



Main Trainer on Team Management

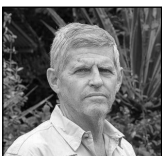
Jorge Gibbons



Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Jorge is a biologist who has spent the last two decades training business and nonprofit organizations in the fields of leadership development, conflict management and team effectiveness. Curious and passionate about human behaviour and performance, Jorge has designed and facilitated numerous training projects involving participants at all levels, from senior global leaders to frontline supervisors. As a practitioner of experiential education, his philosophy is that “one cannot think his way into changed behaviour,” but rather one has to “act his way into changed behaviour.” His recent clients include Thomsom Reuters, ExxonMobil, Roche, Biogen, Deutsche Bank, Imerys, Ernst & Young, and Salesforce. Jorge played a key role in a long-term training program to improve the performance of Rewilding Argentina.

Speakers & Mentors

Luis Arranz



Luis Arranz was born in Tenerife, Spain in 1956. He studied biology in the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and in 1980 he started to work in Equatorial Guinea, first doing tree census and then for the Project Men and Nature funded by the Spanish cooperation to create a network of protected areas in the country. Between 1986 and 1990 worked in South America, redacting the management plan for Huanchaca National Park (now Noel Kempf Mercado NP) in Bolivia and looking for places to create protected areas in Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela.

In 1991 returned to Africa working in Quissama NP in Angola one year and then 9 years as director of Monte Alén NP in Equatorial Guinea, 7 years as director of Zakouma NP in Chad, 7 years as director of Garamba NP in DRC, and 3 months as interim director in Odzala Kokoua NP in Congo Republic. Since January 2017 he works for WWF as director of Dzanga Sangha Protected Areas in the Central African Republic. Since October 2022, he is also director of Salonga NP in DRC, a Park with 34.000 square kilometers, in the Congo Basin. As result of his work, Luis has an extensive experience in the management of conservation teams and relationships with authorities and stakeholders in some of the most challenging parks in Africa.

Luis Ortiz-Catedral



Luis is a conservation biologist and wildlife manager specialising on recovering populations of threatened island vertebrates. Originally from Mexico, he completed his postgraduate studies in New Zealand focusing on translocation techniques for Kākāriki (parakeets). Luis is the Regional Director of the Oceania Conservation Program of the World Parrot Trust. He is also a scientific advisor to the Galapagos National Park.

With 17 years of experience a conservationist and wildlife manager in five countries, Luis has managed teams in a variety of socio-cultural, linguistic and economic contexts to improve the conservation trajectory of 25 species of threatened island vertebrates. Luis is responsible for establishing and developing stakeholder relationships and engagement in Oceania to advance the conservation of parrots in the region. Working with indigenous and grassroots conservation organisations as well as government departments, the private sector and universities, Luis facilitates the exchange of information and the development of conservation grants in a variety of contexts; these range from empowering indigenous peoples to become agents of parrot conservation, to implementing best-practice protocols to monitor populations of threatened species. Luis is part of two major flagship projects.

The Kea conservation project, aims at reducing human-kea conflict in the South Island of New Zealand through a partnership collective of 25 people working for the Department of Conservation and the Kea Conservation Trust. Luis acts as the point of contact between frontline conservationists and the private sector, to secure financial support and engagement, as well as long-term sustainability and conservation impact. As coordinator of the Pink Iguana Project in the Galapagos Islands, Luis mentors teams of 12 Galapagos-born park rangers to monitor the elusive Pink Iguana using trail cameras. Due to the geographic isolation of the Galapagos Islands, distance mentorship requires effective communication via short phone calls or WhatsApp audio-messages. This project requires an understanding of field data outside the traditional academic interpretation, empowering park rangers to lead expeditions and data interpretation, rather than simply collecting data for third parties. In the first six months of mentoring (plus common sense and some basic maps), park rangers have located the nesting grounds, juveniles and new foraging grounds of one of the most elusive iguana species, in a hostile volcanic environment. Prior to this mentorship, the nesting grounds of the Pink Iguana have been searched for unsuccessfully for nearly 20 years.

Astrid Vargas



Astrid brings thirty-five years of experience in biodiversity conservation, community engagement, ecosystem restoration, and Art 4 Action. Her work has made a positive impact on nature restoration initiatives across Europe, North America, South America, and Madagascar. Astrid is a wildlife veterinarian with a Ph.D. in Conservation Biology. She has built and led teams across three continents and spanning multiple countries. Her teams have delivered results through managing the complex, cross-disciplinary relationships between conservation science and research, technical practicalities, local communities and businesses, NGOs and international organisations, as well as local and international political imperatives. Her management style focuses on empowering team members to lead from their personal passions. She is skilled at facilitation strategies to foster strategic vision and find ways forward across the varied interests of different stakeholders. She also mentors young entrepreneurs working on regeneration, supporting them with planning and strategic vision.

Astrid has coordinated International Conservation Action Plans for the recovery of two critically endangered species - the Iberian Lynx in Spain and the black-footed ferret in North America. This involved managing technical teams at the main breeding centres, coordinating efforts among 11 breeding facilities, and implementing National Recovery Plans in the USA, Canada, Spain and Portugal. In Madagascar she helped establish a new protected area in the North of the country. In collaboration with Commonland and local community members, Astrid was key in establishing the ALVELAL initiative — a large scale landscape and community restoration program in Southern Spain. Presently, ALVELAL is considered a beacon initiative in landscape restoration.

Pedro Estêvão Muagura



Pedro studied at the Chimoio Institute of Agriculture in Mozambique with a specialization in Forestry, and later obtained a bachelor's degree at the International Faculty of Forest and Timber Technology in Finland. His second bachelor's degree was done at the College of African Wildlife Management (CAWM) in Tanzania. Pedro was a teacher of Forests and Wildlife at the Chimoio Institute of Agriculture until 2010. He went to Gorongosa National Park for the first time in 1990 to teach students from I.A.C. about classification and identification of mammals and plants. He joined Gorongosa National Park in 2006, when he was asked to be an instructor to help train workers as part of the reforestation program on Mount Gorongosa. In 2012, he was appointed Director of Conservation for Gorongosa National Park, becoming the main governmental representative of one of Africa's most successful private-public partnerships for conservation. During all these years Pedro has been in charge of managing relations between the park authorities of Mozambique and an ambitious project funded by an American philanthropist, coordinating a large team in charge of law enforcement, ecological monitoring, rewilding, and local development, strengthening relationships with neighbouring communities and promoting cooperation among the departments.

Hugo van der Westhuizen



Hugo is the Director for the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust (GCT), an innovative Co-Management partnership between the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS). GCT was created in 2017 on the back of FZS's technical and financial support project to Gonarezhou, that Hugo was involved in since its inception in 2007. Hugo has 30 years of professional experience on the ground in the field of biodiversity conservation, with emphasis on protected area management. Nine of these years were spent as project manager for FZS in Zambia's North Luangwa Conservation Program – a multi-disciplinary project in partnership with the then Zambia Wildlife Authority, which achieved the successful re-establishment of the only viable black rhino population in the country. He has a private pilot's licence with over 5000 hours, mostly accrued during flights in support of park management operations and aerial surveys. His time with FZS was preceded by working for the South African National Parks as a section ranger in the then newly developing Marakele National Park and as a volunteer in Liwonde National Park in Malawi. He has an MSc in Conservation Biology from the Durrell Institute of Conservation Biology at the University of Kent in the UK. In 2012 he was awarded the Bruno H. Schubert prize for outstanding engagement in conservation and park protection in Africa.

Liana Joseph



Liana Joseph is the National Science Manager with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). She works closely with AWC's Chief Science Officer to provide national oversight to AWC's major science programs. She directly manages the National Science Team (11 scientists) and manages projects that provide guidance to AWC's Science Team (~80 scientists) and Land Management Team (~90 land managers) based across the 30 properties that AWC manage for conservation. The National Science Team coordinates national programs (e.g., Endangered Mammal Reintroductions, and Ecohealth Long-term Ecological Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting), and guides land management through the coordination of science-informed land management strategies (e.g., Weed Strategies).

Liana has worked on conservation projects across various sectors and continents. Her first role in conservation was as a Research Coordinator with Frontier International, where she conducted biodiversity surveys on conservation reserves in Tanzania and Uganda. She then earned a Ph.D. from the University of Queensland, where she focused on finding cost-effective ways to conserve threatened species in New Zealand. She later served as an Endeavour Post-doctoral Fellow at the Ashoka Trust for Ecology and Environment in India and a David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellow at the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York, contributing to projects in China and Vietnam. Returning home to Australia, Liana worked for the Queensland Government, leading the Threatened Species Partnership's team within the Threatened Species Unit before starting her role with AWC.

Simon Naylor



Simon has been involved in the management of nature reserves and endangered species for more than 15 years. His main experience comes from managing Phinda Private Game Reserve with &Beyond in South Africa. Phinda represents one of the boldest rewilding programs globally, where a whole landscape was restored from agricultural lands, including all its main large predators and herbivores. As reserve manager, Simon had to coordinate a large anti-poaching team, implement active management and monitoring of the two rhino species, elephants, cheetahs and lions, manage relationships with neighbouring Zulu communities, and collaborate with the managers of high-end ecotourism lodges placed within the property. This requires an ability to promote ecological, social and economic outcomes in one of South Africa's most prestigious private reserves. He's also been involved in the planning and actual translocation of 100 rhinos to Botswana, 5 lions to Rwanda from South Africa, and 30 rhinos to Rwanda from South Africa. Presently, he works as Operations Manager for Conserve.

Christof Schenck

Executive Director of the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS)



Christof's involvement with FZS began in 1990 as a project manager in Peru's Manú National Park. For research purposes, he lived in the rainforest for several years with his wife Dr. Elke Staib and completed his doctorate on the endangered giant otters. After his doctorate, he became a research associate for FZS in Frankfurt am Main. Later, in 2000 he took over the management of the organization. Christof is convinced that successful conservation cannot happen from a desk. As such, he regularly visits FZS project countries to exchange ideas with international teams and to learn about the developments on the ground. As a biodiversity conservation expert, he developed FZS into an internationally respected conservation organization. Additionally, he significantly increased its international network and professionalized its conservation program. Dr. Schenck also represents FZS in scientific discussions, public events, and the media. As a biologist and conservationist, he is, in his own words, "by nature, an optimist".

Charles Wells

Chief Operating Officer for African Parks



Charles has a MSc in Environmental Biotechnology from Rhodes University and has also completed the Harvard Business School GMP. He has over 20 years work experience, mainly in the mining sector, where his roles included Head of Sustainability for Randgold Resources before moving into operations and taking on the General Manager position at the Kibali Gold Mine in north east DRC and subsequently GM East and Central Africa for Barrick Gold.

Ignacio Jiménez

Course Coordinator and Main Trainer



Ignacio is a Spanish biologist with three decades of experience in conservation. He worked with manatees in Central America, golden-crowned sifakas in Madagascar, and protected areas in El Salvador, Brazil and Uruguay. He also carried out a national assessment of the Spanish experience in endangered species recovery. Between 2005 and 2015 he designed and coordinated the largest reintroduction program in the Americas, with species as the giant anteater, pampas deer, tapir, peccary, green-winged macaw, and jaguar. He spent one year in South Africa in order to learn about how conservation organizations manage and integrate nature reserves, rewilding and ecotourism. Ignacio has designed and coordinated more than 20 training courses on applied and interdisciplinary aspects of biodiversity conservation in 8 countries. He is written and codirected the 27 minutes "Rewilding Iberá" documentary, and directed and/or written more than 30 short videos in Argentina, Brazil and Spain. He's also given a TEDex talk and lectures at several universities, including Yale and Duke. His research and conservation efforts have been featured in dozens of scientific journals, books and other publications. In 2022 he organized and coordinated the First Global Meeting for Translocation Practitioners. Ignacio is the main author of "Effective Conservation: parks, rewilding and local development", a conservation manual that has been published in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Presently, Ignacio works to establish new protected areas and manages a national communication campaign to promote natural reserves in Spain.

