**Response to Reviewers**

We would like to thank the editors and reviewers for their feedback and time taken to review this manuscript, and would like to thank Reviewer 2 for their extensive engagement with the paper and the critical and constructive feedback provided. Reviewer 2 and the editors bring up some important issues that upon revision we also felt needed to be strengthened to improve the quality of the paper. We have undertaken some smaller and some more substantial revisions with the feedback in mind and hope they improved the manuscript. Most importantly, we agree with Reviewer 2 that some insight into the motivations of scouts and communities to support them and how this articulate with the programme is needed. We have re-oriented and re-organized the paper with this as a more explicit organizing principle that weaves through the paper. In addition, we have strengthened our arguments and presentation of results by more clearly organizing them and by drawing more explicitly on excerpts from interviews and focus groups to support and substantiate our points.

The amended word limit facilitated being able to address many of the reviewer’s questions, especially those related to providing more empirical detail. We agree that providing much more empirical detail and background is important, and we have tried to augment it in certain areas (as elaborated below). We also have a much more explicit use focus group and interview excerpts. However, we feel that expanding more on the empirical detail, beyond what we have done may take away valuable space needed for analysis and our main contributions.

With regards to the map. We are currently awaiting the final development of the map but felt it important to submit these revisions to ensure we do not delay the process. We look forward to providing a map when it is available.

Below please find some more detailed responses to some of Reviewer 2’s comments. They are in blue for ease of readability. Thank you again for the valuable feedback and engagement with the manuscript. We very much look forward to hearing back from you. Please find the re-vised manuscript starting on page 6.

REVIEW 2:

The authors are correct that insufficient attention has been paid to the
role that communities could and should play in preventing the illegal or
illegitimate taking of wildlife.

Unfortunately this paper as currently written does not advance our
understanding of what would motivate communities to support anti-poaching
efforts and what the impact of that support would likely be on poaching.

The reviewers are likely correct here and we appreciate this feedback. As mentioned above, we have integrated some analysis of the motivations for community scouts and for community members to support them (and anti-poaching more broadly) as it does connect to the challenges we outline in the article. More specifically, we put the lack of ownership over wildlife and viable conservation-related benefits centrally into our argument and connect it to the challenges of community-based anti-poaching and why a co-opting of community scouts into an existing anti-poaching force is problematic, and even more so when communities do not have ownership of wildlife as a benefit. We thus strengthen the argument that for community scouts to be successful and have the support of community members, they must protect not the wildlife of a private reserve, but wildlife that they themselves own or at least benefit from.

The authors acknowledge that only when communities have the rights to
benefit from and manage wildlife will they be motivated to support
anti-poaching activities. As Chris Weaver from WWF-Namibia sagely comments
“…when communities perceive poaching to be stealing from them, they will
even inform on their community members, and take considerable risks to
inform on, and even confront, outsiders.” And though the authors note that
the MCSP was initially designed to devolve rights and responsibilities to
local communities they merely noted that the project had shifted focus from
the original intent.

We have added some nuance to this point stressing that the project itself has not shifted intentions, but because combatting poaching is the priority of the reserve, the scouts were more or less co-opted by the existing anti-poaching unit shifting their duties to largely one of protecting the reserve’s rhinos. We point this out as problematic especially given that the decision-making, use, and ownership of wildlife has not changed to benefit communities. We draw on interview and focus group excerpts to support these points and that pointed out by Reviewer 2 and Chris Weaver above.

Given this, the paper focuses only on the impact of hiring 21 community
scouts to patrol outside the SGP fence. Yet we are never informed how scouts
were chosen. Did they represent all 5 Mangalane communities? Were they from
the poorest or wealthiest households? Unfortunately the authors tell us
nothing about the scouts. Other than “several used to be rhino
poachers.” We also never learn how if “the salary itself cannot compete
with the money from rhino poaching” what motivates ex-poachers to become
scouts.

We have added some empirical detail to fill out some these questions, especially in the section 3 and 4. However, given the very short word limit of the article it is not possible to address each of these points in full and we do not feel that it is the best use of limited space. With that said, these points have been noted and we are looking to develop another article looking more at the process of developing a community scout programme. We have addressed the question of motivation as described above.

The authors’ report that the “research involved extensive participation
observation over six months at SGP and the Mangalane area, interviews with
APU and SGP personnel, local leaders and law enforcement, and focus groups
with community scouts” yet no results are ever presented. The reader is never told what they learned from all these interviews, focus groups, and
direct observation.

We appreciate this comment as a need to better organize our results. Although the results are perhaps not organized in a formal results section as per a hard science paper, we have re-organized how we present them by re-structuring sections 3, 4, and 5 to be more streamlined and clearly presenting our results. The presentation of results is also facilitated and supported with a more substantial use of material from interviews, focus groups and observation. While we could possibly have provided more empirical detail, we feel that this comment is slightly unfair as we do present results throughout the paper.

We have tried to be more explicit about where our conclusions come from by pointing to interviews and observation.

 How often to scouts go on patrol each month? How much of
the border fence do they police?

As above, we have added some of this empirical detail in the manuscript and agree that more empirical detail is needed, especially in sections 3 and 4. While ideally we would like to provide all of these details and expand on them, we again refer to the space constraints and feel it may not be the best use of the limited space available as would take away from the analytical and argument portions of the article. Such empirical details, however, are likely to form part of future work that looks at the programme from a different angle.

How many encounters did scouts have with poachers during the 6 months of data collection?

Because of the sensitive nature of the study area, this is a difficult question to answer. Moreover, as there are 4 separate groups of scouts operating at different times in different places, it was not possible to observe them all of the time. To get this information would require getting the data from anti-poaching management, and again, given the sensitive nature of this work, we are not able to do this.

The reader is never told the answer to any of these questions.

Contrary to the authors’ premise for effective community anti-poaching
efforts the community scouts are not protecting their wildlife, but the
wildlife of a private trophy hunting and visual tourism concession – the
Sabie Game Park owned by MacDonald Safaris, and are effectively supporting
the SGP APU (anti-poaching unit?) by policing the border fence and providing
intelligence on poachers.

This is correct and we thank the reviewer for explicitly pointing this out. This is one of the main points we wanted to highlight. We have made changes to better and more explicitly communicate this point in several areas throughout the paper and have indeed brought it more centrally into our argument.

The authors note that “…scouts have been credited with eliminating
cattle theft in the Mangalane area, a development that provides them with
much support in their communities.” And say that “whether the MCSP has
contributed to a net decrease in poaching is difficult to quantify.”

It was interesting that the authors’ could not attribute a decline in
poaching to the MCSP, but could credit them with halting cattle theft. This
suggests that the scouts are using their time to benefit their communities
rather than the SGP.

This is an interesting observation, although perhaps we did not communicate it effectively. We have revised to more accurately convey the importance of non anti-poaching duties of community scouts and why they matter, despite attention being taken away from them. With regards to cattle theft, there are no other interventions aimed at reducing cattle theft, and it was a common answer in interviews, focus groups and informal conversations to credit scouts with this. Regarding poaching, as we explain in the article, there are numerous anti-poaching interventions and actors in the area that overlap but that also do their own thing, so it is not possible to assess whether one intervention can be credited with the decrease in poaching. This is why we chose not to base the article on the quantitative effectiveness on reducing poaching. We feel it would be disingenuous to make a hard claim on effectiveness one way or the other given the multitude of anti-poaching and law enforcement interventions in the area and across different scales.

As per the last point, we have clarified how the scouts are helping SGP via anti-poaching activities, but also how they help communities in other ways and why this is important. Indeed, we clarify how anti-poaching work was only meant to be one aspect of their work, but this has largely shifted so that it is their primary duty, and explain why.

A map showing the SGP and its border fence as well as the location of the 5
Mangalane villages, and the territory they have traditional resource access
and use claims over would have been very useful.

The authors’ argue for “inclusive anti-poaching” where communities
have ownership rights over wildlife yet never indicate whether this would be
wildlife on communities lands or co-ownership rights to wildlife in the SGP.
The conclusion plead for a bottom-up, rights-based approach but never
specify how this might actually be manifested in the Mangalane context.

The reviewer is correct on this point. We have added information to describe the existing frameworks through which communities benefit from the reserve and wildlife e.g. 20% of license fees on page 6. We have also adjusted the language in the article to more explicitly speak to the point that ownership or not, what is needed is for communities to benefit from the wildlife that they are putatively tasked with protecting, and that anti-poaching must not only benefit a private reserve, and outline ways of doing this in line with the original intentions of the MCSP.

If the authors’ presented, in an organized fashion, what they learned
during their 6 months of research then this paper could make an interesting
contribution.

We must thank Reviewer 2 for the substantial engagement with the paper and getting us to re-think the organization of the paper and results along the lines outlined above.