytelling. Media Labs participants are accomplished professionals, so the program has been designed to hone their pre-existing skills, and learn about the complex threats to wildlife and wild lands in modern Africa, with an important focus on the interchange between communities and conservation. Ultimately, in addition to building a cadre of talented, recognized conservation storytellers, we aim to use these compelling video shorts to help build an African conservation movement, especially among African youth.”**

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The lab seeks to train the participants to tell authentic stories that rarely make it in the mainstream media. As the theme of this workshop, Conservation & Community suggests, stories will focus on how communities have coexisted with wildlife for multiple generations and the challenges it poses in modern Africa. The media labs seek to find and develop these stories and in so doing celebrate the many local conservation heroes and the innovative conservation solutions on the front lines of wildlife conservation.

Lisa Samford, Executive Director of Jackson Wild said: **“We are excited to work with AWF to bring Media Labs to life on the African continent. Jackson Wild celebrates the power of media to inspire wonder for our living planet and to catalyze change. Stories about conservation connect us to the planet and to each other. This collaborative, multimedia effort between AWF and JW’s network will help elevate local voices that bear witness to unique and authentic stories that will result in purpose-driven and sustainable global change.”**

While the pilot Media Lab admitted only Kenyan citizens, AWF and Jackson Wild plan to expand the program into Zimbabwe, Uganda and Rwanda, while building platforms and pathways for broader reach and dissemination of local stories, by local people.

About African Wildlife Foundation

The African Wildlife Foundation (<http://www.awf.org>) is the primary advocate for the protection of wildlife and wild lands as an essential part of a modern and prosperous Africa. Founded in 1961 to focus on Africa’s conservation needs, we articulate a uniquely African vision, bridge science and public policy, and demonstrate the benefits of conservation to ensure the survival of the continent’s wildlife and wild lands.

About Jackson Wild

For 30 years, Jackson Wild has hosted extraordinary convenings for science, nature and conservation media stakeholders, celebrating the finest and most innovative media in the genre. Jackson Wild’s international board members include: African Wildlife Foundation, ARTE France, BBC Studios, Blue Ant Media / Love Nature, Borealés, Conservation International, Discovery, Doclights, FujiFilm Optical Devices - Fujinon Lenses, Gorongosa Restoration Project, HHMI Tangled Bank Studios, Humane Society International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, National Geographic Partners, National Geographic Society, Nature/WNET, Netflix, Off the Fence Productions, ORF/Universum, PBS, Saint Thomas Productions, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Seeker, Smithsonian Channel, Sony Electronics, SVT - Swedish Television, The Nature Conservancy, Terra Mater Factual Studios, Wanda Natura, WGBH, and World Wildlife Fund US.

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