

THE S.N.A.R.E ART PROGRAM

Harmonising Nature and Art

Cicero said, "Art is born of the observation of nature." This is certainly true of the S.N.A.R.E Art Programme that was started by brothers Kailen and Navelan Padayachee. The programme forms part of the S.N.A.R.E Initiative that was launched in January 2015, by the ecologists' KaiNav Conservation Foundation. The twin brothers started the Foundation in 2011, because of their passion for wildlife, biodiversity conservation, and research. As ecologists, their aim is to make a lasting and meaningful difference in this world.

Sadly, Navelan, whose experience lay in estuarine and mangrove fish ecology, marine fish husbandry and capture, and environmental education, passed away earlier in the year, but Kailen, who is also experienced in marine fish husbandry and capture, and who also includes raptor ecology in his list of passions, is determined to continue to grow the vision they had for the Foundation. "This form of poaching is very unselective and results in a wide variety of species being killed. Snare poaching is often also very wasteful, with poachers placing many traps and snares in the bush and forgetting about them, therefore resulting in animals dying in these snares in vain. I feel that it is my duty to bring attention to snare poaching in order to end the unnecessary suffering our wildlife endure, thus promoting holistic biodiversity conservation and steering away from single species conservation," he says.

Another reason the Foundation was established was to promote environmental science and research as a fulfilling career path to young generations throughout Africa, while providing practical field experience in the conservation of our unique natural heritage and sustainable utilisation of natural resources.

THE S.N.A.R.E INITIATIVE

A snare is a trap, which usually forms a noose, and is used to catch a wide array of animals ranging from birds and small mammals, to large cats and even rhino. They can be made from simple wire, tension cables, and even bicycle brake wire, and are therefore relatively cheap to make and easily accessible. They

are widely used throughout Asia and Africa, and are used by both subsistence and commercial poachers.

Snares are not selective and therefore animals are often unintentionally captured. Many rural children are exposed to poaching on a daily basis through either one or both parents, family members or even school friends. By educating children on the effects of poaching from a young age, they hope to prevent future instances of poaching. The education and awareness portion of this initiative aims to help South Africans, in both rural and developed communities, develop the necessary awareness and skills to take responsible steps towards preventing and stopping the poaching of South Africa's natural resources.

The S.N.A.R.E initiative focuses on the location and removal of snares and other equipment used to illegally harvest wildlife and flora from natural areas. By actively and regularly removing snares and other equipment, the initiative intends to make the practice of poaching, unsustainable and uneconomical for the individuals participating in this activity. Data regarding location and characteristics of snare placement is also collected and used in on-going studies and monitoring of poaching activities throughout South Africa. S.N.A.R.E is an initiative meant to not only address poaching in the field, but also forms a means to generate information and to inform decision making in the fight against the illegal harvesting of wildlife and plants.

THE INITIATIVES OBJECTIVES INCLUDE:

Working with local authorities, community members and partnering organisations to identify areas affected by poaching.

Training volunteers on how to locate, recognise and safely neutralise snares and other traps used by poachers.

Educating the general public surrounding natural areas on the impact and extent of the illegal harvesting of wildlife and plants.





Releasing any animals found in snares or traps, as well as to treat any injuries inflicted by the snare or trap.

Recording GPS coordinates of each snare, as well as the basic information on the materials used to build it, the area it was found in, and any possible animals that may have been found in the snare. This information will be added to a national database in the attempt to identify poaching hotspots and assist in current research projects.

Conducting regular anti-snare operations through areas identified to be affected by poaching and locate, remove and destroy snares and other poaching equipment.

Using the data gathered to conduct ongoing monitoring of poaching in different areas of South Africa.

Using the data gathered to improve current management efforts and guide future management decisions in the area.

Since its implementation in January 2015, the The KaiNav Conservation Foundation's S.N.A.R.E (Snare Neutralization, Awareness and Removal Effort) team, has successfully located and removed hundreds of snares from the natural areas of the Tswaing Nature Reserve, Diepsloot Nature Reserve, the Magaliesberg and Rhenosterspruit Conservation Areas. Some of these are now used in education programmes, and to train volunteers on how to identify and safely remove poaching equipment from the bush.

It was through looking for a unique and dynamic method of disposing of the material in a sustainable, responsible and environmentally friendly way that the SNARE Art™ Programme was born.

S.N.A.R.E ART PROGRAMME

The S.N.A.R.E Art Programme uses snares and other poaching equipment removed from natural areas to create inspirational pieces of art. This programme aims to uplift local artists by assisting them to build sustainable businesses. Snares and traps not being used for education purposes are collected and given to local underprivileged artists, contracted by KaiNav Conservation Foundation. These artists then create beautiful and inspiring art from what was originally designed to maim and kill. These art pieces are in turn sold by the foundation in order to raise funds needed to support the ongoing anti-snare patrols conducted during the S.N.A.R.E Initiative. The Foundation is in essence fighting the illegal bush meat trade with art.

By contracting local artists, the foundation aims to promote entrepreneurship and small business development as an

alternative to poaching and the illegal trade of bush meat. S.N.A.R.E Art pieces include wire art sculptures of African animals, and functional art pieces such as rustic African taxi mp3 player docking stations, animal bust bedside lamps and S.N.A.R.E Art animal key chains. Each piece is completely recycled, from the snares used in the art pieces to the wooden bases on which the pieces are mounted (S.N.A.R.E. Art mounted collection).

The wooden bases are created from exotic, invasive plant species removed from natural areas of South Africa. Each mounted piece has its own unique identification number and is accompanied with a certificate of authenticity which is attached beneath the wooden base).

The concept of creating awareness of conservation through art is a novel one and to see snares which were meant to harm and ultimately kill animals, turned into a beautiful piece of art is inspirational. Kailen shares that the artworks have received much attention locally and abroad from tourists and corporates looking for meaningful gifts. There is even interest from Nashville Zoo in Tennessee and Sea World in Orlando, Florida.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Kailen explains that as a registered non-profit, donations are always welcomed. However they do strive to operate as a self-sustaining social enterprise so they welcome people to join them on their S.N.A.R.E. expeditions and purchase our S.N.A.R.E. Art pieces. "We are also looking for areas to expand S.N.A.R.E. too, so we encourage landowners experiencing snare poaching to contact us so we can arrange expeditions on their land. We are also looking for people with experience in mobile app development and software programming to volunteer their time in helping us with our snare database."

The initiative is being supported by a number of local companies, including One Travel, a travel management company who is passionate about social, and environmental initiatives in South Africa. Through their "Snare Tours" or walks One Travel provide their clients with not only a tremendous experience of guided tours through the South African bushveld hunting for snares and traps, but with the added value of an educational and social experience too. All snares found on these tours are documented and captured into a database, and then given to local artists who then create masterpieces from them, something their clients can then purchase as a lasting memento of their meaningful, socially conscious vacation. ■

To learn more about these initiatives visit www.kainavconservation.org