

HOW TO USE DATA JOURNALISM TO INVESTIGATE CROSS-BORDER CRIME



OXPECKERS

Investigative Environmental Journalism



TRAINING FOR **TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL**
IN CONJUNCTION WITH **ROTH COMMUNICATIONS**

INTRODUCING **OXPECKERS**



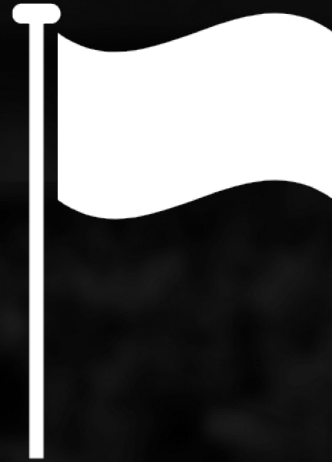
**OXPECKERS INVESTIGATIVE
ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM**

We combine traditional investigative reporting techniques with new media tools to expose eco-offences.



- We are a network of journalists from Africa, Asia and elsewhere doing cutting-edge journalism, under the mentorship of Southern Africa's leading environmental journalist
- Globalisation and the Internet have introduced increasing pressures on natural resources and ease of access to them
- We pioneer data-driven storytelling, geo-narratives, digital tools, drone, satellite and multimedia investigations to disrupt eco-offenders
- Our digital tools use Access to Information applications to liberate data on extractives, poaching, wildlife cybercrime and climate change

THE BEGINNING



- 2012: Oxfpeckers elected a winner of the [African News Innovation Challenge](#) (ANIC)
- Description of project: 'A narrative mapping project that uses satellite imagery and geographic data analysis in stories to expose cross-border criminals and syndicates damaging the environment through logging, poaching and ecological degradation.'
- Africa's first investigative environmental journalism unit established

IN 2013

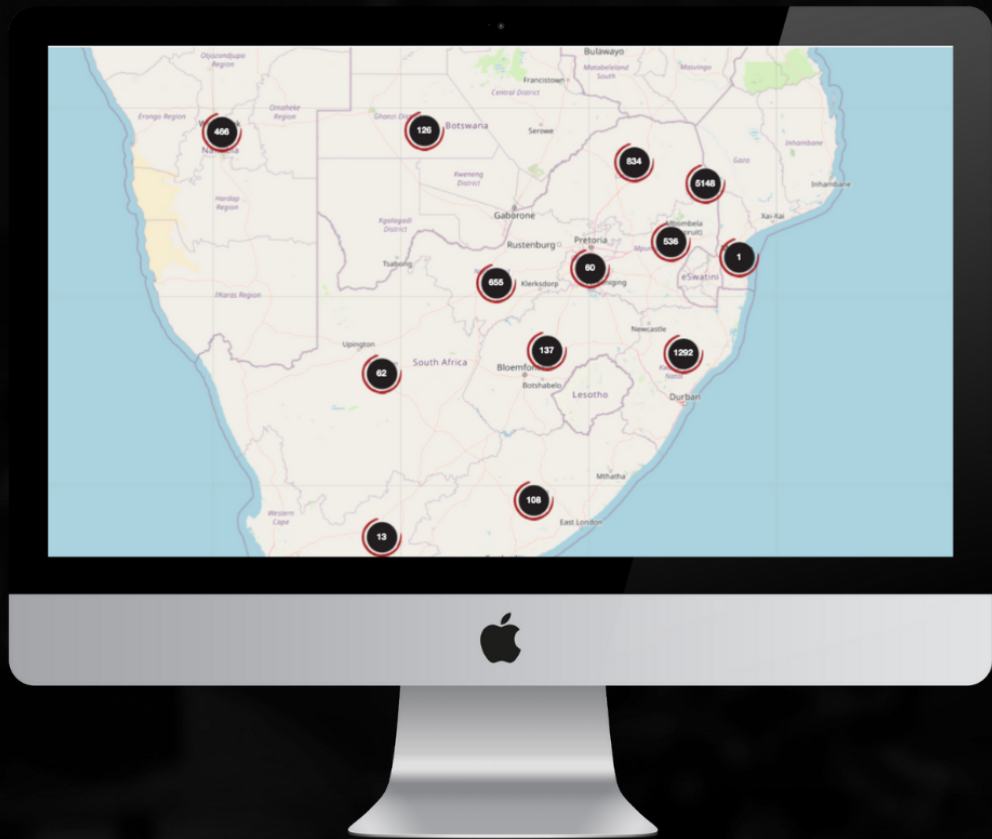


- Collaboration with [InfoAmazonia](#), pioneer of environmental data and geo journalism, based in Brazil
- Launch of [oxpeckers.org](#) at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Rio de Janeiro
- Part of the [African Network of Centers for Investigative Reporting](#) and [Code for Africa](#)

IN
2014



- Launch of [Chinese Journalism Project](#) – unique transnational collaborative model, supported by Wits Journalism
- First cohort of Fellows, Hongqiao Liu and Hongxiang Huang
- Over the years Asian journalists working with this Oxpeckers project have produced pioneering dossiers of work
- ‘Global wildlife trafficking syndicates employ increasingly sophisticated circumvention tools and technology to avoid detection. It makes sense to expose them by playing them at their own game’



PIONEERING DATA JOURNALISM

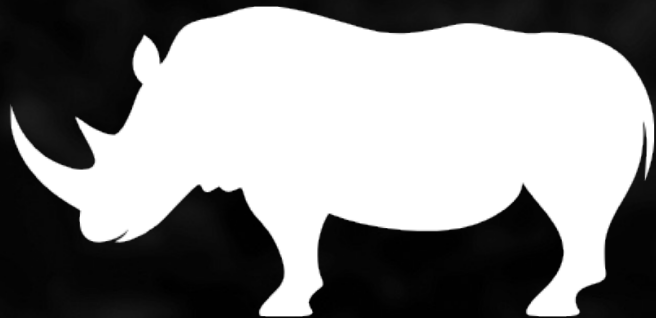
- Oxpeckers model cited in [The Art and Science of Data Driven Journalism](#) (Tow Center, 2014): ‘Newsrooms must diversify their staff, and data journalists need to go beyond acquiring and cleaning data to understanding its provenance and source’
- [PoachTracker](#) – a data-driven geo-journalism tool that provides instant visualization of statistics on rhino poaching deaths and arrests across Southern Africa
- Data based on official statistics; analysed for use in related dossier of investigations



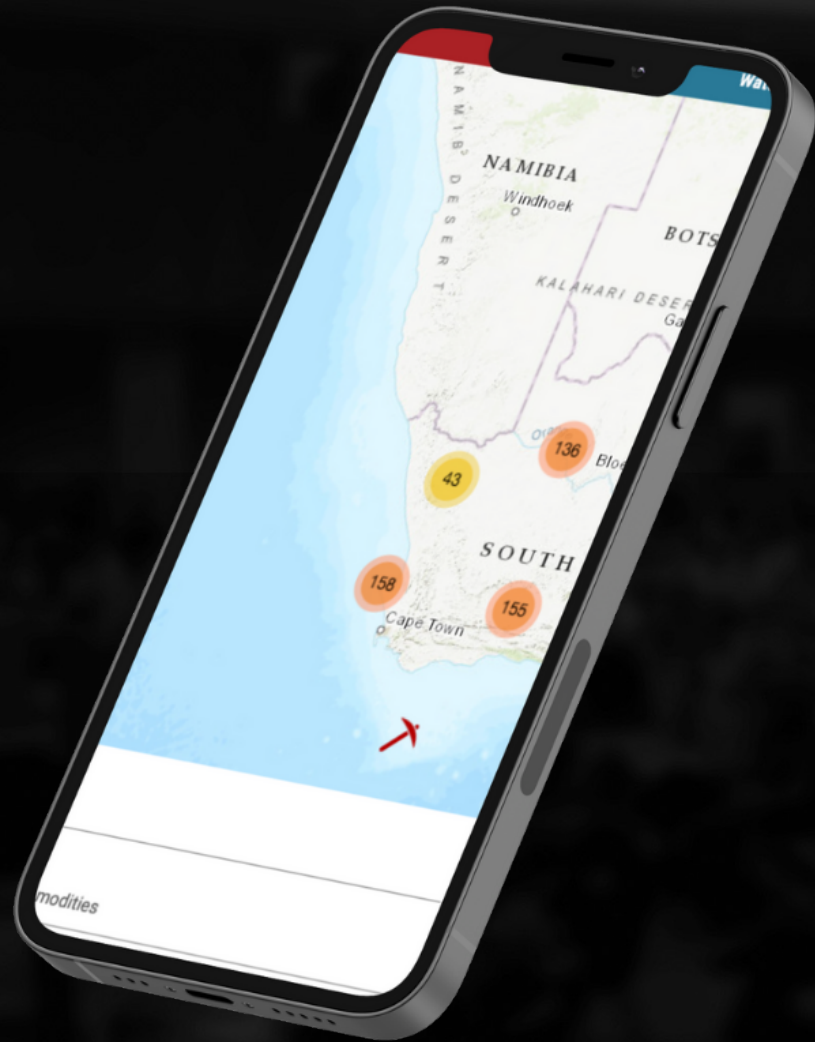
MAPPING JUSTICE

- What happens after wildlife contraband is seized and alleged offenders are arrested?
- Mapping Justice: project started with [Rhino Court Cases](#) platform
- After months of chasing SA's Justice Ministry and submission of formal letters of access to information, Minister released a data set of court cases involving alleged rhino poachers
- Data-driven tool tracks & shares updates on + 350 court cases

ACCESSING INFORMATION



- [Mapping rhino poaching court cases data](#)
- In the United States, one can set up a Pacer (Public Access to Court Electronic Records) account to keep track of court cases. Other countries have centralised government databases
- In Southern Africa, we resorted to search engines, PAIA applications, and individual court records to find the data
- We continue to work closely with government agencies and independent monitoring organisations



#MINEALERT

- Launched in 2016, #MineAlert is an interactive tool that promotes knowledge sharing and accountability in the extractives sector
- Citizen-focused platform that alerts users to mining activities in their area, and allows them to share information about development activities
- Location-based updates about mining applications, associated water use licences, environmental authorisations, and social and labour plans
- Shares information and engages with public review and policy formation processes
- In-depth investigations using this data



#WILDEYE

- #WildEye [a new digital platform](#), building on this model to deal with all wildlife crime and justice
- Launched in 2019, in partnership with the Earth Journalism Network, originally focused on Europe
- Part of a broader project that aids and trains journalists monitoring and investigating illegal wildlife trafficking
- Series of in-depth investigations published exposing wildlife smuggling networks and how they work across the continent, and insights into how the links operate on a global scale.
- [Europe cracks down on wildlife crime](#)



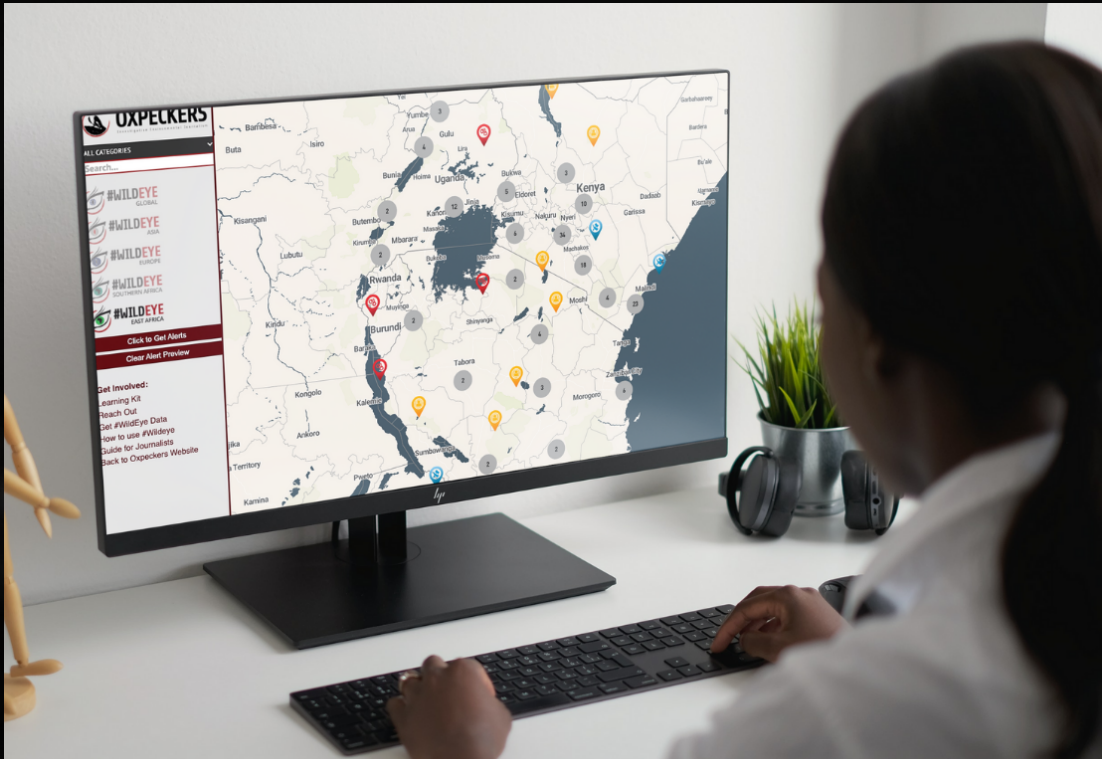
#WILDEYE ASIA

- #WildEye Asia [launched in 2020](#), again in partnership with EJM
- ‘Until now, there was no single place to access information easily on efforts to crack down on wildlife crime in Asia. #WildEye addresses this gap by tracking & sharing data on justice in action’
- Over 18 months, just under 2,000 data points collated and shared on the #WildEye map
- Analysed to produce a series of in-depth investigations in Asia – [How journalists use data to investigate wildlife crime in Asia](#)

BACK TO AFRICA



- Lessons learnt in other parts of the globe now being applied in Southern and East Africa
- [New Oxpeckers professional support programme](#) boosts wildlife crime reporting in Southern Africa with data-driven tools and journalist training
- Brought together experienced investigative journalists and a team of mentee data journalists from Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, to launch [#WildEye Southern Africa in November 2021](#)
- 520+ data points collated and shared on the [#WildEye Southern Africa map](#)



#WILDEYE EAST AFRICA

- Programme quickly expanded to include Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
- Launch in mid-2022
- The map will be published alongside data-driven investigations from the region

Oxpeckers Learning Kit

Resources and learning material from our projects are shared here in the interests of advancing data journalism and environmental reporting around the globe. These include videos, articles and documents describing how our tools can be used, first-hand experiences from data journalists we have worked with, media coverage of our work and the legal processes involved in combating environmental crimes.

VIDEOS

TIPS &
TOOLS

WEBINARS

LEARNING
JOURNEYCOMMUNITY
OF PRACTICE

TIPS & TOOLS



Tips and Tools for data journalists

Handy tips and tools for reporters interested in data journalism




#WildEye Southern Africa: Using the law to access data for combating wildlife crime

Legal experts from the Legal Resource Centre South Africa provide the basics for using the law in accessing wildlife crime data.

#WILDEYE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

- In March 2022, launched the Europe training and professional support programme
- Mentees from Southern and East Africa, and Asia, and a team of mentee data journalists from France, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom
- Data they collect will be published on the #WildEye Europe map and used as part of future investigations
- These projects have culminated in the creation of the [Oxpeckers Learning Kit](#): resources and learning material shared in the interests of advancing data journalism and environmental reporting around the globe

Q & A



DATA SOURCES

USING DATA-DRIVEN TECHNIQUES FOR STORYTELLING

- Centralised databases
- Courts
- Law enforcement
- NGOs
- #WildEye and our partners



STORY ANGLES

- Find a gap in reporting and seize it
- Use data to drive your story and not the other way round
- What are authorities doing to crack down?
- Are offenders part of criminal networks, smaller groups or individuals?
- How harsh or lenient are sentences?
- Are these repeat offenders or once-off criminals looking to make a quick buck?



MEANS OF PRESENTING YOUR STORY

- Consider your audience
- What platform/s are you pitching to?
- Data visualisations
- Always include photos
- Link to a dataset and sources
- Video and audio can be powerful

ENSURE YOUR STORY HAS **IMPACT**



- Outline goals upfront
- Constantly refer back to these
- Collaborate with NGOs
- Follow-up stories
- Different languages
- Different platforms

DATA MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS & VISUALISATION





WHY (GOOD) DATA

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- Gathering, cleaning, organizing, analyzing, visualizing and publishing data to support the creation of acts of journalism (Alex Howard, Tow Centre)
- Data in journalism:
 - Helps reporters tell complex stories
 - Find unique, under-reported stories
 - Less guessing, more facts
- Lack of proper management can lead to misinformation, inconsistencies, overwhelmed resources and reporters, and uninformed decision-making



WHAT CHALLENGES ARE WE FACING?

- Access to high quality data
- “Dirty” data
- Data literacy
- Data integration
- Tools of interrogation
- Safety and privacy
- Bureaucracy and political agendas

HOW TO ANALYSE DATA IN **EXCEL**



- Free and easily accessible
- Use dataset that already exists
- What story do you want to tell?
- Does this viz stand on its own?
- Is this viz easy to understand?



USEFUL MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Keep records of everything, save copies to a drive
- Maintain your data
- Visualise to analyse



Q & A

INTRODUCING TRACKING & MAPPING TECHNOLOGIES



#WILDEYE AND #MINEALERT

Mapping and tracking environmental crimes

#WILDEYE SOUTHERN AFRICA

A tool for mapping and tracking
wildlife crime



OXPECKERS
Investigating Environmental Corruption

See 01:22 – 03:29

WHAT DOES #WILDEYE DO?

- Maps populated with icons containing information about a seizure, arrest, court case or conviction
- Users can filter their experience by selecting a category or search using a keyword
- Alert system allows users to stay up to date



HOW CAN YOU USE **#WILDEYE?**

- Track specific data, patterns or trends
 - Where are law enforcement efforts concentrated
 - Do smugglers have a preference for certain routes?
 - Where and what are the links between continents?
 - How can you use #WildEye to track illicit financial flow?
 - Why do so few seizures result in convictions?
- Identify cases to find new stories, research and angles
- Share data with us

CASE STUDIES



DEEP TROUBLE & CHINA'S SNOW LEOPARD CRIMES

Andiswa Matikinca and Hsiuwen Liu



DEEP TROUBLE: RESEARCH SHOWS COAL IS STILL KING

- Data on planned new mines indicates the global coal mining industry might not be winding down any time soon
- Published in June 2021, following the 47th summit of the Group of Seven (G7) nations
- “We have committed to rapidly scale up technologies and policies that further accelerate the transition away from unabated coal capacity, consistent with our 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions and net zero commitments.”
- Despite efforts to do away with fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions caused by the burning of fossil fuels, coal production continues



CLIMATE CRISIS

- To limit global warming to 1.5°C, coal producers need to reduce their output from now until 2030
- Half all new mining plans and extensions
- If proposed projects proceed, could increase this limit by up to four times
- Transition to renewable energy is urgently needed



IS COAL REALLY ON ITS WAY OUT IN SOUTH AFRICA?

- South Africa has proposed 30 coal mines out of 432
- Over 60% would be for our coal power plants/stations
- Smaller operators and non-JSE companies taking over coal mines
- Large coal mine producers leaving local coal industry
- Will their successors comply with environmental, social and governance requirements?
- New coal projects in exploration, feasibility study and/or construction phase
- Coal reserves will continue to be dug up



**In the tracks of Asia's
snow leopard traffickers**

**IN THE TRACKS OF ASIA'S SNOW
LEOPARD TRAFFICKERS**



CHINA'S SNOW LEOPARD CRIMES

- Part of a cross-border investigation with journalists from South and East Asia
- As few as 3,920 to 6,390 snow leopards left in the wild
- China is home to the world's largest snow leopard population
- 60% of the world's snow leopards live on the high mountains in China
- Biggest market of illegal snow leopard trade



CROSS-BORDER TRADE

- At least 354 snow leopards were poached and traded in China in the past two decades
- Despite an overall decline, organised illegal trade continues to this day
- Trade expands across the country, down to Tibet and then across the border to Nepal
- In order to achieve conservation goals, have to work collaboratively across countries

Q & A

A BRIEF OVERVIEW



FUTURE OXPECKERS WORK



UPCOMING

- Regular updates to all our maps and tools
- Keeping an eye on financial flows, such as [this new toolkit](#) that tracks financial flows in the illegal wildlife trade
- #WildEye Europe Training and Professional Support Programme: training data journalists from France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and United Kingdom
- Training data journalists in East Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda)
- Launching #WildEye East Africa, alongside several data-driven investigations
- Investigating illegal timber trade in Europe
- Investigating wildlife crimes in the Congos

THANK YOU

OXPECKERS

oxpeckers.org

In conjunction with **ROTH COMMUNICATIONS**

www.rothcommunications.co.za