



for
the
rhino

YOUR CONSERVATION IMPACT

Ensuring an
encore for the
singing rhino

14

IMPROVING
OUR DOGS'
TRACKING SKILLS

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Why
Team ZimZam
runs the London
Marathon

Protecting rhinos
with our community

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Fulfilling the
rhino dream



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Introducing...the C-word



When I was a kid, I loved Sesame Street. I was particularly fond of the Cookie Monster, and used to sing along with "C is for cookie, that's good enough for me" (if in a rather higher voice). These days, the first C-word that springs to mind is Covid-19.

Cathy Dean | CEO

People often say, "There's no time like the present." Right now, that couldn't feel truer. As I write this, I'm sitting at my desk in Save the Rhino's office in London, grateful for the small dose of normality in these strange times. But for now, it's just the rhino costumes keeping me company.

2020 has certainly been a rollercoaster year. In February, we celebrated as rhino poaching statistics continued to decline, and in March, we were stunned by your continued generosity as we reached a new record for our grants. Thanks to you, last year, we sent out just shy of £2.5m in grants with another £1.25m ready to award to our programme partners to support their work.

At the same time, we were beginning to hear from our field partners about the initial impacts of the coronavirus. Many rhino conservancies in Africa were struggling in a way they never had before. There had never been such a sudden and total drop in tourism. To make things more difficult, no one knew when visitors might return: they had to plan for an unknown future, with fewer resources. In Asia, it wasn't tourism, but staff travel restrictions that brought challenges: much-needed veterinary training was put on hold and vital search and rescue missions for Sumatran rhinos were delayed. But in all areas, there was one constant: rangers had to keep going.

Some rangers had already been on duty for six weeks and had to remain on duty when lockdown hit. Many had to stay on-site 24/7, not able to visit their partners or children; others had to accept pay cuts to help keep conservancies afloat. Every day rangers continued to patrol, monitor and protect rhinos and other endangered wildlife. There's no doubt that their dedication kept rhinos safe.

Below: Rangers in Namibia have been working tirelessly to protect rhinos throughout Covid-19.

Find out more on page 20.



Save the Rhino International is a UK-registered charity which raises funds and awareness for the world's five rhino species. We work with global project partners to support 17 long-term rhino conservation programmes in Africa and Asia.

Upcoming events for your diary

Sunday 28 February 2021
Wednesday 3 March 2021
Sunday 11 April 2021
Saturday 31 July 2021
September 2021
Sunday 12 September 2021
Wednesday 22 September 2021
Sunday 3 October 2021

The Vitality Big Half, UK
World Wildlife Day, global
Royal Parks Half, UK
World Ranger Day, global
ForRangers Ultra, Kenya
Great North Run, UK
World Rhino Day, global
London Marathon, UK

For more information about any of these events, please visit www.savetherhino.org/events or email events@savetherhino.org or call +44 (0)20 7357 7474.

Cathy Dean



Rhinos and
the **IUCN**
Red List

Black rhino
Diceros bicornis

In-situ population* 5,366–5,627

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Northern white rhino
Ceratotherium simum cottoni
Population 2 (in Kenya, introduced)

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Southern white rhino
Ceratotherium simum simum
In-situ population* 17,212–18,915

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Near Threatened Is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future

<NT>

Javan rhino
Rhinoceros sondaicus
In-situ population* 74

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

Greater one-horned rhino
Rhinoceros unicornis
In-situ population* 3,588

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Vulnerable Considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild

<NT>

Sumatran rhino
Dicerorhinus sumatrensis
In-situ population <80

IUCN RED LIST CLASSIFICATION
Critically Endangered Considered to be facing an **extremely high risk** of extinction in the wild

<CR>

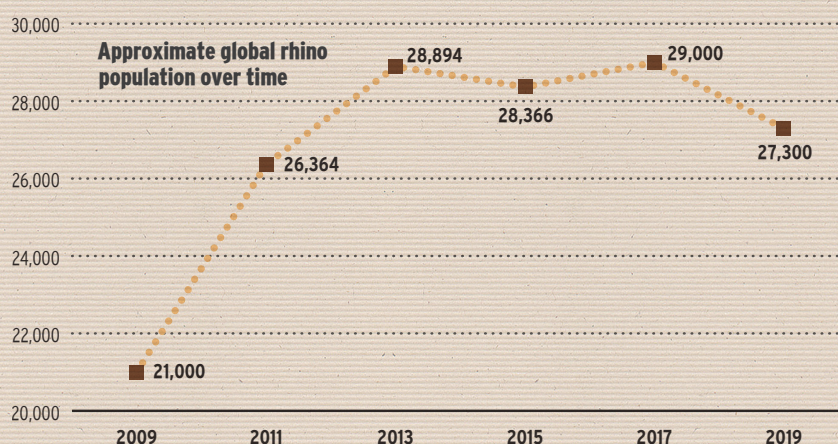
Rhino conservation: Where we're at

Every 12 hours, a rhino is poached. It's a statistic that's still too high. But this is a huge step forward from just five years ago, when rhino fatalities were much higher: in 2015, on average, a rhino was killed for its horn every six hours.

We're hopeful that this decline in the poaching rate will continue but, of course, we still need huge efforts to protect remaining populations and secure habitats for new breeding groups of the rarest species. Black, Javan and Sumatran rhinos continue to be listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN, and while their populations are slowly increasing, numbers remain dangerously low.

During the past decade, the worldwide rhino population has increased by 30%, from approximately 21,000 in 2009 to more than 27,700 in 2019. Despite this, the global population has recently dropped by 6%: more rhinos have died since 2017 than have been born, a trend that we, together with other conservation organisations, are trying to reverse.

The global decline adds more intense pressure at an extremely difficult time, as reserves and conservancies struggle with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. We're hopeful that we have the tools we need to increase the number of rhinos in the world, but we know that there's no room for error: the margins are small and the risks are simply too high.



RHINOS: the global context

Rhino conservation takes place in the wider context of a global struggle to protect wild places and species. The poaching that threatens rhinos also threatens other species: tigers, like rhinos, are highly prized in Asian markets; around 50 African elephants and 300 pangolins are poached every day; to name but a few.

Stopping illegal wildlife markets is a top conservation priority.

Meanwhile human encroachment into wild habitats, primarily for food, continues apace. 75% of the Earth's land surface is now substantially degraded, affecting not only rhinos and myriad other species, but also the wellbeing of over three billion people.



Such encroachment also leads to outbreaks of zoonotic diseases such as Covid-19. And behind all this, climate change is reaching dangerous levels. There is much hope, not least from the many wonderful people working for conservation and sustainability, but radical change is needed, and the next ten years will be critical.

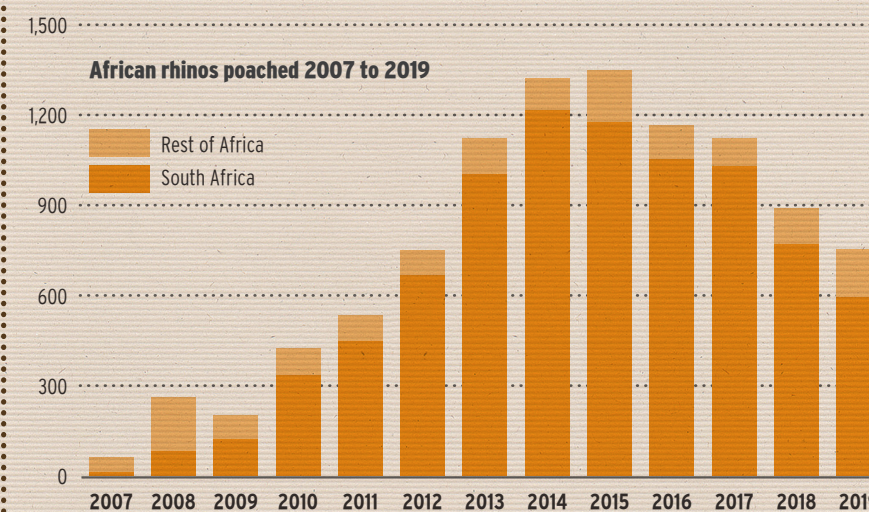
African rhinos

When the current poaching crisis began in 2008, Zimbabwe was hardest hit: more than 60% of the rhinos poached that year were killed in the country.

Since then, South Africa has continued to suffer more than anywhere else, losing almost 9,000 rhinos in the past decade;

a frightening, but perhaps not surprising, statistic, given that the country is home to three-quarters of Africa's rhinos.

Thankfully, in 2019 we saw South Africa's poaching numbers fall below 1,000 for the second year in a row, dropping to 594. There's no doubt that extensive efforts by rangers and law enforcement teams have played a significant role in driving these numbers down. However, the impact of



such intense poaching since 2008 is taking its toll on rhino populations: there are fewer rhinos left to poach in the first place.

As rangers improve their effectiveness in certain areas, poaching syndicates are being pushed into countries that have not yet built their anti-poaching capacity. In Botswana, a country that has been recently targeted by poaching gangs, the Government has – belatedly some might argue – implemented a national dehorning strategy, in the hope of deterring poachers.

So far in 2020, reports indicate that fewer rhinos have suffered at the fate of poachers, likely thanks to improved tactics by anti-poaching units and enforcement authorities, and the impact of movement restrictions due to Covid-19. But, as much as we'd wish to, we cannot predict the future.

There are major concerns that poaching groups have used the 'quiet' time to ramp up recruitment and strategize for coming months. Combining this with the sudden and catastrophic loss of income that many reserves have suffered due to the overnight drop in tourism, 2021 will bring huge challenges for rhinos – and the people that protect them – across Africa.

Asian rhinos

Unlike their African cousins, Javan, Sumatran and Greater one-horned rhinos haven't experienced the same levels of poaching during recent years, though it remains a significant threat.

The greatest risk to all three species is a lack of suitable, secure habitat, reducing the ability to increase populations' sizes. Thankfully, efforts to increase available space and protect the remaining forest seems to be having an impact for Javan rhinos, as four new calves were spotted by camera traps in late 2019 and two more in 2020, bringing the total population above 70 – an incredible achievement considering that there were fewer than 30 in the 1970s.

This positive news highlights just how important the next step is: securing a suitable second habitat. For now, all 74 Javan rhinos continue to live in just one place, Ujung Kulon National Park, putting the entire species in extreme danger from a disease outbreak or natural disaster.

Unfortunately, there have been no sightings of new Sumatran rhino calves during the past 12 months, but there is increased momentum to ensure a future for the species via the Sumatran Rhino Rescue

Project. Rhino Protection Units continue to patrol throughout Indonesian rainforests, recording all rhino signs, with the hope of rescuing isolated rhinos and bringing them together with others to mate successfully.

While the situation is somewhat different given their total population sits above 3,500, the importance of good habitat cannot be forgotten for Greater one-horned rhinos. The species continues to steadily increase,

but a number of natural deaths in a key area (Chitwan National Park, Nepal) and a spike in poaching incidents in another (Kaziranga National Park, India), brings cause for concern.

Moving rhinos into suitable locations is a crucial next step, as well as reducing human encroachment around current habitats, and stopping poaching attempts before they take hold.



*In the countries in which they naturally occur.

Your CONSERVATION impact

In the past 12 months, despite all of the challenges, there have still been some incredible achievements. Your support, whether you've donated, you're a member, or perhaps you've taken on a fundraising challenge, has made a real difference for our partners across the world.

Here are a few examples of what you've helped to achieve.



SHAUN MOUSLEY

Kenya

More habitat for Kenya's rhinos

Kenya is a stronghold for the Eastern black rhino subspecies, home to around 75% of the total population (approximately 1,000 are left in total). It's vital that we work to increase the number of this subspecies, but this can only happen if there is enough room for these rhinos to live in the wild.

To provide more suitable and connected habitat, we've been working with conservancies across Kenya's Laikipia County, making plans to expand the areas that black rhinos roam while keeping them safe. Covid-19 has presented some challenges, but the collaboration continues, as we've been working to support the same reserves in securing urgent funding for things like salaries, fuel, rations and general maintenance, after budgets were cut due to the lack of tourism.

To date, we have raised and distributed \$700,000 to support Core Critical Operations Costs, thanks to grants from the Bently Foundation, the Rhino Recovery Fund and ForRangers.

Namibia

South-western black rhinos increase

Thanks to dedicated conservation efforts, the global population of the South-western black rhino subspecies has grown by more than 11% since 2012. There are now 2,188 South-western black rhinos, most of which reside in Namibia, and the subspecies has been re-classified to a lower category of threat by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Huge improvements in law-enforcement and anti-poaching activities have been key to the subspecies' success, as have the efforts to ensure that local communities benefit from the rhinos' presence.

Unfortunately, the two other subspecies are still listed as Critically Endangered meaning that, at a species-level, black rhinos continue to be at extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.



SR

South Africa

Rhino poaching drops below 600

For the first time since 2011, the number of rhinos poached in South Africa dropped to below 600 in 2019. Whilst this number remains too high, it is significant: since the shocking highs of 2014, poaching rates in the country have halved.

Such a huge shift has only been possible thanks to the commitment of rangers and law enforcement authorities, making sure that rhinos are protected on the ground, and criminals are sentenced appropriately. The threat remains intense but, with regular training and effective equipment for anti-poaching units like those in the places we support (Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and uMkhuze Game Reserve), we're confident that the number of rhinos poached will continue to fall.



STEVE AND ANN TOON

Viet Nam

New directive brings us one step closer to stopping illegal wildlife markets

The outbreak of Covid-19 put a spotlight on all forms of wildlife trade, both legal and illegal, increasing pressure on many countries to reaffirm their commitments to clamp down on any trade that threatens endangered species and impacts human health.

In July, we were pleased to hear that the Prime Minister's Office in Viet Nam had issued a Directive suspending all imports of wildlife and wildlife parts, simultaneously expressing determination to end all illegal markets.

There is still work to do, but the Directive is a significant step forward. Now, we must maintain this momentum to shut down all illegal wildlife markets.



NICK GABBUTT



© Rhodri Lloyd/WWF

Indonesia

Javan rhinos on the rise

Javan rhinos are very rarely seen, even by the rangers who patrol daily within the forests of Ujung Kulon National Park, where the entire population lives. Instead of relying only on rangers' sightings, camera traps are used to help monitor the rhinos within the Park. Late in 2019, there was remarkable footage recovered: four new calves had been spotted! This success continued, as two new calves were seen in September 2020! The total population now sits at 74.

The number of rhinos remains precariously low, but this positive news shows just how important current projects are to provide extra space, giving Javan rhinos a better chance at breeding successfully to continue increasing their population.

Rhino goodies

Silver Jewellery

Every piece is made by *Symbols on Silk*, South Africa, emanating a 'Simple But Significant' style. Each design symbolises a special message, the rhino being a symbol for confidence, assurance and steadiness.

From £19



Plaited silver Rhino bracelet £20

Sterling silver on light grey plaited bracelet.



Silver Rhino pendant necklace £30

Sterling silver chain and pendant.



Rhino silver disc bracelet £25

Sterling silver rhino disk charm on a light grey thread bracelet.



Rhino silver earrings £19

Sterling silver rhino stud earrings with butterfly backs.

MEMBERS GET A 10% DISCOUNT ON ALL MERCHANDISE ITEMS | MEMBERS GET A 10% DISCOUNT ON ALL MERCHANDISE ITEMS | MEMBERS GET A 10% DISCOUNT ON ALL MERCHANDISE ITEMS



Close Encounter Collection

We're delighted to be collaborating with artist Rebecca Carter, to bring her incredible illustration to life with our black rhino range as the first edition for our Close Encounter Collection.

The illustration comes on a number of products, from prints to water bottles.

From £15

NEW Alex's 2020 Mr Rhino Christmas cards £7

A6, pack of 10

'Too many lockdown cookies, maybe?' and 'Oops! Watch out for the crash!' Five of each design. Cards are blank for your own message.



Meet the herd!

Each and every one of our members helps us to make a difference. Why not treat the rhino enthusiast in your life with a membership? All membership options are available to purchase as a gift.

Electronic membership

Go eco-friendly and choose paperless, making your membership donation go further. From £2.50 per month

Individual membership

Show your personal passion with our Individual membership. From £3.50 per month

Family membership

Share a membership with your loved ones through our Herd members' option. From £8.50 per month

Ambassador membership

For those wanting to make a bigger impact in supporting rhinos. From £12 per month

See our website for more details about membership types/ details, payment options and T&Cs.



NEW The Jungle Collection

Introducing you to our newest members of the herd, Wilbur and Walter, the water-wallowing rhinos! They feature in our Jungle Collection, inspired by the rich rainforests of Indonesia.

A fun and colourful design, printed to order to eliminate waste. Designed by Rachel Wynn, Twogether Creative.

From £7

IT'S EASY TO ORDER Visit our store at www.savetherhino.org
See lots more rhino goodies online!

COVID-19

A helpful tool for wildlife protection?

Working on issues relating to environmental policy in China has always posed its challenges, and never more so than in 2020. While recognising the importance of holding the Chinese Government to account, we must ensure this is done in a way that counters, rather than perpetuates, racism, and recognises the roles that all countries have to play in preventing a sixth mass extinction.

Aron White | Wildlife Campaigner,
Environmental Investigation Agency

Early this year, initial suggestions that the emergence of Covid-19 may have been linked to trade in wild animals saw a great deal of scrutiny on wildlife trade in China, from both within and outside the country. Sadly, a large amount of international coverage was ill-informed – such as persistent conflation of the term “wet market”, which can mean any market where fresh produce is sold, with a market selling wildlife. Much commentary also failed to counter xenophobic and racist narratives, a major concern amid reported upticks in racism experienced by people with Asian heritage living in the West.



Opposite: Shanghai, Nanjing Road

Left to right: Clearing forests for palm oil in Indonesia – Covid-19 has forced all of us to rethink, and reset, our relationship with nature.

Top: Medicinal wine listing leopard bone as an ingredient on sale in a Chinese pharmacy.



Looking at wildlife trade policy in China today, it is clear that the Government has adopted genuinely significant policy changes in the wake of Covid-19, with a directive in February having banned the commercial breeding and trade of almost all terrestrial wild animal species for consumption as food. But these changes do not go far enough: the use of body parts of threatened species such as leopard bone and pangolin scales in traditional medicine remains legal.

So far, rhinos appear to be unaffected by these recent policy changes – as protected species, they could not previously be bred and traded as food. However, rules regarding the use of rhino horn remain ambiguous.

In October 2018, China's State Council repealed a 25-year ban on the use of rhino horn and tiger bone in traditional medicine, replacing this with a policy that permitted the use of parts from captive-bred animals. Shortly after, government spokespersons indicated that roll-out of this new policy was being delayed, but it has never been officially repealed or replaced, and is still listed as a valid policy on the State Council's website.

Such mixed messages are a serious impediment to reducing demand for threatened species, especially in an environment where NGO campaigns are pressured to broadly reflect government positions. But China's lawmakers now have a timely opportunity to change this. The Wildlife Protection Law, the country's main piece of legislation covering wildlife trade and conservation, is being revised.

With a draft revision expected before the end of 2020, China's lawmakers should use the opportunity to finally commit to ending demand for threatened wildlife and, in doing so, respecting the wishes and hard work of wildlife advocates in the country.

Moreover, underlying assumptions that risks to public health arising from our relationship with wildlife are issues specific to certain regions are not only unjust, but miss an opportunity for a much-needed reset of our connection to nature. Behaviours that increase the risk of zoonotic disease are prevalent across the globe.

That said, close scrutiny of Chinese government policy relating to wildlife is justified given the global implications: China is home to a large proportion of the world's biodiversity; some Chinese state investments in overseas infrastructure carry potentially catastrophic risks for the world's climate and ecosystems; and Chinese consumers (at home and in other countries) are a major source of demand for many species threatened by illegal trade. Government policies that legitimise trade in threatened species are an important enabling factor in this demand.

When talking about the demand for threatened wildlife from Chinese consumers, it must be emphasised that the vast majority of people in China would never purchase such products. Moreover, there are a huge number of dedicated advocates in China working to secure a sustainable and biodiverse future. International conservationists and media should recognise and amplify these voices.



Cracking down on corruption

Saving rhinos isn't just about rangers patrolling to monitor and protect rhinos, or developing campaigns to change perceptions about the use of illegal rhino horn. It's also about tracing illicit money flows across the world, tracking down international fugitives, and combining all the evidence you've got to bring a case before a judge. After all that hard work, the last thing you want is to face a battle against corruption.

Emma Pereira | Communications Manager

The illegal wildlife trade is the fourth-most lucrative international crime, behind drugs, human trafficking and counterfeiting, estimated to be worth £15 billion annually. Rhino horn is one of the highest valued illegal wildlife products, making the illegal trade in horn – and the poaching that comes hand-in-hand with it – a prime market for international criminals. When the reward is so high, no one wants to get caught, and corruption is rife.

With the chance of significant extra income, the temptation to act differently (or illegally) can be great, particularly for anyone taking a job as, say, a field ranger, simply because it was a form of income, rather than because of a love of wildlife. Rangers may turn poacher themselves, or provide inside information to poaching gangs; crucial evidence may be 'lost', and court cases delayed when defence attorneys repeatedly fail to attend court hearings. Similarly, a presiding judge or magistrate may be bought off by a poacher's defence team, or the prosecutor may be persuaded to only bring minor charges.

Fortunately, there are ways that we can reduce, and work towards stopping, corruption. One approach is to maintain an individual's motivation against rhino poaching. By keeping rangers and the judiciary motivated to act in the best interest of rhinos, the chances of successful arrests and convictions are higher. Often, this can be achieved through simple means.



MIMAZI RHINO SANCTUARY

If a ranger is happy in their job; if they are paid well, and if they have enough support from their team and manager, they are less likely to undermine their rhino conservation efforts. That's why so much of our work at Save the Rhino focuses on improving ranger morale: providing effective equipment, offering regular training, and rewarding exceptional service. With more than 100 wildlife rangers killed on duty each year, it is important that they and their family feel supported while working in extraordinarily dangerous circumstances.

For magistrates and law enforcement personnel that aren't on the ground, it can take more than job satisfaction. Individuals must be able to recognise the impact of corruption on the people and wildlife that they are there to protect. This often means more training for those convicting suspected poachers and their associates, as well as strong anti-corruption policies, and independent teams put into place to scrutinise anything that seems suspicious.

All of this takes a huge amount of resource, commitment, and capacity. Given that the crimes most at risk of corruption are often performed at huge scales and across borders, it also takes a significant amount of collaboration at an international level.

While none of this can happen overnight, it's critical to boost our efforts and work together with others to stop corruption at all levels. Given the high stakes – the possibility of species' extinctions – we can't afford to ignore it.

The illegal wildlife trade and Covid-19

What a year 2020 has been! As I write this in August, the early weeks of the New Year seem like a previous life. Full of optimism, we were finalising a new three-year conservation strategy, planning workshops and events with our partners around the world, and discussing ambitious new conservation projects. And we were a little worried about the news of a new zoonotic virus in China.

Jon Taylor | Deputy Director

One of the causes of our excitement was the development of our work in Viet Nam and China. For some years now, we have worked with our wonderful partners TRAFFIC and ENV (Education for Nature-Vietnam) to reduce demand for rhino horn in Viet Nam, trying to identify and reach key audiences, and to challenge traditional ideas with new messages about sustainability and the need for harmony with nature.

And while those efforts remain essential, we were (and still are) keen to broaden our work to include creating and enforcing strong legislation, and we want to support research to increase our understanding of the illegal wildlife markets and the effectiveness of various approaches to ending them.

Of course, back in the 'old days' of six months ago, the illegal wildlife trade was seen primarily as an issue of biodiversity and habitat loss. Then the Covid-19 outbreak became a pandemic, and everything changed. Suddenly the newspapers were full of discussions about illegal wildlife markets, not as a wildlife issue but as a public health issue. People talked with some horror about 'wet' markets, unaware that these are simply fresh food markets in hot Asian countries (the 'wet' refers to melting ice). The virus was said to have come from pangolins (many journalists had to Google 'pangolin'), then bats. Rhino horn was touted as an early potential source of the virus, which is physically impossible; then, more worryingly, as a potential cure for the disease.

Probably in response to internal public health concerns, rather than to the protestations of Western newspapers, the Chinese Government banned the consumption of wildlife as food. The ban did not, however, extend to its use for medicine or for 'exhibition' use in circuses and the like. Viet Nam has more recently followed suit and taken welcome steps to shut down



its own illegal wildlife markets. However, as rhino horn is not eaten (it is used as a status symbol and as an ingredient in traditional medicine), bans on consumption will have little impact on the illicit and destructive rhino horn trade.

It is too early to tell whether the Covid-19 pandemic will have a transformational impact on the illegal wildlife trade in general and on the trade in rhino horn in particular. Certainly, the reframing in people's minds of the wildlife trade as a direct public health threat, rather than an indirect 'environmental' issue, may lead to much louder and more urgent calls for action, and Save the Rhino will be working with all its partners to reinforce those calls with expertise and evidence.

But what the ongoing pandemic does highlight, in a way that the more abstract (though far greater) threats of biodiversity decline, habitat loss and climate change often do not, is our direct reliance on and intimate connection with a world that is healthy, diverse and resilient. This pandemic shows us that 'the environment' is not something elsewhere, about which we can choose to care or not. A world of vibrant forests and clean rivers, of vast savannahs and abundant oceans, and of many, many rhinoceroses, is not a 'nice to have' for those who care about such things, it is a condition of our very survival.

ENSURING AN ENCORE for the singing rhino

With fewer than 80 individuals remaining, the Sumatran rhino holds the unwelcome distinction of being one of the rarest mammals on the planet. Found only in the rainforests of Sumatra, these rhinos are unique: small, hairy and accomplished singers (their whale song-like vocalisations are thought to be their way of calling out to mates!)

The urgency of their plight was recently highlighted, when Iman, Malaysia's last Sumatran rhino, died in November 2019. Indonesia is now the species' final bastion.

Jack Bedford | Fundraising Officer



ALAN COMFORT

Concerned that the Sumatran rhino's song would soon fall silent, in 2018, an Alliance of conservationists launched Sumatran Rhino Rescue, a ground-breaking initiative to save this Critically Endangered species from extinction. Two years on, what's been achieved and what are the next steps on the Sumatran rhino's journey back from the brink?

Boosting breeding at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary

During the past year, the team at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary (SRS) in Way Kambas National Park completed an ambitious expansion project: a second ring of enclosures with space for five more rhinos, and new, state-of-the-art veterinary equipment to ensure the highest-quality care for the SRS' rhino residents. The Sanctuary is now poised to welcome more rhinos, intensify breeding efforts and grow its population.

Delilah, the Sanctuary's youngest rhino, born in 2016, is now approaching maturity and has been given her own enclosure. Ratu, Delilah's mother, has since been reintroduced to male Andalas and the pair are breeding again. The Sanctuary's team are hopeful that a pregnancy will follow soon.



Rescuing wild rhinos

Perhaps most excitingly, the first stage of the rescue mission has begun. Across their last remaining habitats, surveys were started to locate and track rhinos. With so few individuals left, finding a wild Sumatran rhino is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Thankfully, the survey teams have some tools up their sleeves. They comb through patches of habitat, looking for signs, like footprints, dung or broken twigs, which indicate a rhino is near.

Once a rhino has been detected, the teams change tactics, following the animal to work out its most-used routes, with camera traps helping fill in more details about the individual, such as age, sex and breeding status. This information will help when planning to rescue the rhino, so it can join the conservation breeding programme and help to save its species.

JOEL SALTIRE



IMAGES: NICK GARBUTT UNLESS NOTED

What's next?

Whilst Covid-19 has temporarily delayed these efforts, the Alliance is hoping to begin captures in early 2021, with the team undergoing extensive training to ensure each rescue is a success.

Meanwhile, efforts to secure sites and begin construction for two new Sumatran Rhino Sanctuaries are underway, so that animals rescued from non-viable situations have a safe new home where they can breed and produce the next generation of this wonderful species, under expert care.

The journey ahead may be long but, with these first determined steps, there's a strong chance the Sumatran rhino's song will continue to ring out through Indonesia's rainforests for years to come.

Save the Rhino International and our zoo partner Wilhelma Zoological and Botanical Garden, Stuttgart, joined Sumatran Rhino Rescue as Strategic Partners in 2018, donating \$100,000 each to support the work of the project in southern Sumatra.

Clockwise from left: A Sumatran rhino's footprint – they are the smallest rhino species on Earth.

Sumatran rhinos love to wallow, cooling off and giving their skin some rest bite from parasites.

The veterinary lab at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary has been upgraded, giving the team more equipment and resources to make sure that all their rhinos are healthy, so that they may breed in the future!

Andalas, the first Sumatran rhino to be born in captivity at Cincinnati Zoo, USA.



The call I was hoping would not come

On a November evening in Indonesia, I was at home packing and preparing to leave for the United States for the International Rhino Foundation's (IRF) annual meeting. I was interrupted by a call. Fires, started by people, had been burning in Way Kambas National Park in Sumatra for weeks and, aided by a strong wind and dry conditions, they were approaching an area of the Park that we had recently replanted.

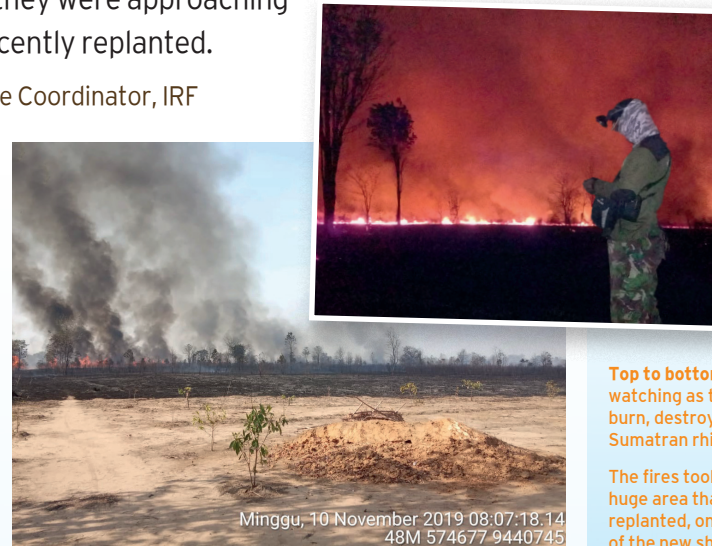
Inov Sectionov | Indonesian Programme Coordinator, IRF

Deforestation has been a leading cause in the increase of fires worldwide. Climate change has extended the dry season, increasing the risk of larger, more intense fires. In Indonesia, where deforestation has recently declined, reforestation and recovery efforts have not been able to keep up with past decimation, leading to many wildfires in degraded lands.

Unfortunately, fires are increasingly being set by people. In Way Kambas, poachers often use mosquito coils to light bush and smoke out game. As fires rage, rangers race to protect the habitat, sometimes distracting them from normal duties and allowing poachers to move unseen.

That November phone call was from the Park's rangers. Sparks from one of the spreading fires had leapt the fire break we had maintained and the dry grass had ignited. Swept by the wind, the flames had burned 60 acres of recently planted seedlings. It was an entire loss. I was devastated.

Park rangers, supported by Rhino Protection Units in the area, did everything they could to save the newly planted zone; an area that had been destined to grow into an expanded habitat for rhinos, elephants, and tigers, among other wildlife. The new seedlings had been growing well and, in fact, wildlife had already begun to move into the area: not long before the fires, the team had spotted a tiger moving through the plot.



Top to bottom: A ranger watching as the fires burn, destroying vital Sumatran rhino habitat.

The fires took hold of a huge area that had been replanted, only a handful of the new shoots survived.

Firefighters and rangers doing everything they can to put the fires out.

The project had been a true community effort. Local students had come to the area on field trips, learning about the rainforest and planting new trees. The pride in transforming an area that was deforested more than 10 years ago was profound.

I went through a range of emotions. I was sad to see the community's hard work wiped out in a single day. I was angry because this fire was not a natural disaster, but caused by humans. However, my emotions began to take a different form – that of hope.

The plants were gone, but the spirit of the people remained. Within weeks, rangers and communities were back at work, clearing the site again, planting new seedlings – larger ones this time, that would be more likely to withstand a fire. They've already built wider firebreaks, dug another deep well, and purchased more fire-fighting equipment. And we're committed to supporting them every step of the way.

Together, despite the setbacks, we are continuing to create a larger habitat for the Sumatran rhino and other endangered wildlife.



Replanting areas that have previously been degraded is essential if we are to secure enough space for the Critically Endangered Sumatran rhino.

Beginning with small seedlings, and a whole community behind them, these plants will grow to full trees in three to four years.



Growing harmony

Way Kambas National Park, on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, is home to one of the world's most endangered mammals, the Sumatran rhino. With fewer than 80 animals left, all living in small, fragmented populations, we must take immediate action to save the species from extinction.

Christopher Whitlatch | Communications Director, International Rhino Foundation

Way Kambas National Park is the only protected area in Indonesia with no buffer zone – the Park is surrounded by villages on all sides. Human settlements have frequently encroached into the Park, destroying the habitat that rhinos and other wildlife need to survive. Sadly, around one-third of the rhinos' rainforest habitat has already been lost to human encroachment.

To boost the number of Sumatran rhinos, it's essential that we increase breeding efforts, but in the longer-term, we must also secure places for these rhinos to go. Together with a large coalition of partners, we're working simultaneously to achieve both of these goals; developing successful breeding programmes in rhino sanctuaries, while ensuring that there are safe and suitable habitats for every animal to live in the wild. Such wild habitats cannot simply be 'found', there are many factors to consider: how much space is required; how close is the new habitat to current locations; does it have the right food and water supply? Sometimes, the best approach is to restore a place that was previously suitable, but has since been degraded.

Reforestation can be difficult. Fires, tsunamis, and other natural disasters can each be a huge setback. And, of course, like any conservation project, the commitment of the local community, is crucial for the project to be sustainable. It's a delicate harmony between people and nature.

When a site is identified as potential good rhino habitat, they can't simply 'move in'. The site has to be cleared and replanted. Many such sites are located next to local villages, adding an additional challenge: villagers often collect fruits and other resources from the forest. A mutually beneficial solution has to be found for both people and wildlife.

To ensure the success of a reforestation project, we make sure that the local community are part of our efforts. Local farmers grow the new seedlings to replant the site, and people from a nearby village are hired to plant seedlings, maintain the area, and later harvest browse from mature trees to feed the rhinos at the nearby Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary. Once planted, trees should grow to maturity in just four or five years.

On the outside, bordering the village, local people will plant fruit trees that they can later harvest for themselves or to sell. At the core of the restoration area, rhinos' preferred foods will be planted. One plant, the jackfruit tree, is grown in both areas: it is liked by both humans and rhinos!

Such close working is critical to protect Sumatran rhinos. Not only will this boost our immediate conservation activities, but also improve harmony between people and wildlife for the future.

ALL IMAGES: NICK GARbutt

The 26 for 26 challenge

Since 1992, a team of rhino runners have come together for the London Marathon each April. But, for the first time in history, our team were faced with a postponed race. As devastating as the news was, they did not give up. Instead, they spent Sunday 26 April running, jumping, cycling and baking to mark what would normally be our favourite day of the year!

Darion Moore | Michael Hearn Intern

Lockdown may have prevented our amazing group from charging through the streets of London, but it didn't stop them from coming together as a team to tackle different challenges, wherever they were in the world. As part of our 26 for 26 challenge, we saw our runners complete a range of activities in whatever socially distanced space they could find, representing the 26.2 miles that they would otherwise have completed. It was a phenomenal day full of smiles, team spirit and virtual cheers.

It's fair to say that we have an exceptionally creative team. There were stair climbs, step counts, cycles, miles covered by roping in family members, and even rhino cakes! Some of the team put themselves to the test as they ran a huge number of laps in their gardens to complete a full marathon, doing their best not to get dizzy. A few even managed their garden marathons in full rhino costume! The most creative challenge was Chris Green's unique Kilimanjaro ascent, in which he climbed up and down his stairs 550 times (in costume) to reach the summit.

However, our most adorable participant and youngest challenger was David Tyrell's son, an honorary member of our team, who, at age three, showed incredible determination by joining his dad for 26 exercises, for 26 days!

It may not have been the real thing, but the day was a huge success.

Everyone supported each other, lifted the team spirit and shared their love of rhinos. Thanks to the support of countless family and friends, the team raised nearly £10,000 during the challenge, a phenomenal amount during these difficult times.

Unfortunately, as training programmes began to shift up a gear during the summer, the news came that there would no longer be a mass-participation 2020 marathon in London, with the next in-person race taking place in October 2021. Whilst it was the news that many had expected, it was heart-breaking nonetheless. Still, our runners did not falter. Many completed their training to finish on a high, tackling a virtual London Marathon on Sunday 4 October.

All of our rhino runners are exceptional, doing exceptional things and raising exceptional funds. This has definitely not been the marathon journey they signed up for: the phrase "It's a marathon, not a sprint" has never been truer. But they have shown that they are just as resilient as the rhinos that their funds are helping to protect. Our thanks to the whole team for their phenomenal support. Bring on 2021!

From top, clockwise:
Andy Humphries finishing his garden marathon.

An impressive rhino cake made by Trevor Cudmore and his daughter.

Dave Wardle on his garden London Marathon!

Chris Green during his Kilimanjaro summit.

David Tyrell and his son Alfred, with their well-earned 26 for 26 medals!

Joanna Maingard completing her run!



Fundraising and fulfilling THE RHINO DREAM

Everyone that's met Kylene knows her passion for rhinos. Since introducing herself to us in 2019, Kylene has been on quite the journey. Her fundraising efforts within her local community have led her on the path to begin studying conservation biology and fulfilling a lifelong dream.

We asked Kylene to share her story...

Kylene Wright
Save the Rhino supporter



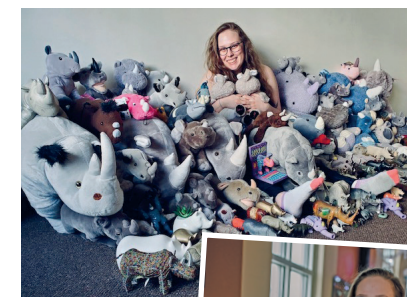
My passion for rhinos started when I was five. My mother encouraged me to pick out a new toy – I chose the brown stuffed rhino with a giraffe-pattern bow-tie. To this day he stays beside me in my bedroom. My family knew how much I loved him, so whenever they saw anything rhino on their travels, my collection would grow (something that has never got old!) – along with my curiosity about and affinity for rhinos.

Fast forward many years and I really began to feel unfulfilled at college. My love for rhinos was something I always wanted to develop into a lifelong career, but I didn't have an academic background in conservation. I had always hoped that through hard work, passion and dedication, eventually I would find myself on the right path towards my dream. That's when I started reaching out to many different rhino organisations for any opportunities to get involved.

When I began fundraising for Save the Rhino, I started with a sponsored 5 km run, but I soon realised that I couldn't do that do every other week. So, I turned to baking!

More than a year later, I have baked lots of vegan goodies! From cookies, to chocolates, to breads, all rhino-shaped, of course. When my donations hit \$1,000, I cried. I was so overwhelmed by the number of people who had supported me. It was at that moment I truly understood that my passion had resonated with everyone I had met in my life and everyone knew how important this fundraising meant to me.

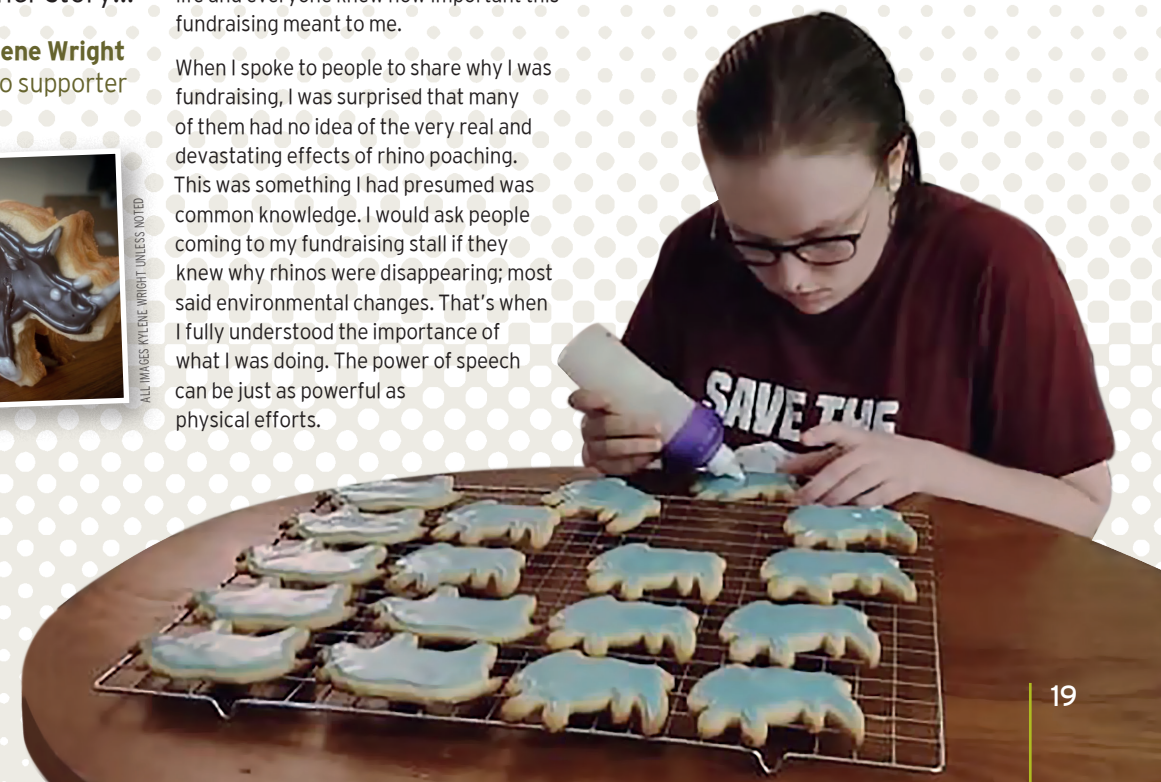
When I spoke to people to share why I was fundraising, I was surprised that many of them had no idea of the very real and devastating effects of rhino poaching. This was something I had presumed was common knowledge. I would ask people coming to my fundraising stall if they knew why rhinos were disappearing; most said environmental changes. That's when I fully understood the importance of what I was doing. The power of speech can be just as powerful as physical efforts.



Top to bottom:
Kylene with her incredible rhino toy collection, fundraising by selling her rhino cookies, and icing each cookie by hand – bake off, watch out!



While I have always been happy to raise donations for rhinos, my fundraising experience has helped me change focus. I have been accepted into university to achieve my Professional Science Master's degree in Conservation Biology. My lifelong dream is to get my foot in the door to work directly with rhinos every day. And now, here I am, on the path that will lead me to my dream.



RHINO COVID-19 CRISIS | RHINO COVID-19 CRISIS | RHINO COVID-19 CRISIS | RHINO COVID-19 CRISIS

IT'S UP TO ALL OF US

Covid-19 is putting rhinos at risk

From the sudden tourism shutdown to the decline in global economies, our partners around the world have been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Yet, while so much of everyday life has been put on hold, rhinos continue to need protection.

When the initial effects of the pandemic were being felt by our partners in Africa and Asia, we knew we had to do something to help. Many had lost significant funding overnight, and paying for essential, yet simple, items, was already becoming tough.

Your response during the first phase of the campaign was incredible.

**You raised more than
£22,000 TO SUPPORT
rhino conservation in
NAMIBIA, INDONESIA
AND SOUTH AFRICA**

Protecting the extraordinary DESERT-ADAPTED BLACK RHINO

Save the Rhino Trust, Namibia

Every rhino is special, but the rhinos roaming across Namibia's vast Kunene region are extraordinary. To survive in the harsh desert, they have adapted to go without water for up to four days and to browse on the usually poisonous 'melkbos' without any ill-effects.



To protect and learn more about these unique rhinos, rangers at Save the Rhino Trust have been deterring poachers and collecting vital information about the rhinos' daily habits since 1982. In that time, the black rhino population has trebled, but they still face an intense poaching threat, and the Covid-19 outbreak has made everything much more difficult.

The pandemic meant that tourism in the region stopped overnight. Tourism that contributed significantly to rhino protection, supporting the costs of ranger salaries, rations and equipment.

Your donations so far have helped to provide food and equipment for rangers, and to repair vehicles that are used each day: making sure that rangers can keep patrolling the wild Kunene region of Namibia, protecting the special desert-adapted black rhino for the future.



PROVIDING PROTECTIVE equipment for rangers

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, South Africa

In March, like many places across the world, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) went into lockdown; no visitors were able to come into the Park for more than three months.

During this time rangers had to keep going. They couldn't let the Park's endangered wildlife – including black and white rhinos, elephants, lions, and wild dogs – be put at greater risk. To abide by strict movement protocols, some rangers had to remain on site when lockdown began, meaning they would have to work for more than six weeks without seeing their families. It was an extremely tough time for everyone at HiP.

Of course, the huge loss of income from tourism meant that budgets had to be cut back, at a time when they needed more resources than ever: not only did everyday costs still need to be paid for, including rations, fuel and salaries, but every ranger now urgently needed extra equipment to keep them safe from Covid-19. No one could have predicted that this personal protective equipment would be necessary.

Thanks to your donations, HiP was able to cover some of these extra costs, purchasing more masks, gloves and hand sanitiser, making sure that every ranger, their team, and wider community, is better protected from Covid-19.

PATROLLING FOR EXTREMELY RARE RHINOS

Rhino Protection Units, Indonesia

Deep within the rainforests of Indonesia live two extremely rare rhino species: Javan and Sumatran rhinos. Combined, there are fewer than 160 of these animals left. With such fragile populations, safeguarding the remaining Javan and Sumatran rhinos is vital.

For more than 25 years, expert Rhino Protection Units (RPUs) have protected these two vulnerable species 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Thankfully, these teams were able to continue their important job throughout the lockdown, trekking through dense jungle in teams of four to track rhinos, remove snares, and secure essential rhino habitat. Despite great challenges, RPUs have been key to maintaining an incredible zero poaching record of Javan and Sumatran rhinos for 14 years. But Covid-19 threatened the future of these specialist units.

The huge economic impact of Covid-19 caused a 30% shortfall in the annual RPU budget: funding that is essential to keep Javan and Sumatran rhinos safe.

Your generous donations contributed to making up this shortfall. You provided enough funding to pay for three Rhino Protection Units for one month, and also purchase essential kit and equipment that's needed for each patrol.



**How you can
CONTINUE TO
SUPPORT RHINOS
during Covid-19**

Together we can make a difference

Your support so far has made a huge impact on teams across Africa and Asia. But Covid-19 is not the only threat that impacts rhino conservation today.

In this crisis there's a very real danger that many of the conservation successes of the past few years might be lost – things could very easily go into reverse.

DONATE TO THE RHINO Covid-19 Crisis appeal:

Online: www.savetherhino.org/rhino-covid-19-crisis

Or text: **COVID19RHINO**
to **70085** to donate £10

Texts cost £10 + one standard rate text.

Going above and beyond The development of ForRangers

In less than five years, the ForRangers initiative has donated more than £2 million for ranger equipment and kit. Not bad for an initiative that started on a whim.

The story goes that, after a training run, Sam Taylor jokingly suggested to Pete Newland that they should do the Marathon des Sables, a 250km ultra marathon billed as “the toughest foot race on Earth”.

David Hill | Events Manager

To Sam's surprise, Pete said yes and suggested that they not only take on the challenge, but raise funds for rangers while they were doing so. A few days later, Pete signed everyone up, and ForRangers was born. Since day one, ForRangers' aim has been to improve the welfare of the men and women who protect Africa's most endangered species. By raising funds, ForRangers helps to purchase essential and everyday equipment, such as boots, uniforms and rations, whilst also providing ranger training and refurbishing (and sometimes building from scratch) ranger accommodation and recreational areas.

As ForRangers expands, so do Sam and Pete's ambitions. Together, we've set up grants to match those ambitions, providing even more support for rangers.

To support Moses, ForRangers purchased a prosthetic limb and funded physiotherapy to help him continue in his day-to-day life. He is now back at Borana, working in the radio operations room.

Providing access to medical care

Access to top-quality healthcare is critical to the wellbeing of rangers, both in and out of the workplace.



ALL IMAGES FORRANGERS



Nanyuki Cottage Hospital is the centre of medical excellence for the whole of Northern Kenya, and has treated hundreds of rangers injured in the field during the last 10 years. The Hospital was in dire need of developing its

radiology department to better diagnose injuries and provide specialist healthcare. Thanks to donations and support from ForRangers, this will now be possible.

Further donations to ForRangers have also enabled the construction of a health clinic in Loisaba Conservancy, providing vital infrastructure to address the medical needs of rangers and the wider community.

Improving ranger training

One of ForRangers' priorities is to help rangers work at the highest level possible; physical and professional training is key. This year, ForRangers established a fitness regime and new equipment for rangers at four conservancies within Kenya's Laikipia County: Lewa, Borana, Ol Jogi and Ol Pejeta.

In Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 235 pairs of trail-running shoes were sent to the ranger teams, improving the rangers' ability to build their fitness and health, not only to boost their effectiveness at work, but also their wellbeing and mental health.

Despite the challenges that the past 12 months has brought, the above shows the impact that ForRangers is having. Next year, we hope to accomplish even more.

Supporting rangers and their families

For the third year running, we've purchased a life-insurance policy for Kenyan rangers, paying for hospital treatment and supporting the families of rangers injured or killed in the line of duty. In June 2020, while responding – at the community's request – to a livestock theft, one ranger was killed and another injured. The policy will support the injured ranger while he is out of work, and will provide for the deceased's widow and children.

Protecting rangers from wildlife hazards

Rangers are at risk of snakebites while on patrol. With the support of ForRangers, 46 vials of anti-venom were purchased by the James Ashe Anti-Venom Trust, an amount that could save the lives of 10 to 15 people.

In 2012, Moses Kasaine, a ranch herder on Borana Conservancy in Kenya, was bitten by a puff adder. After months in hospital and years of suffering in pain, the difficult decision was made to amputate Moses' foot above the ankle.

Left to right: Moses Kasaine back at work in Borana Conservancy, thanks to support from ForRangers.

Rangers visiting an injured colleague at Nanyuki Cottage Hospital.

A ranger team during the Mt Kenya rescue training.

A ranger at Garamba National Park with his new trail shoes.

The ForRangers line at the James Ashe Anti-Venom Trust.



Working together for BLACK RHINOS IN KENYA

News of conservation successes are few and far between in today's climate, especially when referring to rhinos.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Kenya experienced a rhino-poaching epidemic that reduced the estimated 20,000 Eastern black rhino population to fewer than 300 individuals by 1985.

Jamie Gaymer
Chair, Association of Private and community Land Rhino Sanctuaries (APLRS)

In a desperate bid to save the species from becoming locally extinct, the Government of Kenya endorsed the formation of rhino sanctuaries on private, and latterly community, land. The strategy proved to be successful. Kenya has seen a slow but steady increase to 794 Eastern black rhinos today. But today, we are close to reaching full capacity in existing secure habitat.

In 1989, the APLRS was established as a platform for private sector rhino conservancies in Kenya to work together. In 2013, we changed the constitution of the APLRS to include community land and, subsequently, the Association has become an integral part of Kenya's rhino recovery plans.



The APLRS now acts as the interface between the private, community and government sectors, and collectively hosts 62% of Kenya's rhinos.

Without room to expand into, it would be impossible for rhinos to grow in population size. Such a situation is arguably as detrimental as poaching, especially when the objective is to reach at least 2,000 black rhinos thriving in Kenya. In recognition of this aim (from Kenya's Black Rhino Action Plan 2017-2021) and the space deficit with which we are faced, the APLRS – together with Save the Rhino and with the support of the Bently Foundation – organised a Laikipia Rhino Range Expansion Workshop in 2019.

Partners and stakeholders were invited to share their experiences of rhino-range expansion, encouraged to volunteer historical rhino range for capacity development and to strategize concerning the necessary steps to avail more land for rhinos. Ecological issues are pertinent, and security is fundamental, but social, political and economic considerations are no less important. How do we develop secure space for rhinos that is environmentally suitable, politically and socially robust, and economically viable?



ALL IMAGES APLRS

The workshop was a tremendous success. Whilst “Rome was not built in a day”, we have embarked on a series of tangible outputs from the meeting. Thus far, we have developed new site-selection criteria, new

private / public “Guardianship Agreements”, guidelines for new rhino conservancies and an APLRS private and community rhino endorsement matrix for potential new sites.

We're working closely with the Kenyan Wildlife Service to undertake several projects that will hopefully lead to more space becoming available for rhinos, including the collection and banking of scientific data that will be invaluable for rhino-range expansion. Within the next three to five years, we hope to create new, connected areas to host black rhino populations.

The APLRS would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that have participated in this work so far, in particular: Save the Rhino International, the Bently Foundation and the Kenya Wildlife Service, as well as the support that we have received from countless others.



Expanding HABITAT for rhinos on Borana Conservancy

In 2013, in collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Service, 21 black rhinos were introduced to Borana Conservancy, a 2,000-acre conservancy located at the foothills of Mount Kenya. Ten of these rhinos came from Nakuru National Park in the west, and the remaining 11 from neighbouring Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

Michael Dyer | Managing Director, Borana Conservancy



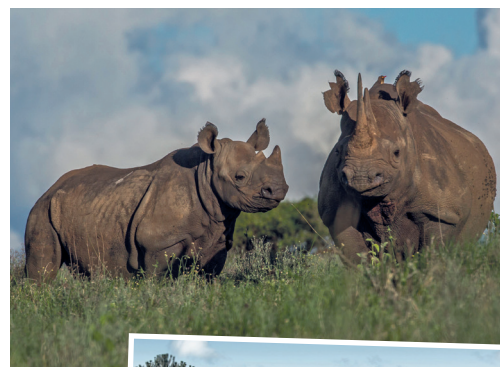
Top to bottom: Borana is home to black and white rhinos, as well as elephants, lion, reticulated giraffe, and Grevy's zebra.

Dedicated efforts have enabled the black rhino population to grow, and wildlife live in harmony with cattle owned by the local community.

A year later, once the rhino had established home territories, the fence between Lewa and Borana was dropped and the Lewa-Borana Landscape (LBL) was formed, creating one of East Africa's largest continuous rhino habitats. The biggest threat to rhinos at Borana is the lack of suitable, safe habitat. To reduce this threat, we work closely with our neighbouring community partners, such as the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch. The 40,700-acre ranch is owned and managed by Il Laikipiak Maasai, which directly translates to 'the people of wildlife'.

Il Ngwesi community members have agreed to set aside 17,000 acres to become a fenced sanctuary for 20 black rhinos, expanding habitat and encouraging larger population growth for this iconic species. The area, as well as Lewa and Borana, was originally home to a significant black rhino population that was wiped out in 1970s due to poaching and changes in the landscape for agriculture. The re-introduction of black rhino will not only create a catalyst for a booming conservation economy, it will also generate employment for residents and increase the calibre of the wildlife experience, encouraging tourism and fulfilling our aim of improving livelihoods.

Additionally, we're working to improve our knowledge about rhinos on our landscape, so that we can better protect them. In partnership with Space for Giants, Borana uses a tool known as SMART. SMART is a law enforcement monitoring tool that helps our management team to be more strategic about the deployment of conservation resources and to better understand the spatial distribution of wildlife across the Conservancy. Twenty six members of the Borana rhino monitoring team have been trained in SMART, enabling them to record all wildlife sightings, human-wildlife conflict incidents, fence voltages and carcass sightings on their dedicated smartphone during patrols.



With SMART, we are able to understand more about each rhino's home range, popular rhino locations and the areas that rhinos tend to avoid. This has led us to learn more about water points used by wildlife across Borana. Our water supply is subject to seasonal rains and, although our larger dams hold water throughout the year, the increased pressure and intra-species competition (particularly between rhino) means that areas surrounding these water points become over browsed.

Through SMART, we can spot the areas that have a high number of rhinos (usually around water) and areas that are un-touched. Consequently, this has helped inform our plans to improve water distribution across the Conservancy. We will be establishing four new water points by constructing 18 km of pipeline and equipping two boreholes with solar power. Fundamentally, this will increase available habitat for young male black rhinos that are establishing new territories, as well as opening up habitat for other species.

Since they were reintroduced in 2013, the black rhino population has flourished at Borana. In 2019, we saw an incredible 17 black rhino births! The high number of new calves recorded across the landscape highlights the importance of continually expanding and securing habitat for this critically endangered species.

SHAWN MOUSLEY

JAMES LEWIN

VETERINARY CARE for Kenya's black rhinos

Rhino populations around the world have been decimated largely at the hands of poachers. It's not the only threat that rhinos face but, because of its prevalence and brutality, there has been an intense focus on rhino security for the last few decades. As a result, issues concerning the biological management of rhinos might have been somewhat neglected.

Jamie Gaymer | Conservation Manager, OI Jogi Conservancy

Kenya's rhino population crash of the 1970s and 80s (from an estimated 20,000 to fewer than 300) caused a genetic bottle-neck and severe loss of genetic diversity for the country's Eastern black rhinos. Consequently, the entire population is threatened by exposure to disease. Today, with approximately 1,000 Eastern black rhinos remaining, it's crucial that every animal receives as much support as possible.

In 1995, OI Jogi Conservancy developed a wildlife veterinary clinic to enable our team to treat injured animals as quickly as possible. Inevitably, some of the equipment has depreciated or become obsolete, yet the clinic remains crucial to protect and care for rhinos.

To bring the clinic up to an international gold standard, and with help from several partners, donors and philanthropists, we recently acquired several pieces of equipment to improve our capacity to serve Kenya's wildlife. This included an X-ray, powerful enough to x-ray through a rhino's leg, a Bluetooth- and wifi-enabled microscope, weighing scales capable of weighing anything from a small tortoise to an adult rhino, and an ultrasound machine to determine pregnancy and investigate eye disease.

Just like every area of science, knowledge and understanding of rhino veterinary medicine has evolved exponentially over time. Therefore, collaboration and learning are vital to maintain best-practice. In 2019, OI Jogi, alongside the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Smithsonian Global Health Program and the Mpala Research Center, with support from Save the Rhino, convened a multidisciplinary workshop to bring together specialist rhino veterinarians and conservationists from across the world. The workshop gave rhino vets and conservation professionals the opportunity to discuss a broad range of topics, share ideas, build relationships and improve our mutual ability to serve rhinos from a veterinary perspective.

Through this workshop and continued learning, we're building capacity and knowledge within our team and others, whether that's by improving our population management so that breeding success increases, or by acting quickly to treat an injured animal. At OI Jogi, it is our hope that we can share this capacity, so that wildlife is the ultimate beneficiary.

Improving veterinary equipment not only benefits rhinos, but a whole host of other wildlife species that live at OI Jogi.

When a rhino needs treatment, the team is now well-prepared to do as much as they can to support the animal and bring it back to full health.



ALL IMAGES OI JOGI

Improving our dogs' tracking skills

As the Head of the Canine Unit at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, I oversee the dog training within Lewa and outside in the community area. I am very happy to lead this elite team of dogs and handlers, all working tirelessly and putting their lives at risk to protect wildlife and communities.

Joseph Piroris | Third-in-Charge of Anti-Poaching Unit and Commander of K9 Unit, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

Our dogs are on the frontline of conservation efforts within Lewa, and are also frequently deployed beyond Lewa's boundaries, responding to emergency calls from the communities surrounding Lewa and other conservancies.

Thanks to our Unit's efforts, security incidents, including rhino poaching, have reduced significantly. Our dogs are not only heroes of conservation, but our communities similarly recognise and appreciate their commitment to fighting against road banditry, stock theft, attacks on tourists and other issues.

Our training sessions take place every day, with the exception of Sunday, which is the general cleaning time for the kennels and dogs. When exercising on the long trails within the Conservancy, our dogs enjoy tracking the scent over a long distance through the long grasses.

Through the good relationship we have with our neighbouring communities, our K9 Unit also carries out exercises, day and night, within community areas. Training in these areas is extremely challenging for the dogs due to the increased human activity, causing many distractions. Training in such situations improves our tracking capabilities, making the Unit more effective when deployed.

Recently, a number of our dog handlers participated in an exchange programme in South Africa. South Africa is known to have excellent canine teams and the experience significantly improved our handlers' capabilities. Our rangers learned advanced skills, including tracking at night and emergency First Aid while on an operation, as well as improving their understanding of anti-poaching operations within a protected area.



Canine teams are rapidly expanding across Africa, becoming more important than ever to stop poaching and reduce overall crime.

Since 2018, we've supported a continental workshop to share knowledge between dog units across Africa.



Members of our team were also looking forward to attending the Lusaka-based Working Dog Workshop, organised by Save the Rhino and others, scheduled for May 2020, but unfortunately it had to be postponed due to Covid-19.

In previous years, these workshops have been extremely helpful, providing an opportunity for our team to share knowledge and experiences with people from all walks of life. This collaboration is crucial to ensure that our teams are able to excel, helping us to protect wildlife and our local communities.



How would you manage A RHINO POPULATION?

If you were asked to look after a group of rhinos, how would you do it? Protecting every individual from poaching is probably one of the first issues that came to your mind, but after securing your rhinos, what should happen next?

Rob Brett | Senior Technical Specialist, Africa, Fauna and Flora International

In north-east Tanzania, a small population of Eastern black rhinos live at the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary. The Sanctuary holds an incredible 22-year zero-poaching record (none killed since the rhinos were reintroduced). Its focus is to increase the population through breeding and support Tanzania's strategy to boost black rhino numbers. We spoke to Rob Brett, an experienced rhino scientist, to find what this entails.

First up, how do you decide what to do with a rhino population?

It's all about monitoring. To understand the next steps, you have to know how many animals you have in the first place, but also, are they breeding regularly? Are they living to a good age? How does the habitat support them? Answering these questions is critical to decide on the best management options. Through this research, we look at the habitat's 'Ecological Carrying Capacity' (ECC).

The ECC shows the number of rhinos that can survive and reproduce successfully within a specific area, using factors like the food and water available. It's a great marker when looking at the space needed to grow the population by 5% each year, which is the average growth rate for a healthy black rhino population.

With a small rhino population like Mkomazi's, how can you ensure genetic diversity?

It's understood now that to establish any rhino population, you should have at least 20 unrelated individuals in the beginning. This helps to ensure the population has enough genetic diversity so that, as a whole, the population can adapt well to future environments or disease outbreaks.

At Mkomazi, all of the rhinos have been reintroduced from other areas, some from South Africa, and others from zoos across Europe. The genetic make-up of rhinos from zoos tends to be quite rare, because the animals were often brought into zoos at a time when there were many more individuals in the wild, so they were part of more diverse populations. Bringing former zoo animals together with the 'wild' rhinos amplifies the genetic diversity of the next generation.



Monitoring rhinos is essential to understand the next steps in managing a population.

This isn't just about rangers checking a rhino's health, but also looking at longer-term breeding success.

You mention bringing former zoo and wild animals together, is this difficult?

In short, yes! However, there are well-established and agreed ways to improve the safety and ultimately, the success, of any introduction. Animals from a zoo have to get used to the new environment. Rhinos are fairly good at adapting, which is helpful, but they still need time.

New animals will generally remain in a small enclosure, or boma, for a few months, and this will be gradually be enlarged until they are released. It's important to record every step in any introduction like this, because the process is very hard, expensive, and takes a lot of time. Learning from previous introductions, successful or not, is key.

Once rhinos are introduced, what's next?

After rhinos are introduced to a new place, continued monitoring is essential. It's really important to understand how each animal settles in and if, over time, they do contribute to the next generation by breeding with each other and, hopefully, any resident rhinos already there. It's a good feedback loop: you can judge success by looking at the population's breeding rate once more and comparing the number of animals to the ECC.

Having too many rhinos may not seem like a problem, but it can reduce the breeding rate significantly, so plans are often made to transfer 'surplus' animals to a new area and establish a new population. Of course, all of this takes time: rhinos tend to breed every three to five years. You have to be patient, but it's the only route to successfully increasing the number of rhinos!

Why Team ZimZam runs the London Marathon

Since 2018, teams of runners from Zambia and Zimbabwe have joined us for the London Marathon, switching wilderness trails for 26.2 miles of city streets. We sat down with Claire and Joanna, team leaders in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively, to find out why the London Marathon is special for team ZimZam.

Claire Lewis
Programme Manager,
North Luangwa
Conservation Project

Joanna Craig
London Marathon
team manager,
Gonarezhou
Conservation Trust



Why is taking part in the London Marathon such an important experience for the runners?

Joanna: The London Marathon gives our runners the opportunity to experience a culture and landscape different to their own. It's a chance to connect with a wider network of conservationists while acting as ambassadors for the wilderness of Gonarezhou National Park. The Marathon is both a morale boost and an adventure of epic proportions!

Claire: Running is a great motivator and it is something we all do together as a team, it doesn't matter if you are the boss or the office cleaner. There is great camaraderie and a bit of healthy rivalry on all our runs, and being selected to go to London is an extra incentive. Most of our team have never been on an intercontinental flight, some have never had a passport before, so the whole experience is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

How do you choose who will join the team each year?

Joanna: Rangers who excel throughout the year are offered the opportunity to run in the London Marathon as a recognition of their efforts and achievements. The same opportunity is given to recognise dedicated members of the administrative team.

Claire: We change the selection criteria each year, so it is not a 'reward' only for certain groups of people, but for anyone that commits to fitness. For example, in 2018 Paimolo and Cosmas were chosen as two great examples of leaders, and in 2019, Patrick and Amon were given the opportunity because they were so committed, turning out to every training run and consistently running exceptional times.

How do you and the team prepare and train for the race?

Joanna: We do a lot of running up and down Gonarezhou's airstrip and fence lines! The team fits in training around their usual day-to-day responsibilities. And of course, they're also juggling the challenges of running in a remote, wild location.



Claire: Each week, we complete three one-hour runs on dirt tracks in the middle of North Luangwa National Park. We always have a safety car with us as there is nothing to stop elephants and lions making us stop or change course... snakes, leopard, buffalo and even black rhino have been known to disrupt our runs! Once or twice a month we try to do longer runs outside the Park. A lot of training takes place during the rainy season, which is soggy and muddy underfoot, and also hot and humid.

Team ZimZam raises funds to support each conservancy – just how important is this?

Joanna: Tragically, Gonarezhou National Park has twice witnessed the loss of its black rhino population due to poaching; in the 1940s and then again in the early 1990s. In March 2017, the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust was formally launched, with the objective that black rhinos will once again be reintroduced. Since then, huge amounts of work have been done to improve security operations and create stable funding resources.

On 10 June 2020, work began to construct an Intensive Protection Zone, bringing Gonarezhou a step closer to being home to the magnificent black rhino once again. Funds raised from the marathon are helping us to make our dream of reintroducing black rhinos safely, a reality.

Claire: It is very expensive to ensure that our rhinos stay protected, so every penny counts, but for us, it is much more than just the money. It is a direct link between black rhinos in Zambia and the global effort to save the species. Running in the London Marathon wearing a Save the Rhino and North Luangwa Conservation Project t-shirt, with strangers on London's streets shouting your name to cheer you on, is mind-blowing. For the runners who have never left Zambia before, this is a huge eye-opener. It is, without doubt, one of the highlights of the year. Everyone in North Luangwa follows the runners on social media and tracks them during the race, cheering them on from rural villages and remote outposts. It is beyond words to describe what that means.

Team ZimZam will be back in London in October 2021. We can't wait to see them running through the city!



SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Working with our local community in North Luangwa

Every day at the North Luangwa Conservation Programme, we help communities conserve their natural resources for their own benefits. One way that we do this is by teaching others about the incredible wildlife that they live beside.

Henry Sikapite | Conservation Education Coordinator, North Luangwa Conservation Programme

In 2003, our education programme, Lolesha Luangwa, began, thanks to a partnership between Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Zambia. Translated, Lolesha Luangwa means “look after the Luangwa ecosystem” in our local Bemba language. Each year, we engage almost 2,000 Grade Six learners within schools in the communities surrounding North Luangwa’s National Park.

One of the key themes within the Lolesha Luangwa programme is to teach students about black rhinos. The species was once found throughout Luangwa, but was poached to local extinction in the early 1990s. Later, once the area was secured, they were slowly reintroduced. To ensure that the rhinos would be not only protected, but also valued, by the local community, sharing the importance of black rhinos and other wildlife species is crucial for our education programme.

Through a series of lessons, we endeavour to build conservation knowledge among the learners, inspiring them to spread this awareness with their families and friends. Together, we hope that using this knowledge, individuals will ultimately take steps to conserve wildlife resources.

This helps to create a sense of responsibility to and ownership of Luangwa’s natural resources among our communities, which can reduce poaching and wildlife-crime incidents.

Some of our learners say, “We should not cut down trees and kill animals, poachers must be reported and arrested”. To complement what our learners hear in class, we also bring students into the Park to explore more about the wildlife they are learning about. This is the most exciting moment of my job; spending three days with students and teachers in the Park, sharing the experience of being in the wilderness and seeing wildlife up close!

The impact of Covid-19 on Lolesha Luangwa

Covid-19 has hugely affected our work at Lolesha Luangwa (and more widely across the North Luangwa Conservation Programme). Several of our outreach activities have been affected: no visits or outreach presentations have been given, schools have had to close, and our research teams were not able to complete their work. We don’t know when we will be able to teach our students about the incredible wildlife that lives near them, or provide the opportunity for them to see elephants, zebras and buffaloes with their own eyes.

Nevertheless, to continue strengthening our relations with schools and communities, we have distributed water buckets, bucket stands, washing basins and boxes of soap to supplement the Government’s effort in combating Covid-19. Where we can, we’ll continue to work with everyone in the local communities to benefit them and the wildlife that lives close by.



ALL IMAGES BY ANA WEDDOWS



North Luangwa Conservation Project, which runs the Lolesha Luangwa education programme, works closely with everyone in the local community; sharing knowledge at schools, boosting community participation in conservation with elders, and improving access to better livelihoods.



Keeping a close eye ON BLACK RHINOS

Rhinos might be large animals, but that doesn't make them easy to find, especially when their home is a landscape stretching out for hundreds of thousands of acres. Black rhinos, in particular, love to spend their time deep within the bush, so keeping an eye on them takes a lot of time and expertise.

Natasha Anderson | Rhino Monitoring Coordinator, Lowveld Rhino Trust



At the Lowveld Rhino Trust (LRT), our team is responsible for monitoring more than 200 black rhinos across the Bubye Valley, a huge and incredible area spanning more than 740,000 acres. While it's important to manage the rhinos at a population level, it's also critical to be able to identify each animal when they are spotted, noting down their location, health and general behaviour. To do this, unique ear-notch patterns are marked on every rhino.

Knowing each individual within the population makes it possible for LRT staff to identify when individuals move from their usual areas, or go missing: critical information throughout periods of high rhino poaching.

Each day, rhino monitors leave their field bases to track rhinos. They're looking to locate fresh rhino spoor (footprints, browsing signs, fresh dung). One of the first places they'll check is the nearest water point, as rhinos tend to drink at night. From there, monitors follow the spoor on foot until they are able to visually identify the individual.

At the final point, when a rhino has been spotted, the tracker's experience is crucial. They must approach the rhino at a distance, remaining cautious so that they do not disturb the animal, which could be dangerous. Photos will be taken and, as much as possible, checks will be made to look for injuries such as snare or bullet wounds that may require veterinary attention.



From top, clockwise:
A black mamba spotted by a rhino monitor on patrol.

Black rhino Susan, with her calf.

Two young male black rhinos.

Peeking through the bush, you can see the notch on this rhino's ear.

Black rhino Nanzi, with her calf.

there has been poaching activity in an area, trackers will increase their patrol efforts to find any missing animals.

Once back at base, field information is verified to ensure correct identifications have been made (photos are checked against previous records of an animal) and all of the data is then entered into a monitoring database. This information is then analysed, providing accurate records to inform management interventions and plan anti-poaching strategies.

Such intense monitoring also brings us good news. In the last 12 months, our teams have spotted 25 black rhino calves, and there have also been signs of three additional calves, but these calves have not yet been seen; the size of the calf spoor indicated that they were still very small – in one case, only a week or two old. To ensure the health and safety of both our rhinos and our rhino monitors, we don't track rhinos when their calves are

Every single black rhino is systematically checked in this way. If a particular rhino is not found within its usual home range, or if

this young, as the mothers are (rightfully so!) extremely protective and sensitive to any disturbance. Furthermore, young calves are not able to move long distances, particularly if their mother is disturbed and runs, so special effort is made not to unsettle these pairs.

Monitoring rhinos may seem like a very simple task, but such intense tracking takes a lot of time, effort, and expertise, especially in the huge Bubye Valley. But without monitoring, we wouldn't have good or accurate knowledge about our previous black rhinos, or the best way to protect them.



A surreal Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park

Driving along the main road from Memorial Gate to Hilltop in mid-April 2020 was a surreal moment for me. Animals had made these well-established roads into new walking trails, made obvious by miles of dung, and rhino middens centred on the road. Driving in my vehicle, I would have to wait patiently for large herds of buffalo to cross, oblivious to the fact the humans had ever commuted up and down these roads.

Dirk Swart | Section Ranger, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park

Right: A white rhino at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.
Below: Wildlife roadblocks through Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park during lockdown.

The bewildered look of buffalo, impala and lion on seeing a vehicle was clear and extraordinary. I had the sense that these animals, in such a short time-frame, had relegated vehicles and human activity to a distant memory. During the last week of March 2020, the Government of South Africa put the entire country into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the discovery that staff could be exposed to the virus by tourists, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi was put into a total lockdown at least three days before the Government's official date. Due to the urgency of the situation, only three hours were given for day visitors and for staff to prepare before all gates were to be locked. Initially, tourists were locked into the Park and arrangements had to be made to determine how we would deal with such a situation.

After an emergency meeting, it was decided a day later that all tourists and non-essential staff would have to leave the Reserves before the Government's full lockdown began. All law enforcement staff, however, had to remain. Field rangers, some who had already worked for up to six weeks – and were therefore due some time off – were forced to stay, while staff wanting to return were told to stay home.

The Government acted quickly: strict curfews and many regulations, including road blocks, meant that moving around the country was very difficult. In turn, poaching incidents dropped almost to zero during the first six weeks. By this time, a lot of staff had burned out, working day and night without relief. But they continued: protecting rhino, checking fences, burning firebreaks and sustaining the integrity of the Park.



The lack of tourists during this period also meant zero income, which affected budgets and expenditure. Purchasing maintenance equipment and essential items became almost impossible.

By early August, gates were opened, tourists were let back in, and overnight accommodation allowed. Gradually, a sense of normality is returning; however the Park and the surrounding area has a huge mountain to climb to bring business and livelihoods back to normal.

During this period, Save the Rhino initiated a Covid-19 appeal to assist with fundraising for our needs. Some of this has already assisted with personal protection equipment for our rangers and wider team to help prevent the spread of the virus.

It's also helped to maintain day-to-day operations, which have been extremely effected due to the knock on effects of the pandemic. Thank you to all of you for caring for us during these very difficult times.

As I sat in my vehicle a day before the gates were to be opened again, I thought to myself that, for the first time in the modern history of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, the Park had been without visitors for a sustained period of time, quiet, almost undisturbed. It was surreal, but a sense of emptiness prevailed, only fulfilled when the public could once again share in the Park's beauty and glory.

LAWRENCE NKOSIKHONA NENE

uMkhuze Game Reserve is a 40,000-hectare reserve within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park; a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. While 40,000 hectares may seem like a huge area, uMkhuze is much smaller compared to many other South African parks, sometimes even referred to as the 'postage stamp' reserve! It is home to an enormous number of species, including black and white rhinos. We recently spoke to **Section Ranger Lawrence Nkosikhona Nene** to find out what a day is like at uMkhuze Game Reserve.

What is a day like for you at uMkhuze?

Since I began working at uMkhuze eight years ago, my day has changed a lot, but now, as the Mshopi Section Ranger, my first duty is to check in with my teams at 06:00. In these calls we share plans for our daily patrols and decide on logistics, including equipment deliveries and any specific issues throughout the day. After this I spend my time working with the team to keep our wildlife safe, monitoring our equipment around the Reserve, like our fence-line cameras. If an incident takes place, we react instantly: we cannot afford to waste any time. Sometimes people attempt to come into the Reserve at night: we're always ready, no matter what.

What's the wildlife like at uMkhuze?

uMkhuze is a 'Big Five' Reserve, which means that we have lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino. But there are many other species, including large herds of impala, giraffe, hyena, kudu, wildebeest and nyala, and cheetah and wild dogs. That's not mentioning any of our bird species! uMkhuze has a huge bird population: at the last count there were 420 different species.

Do you see rhinos every day?

Unfortunately, I don't see rhinos every day, but our rhino monitors do. They go out each morning to look for both black and white rhinos. This helps us to know each rhinos' location and health, and monitor our rhino population.

uMkhuze is relatively small compared to other places, such as Kruger National Park. Does this bring different challenges to your work?

At the moment our team deals with around two incursions into the Reserve each day, sometimes up to four or five. On patrol, rangers come across snares, people hunting with dogs, vulture poisoning, rhino poaching and illegal logging. Other parks like Kruger are much bigger than uMkhuze, but I think that we're all facing these challenges. It's tough doing this work, so our main priority is ensuring we have enough capacity and resource to respond to every incident, so that wildlife and this habitat remain protected.

What inspired you to become a Section Ranger?

I'm passionate about wildlife and I wanted to do something to help endangered species.

Each day I get to do something to achieve this. I love seeing the populations of endangered species increase, and know that if that species lives at uMkhuze, we're doing our part to help.

How has Covid-19 affected uMkhuze?

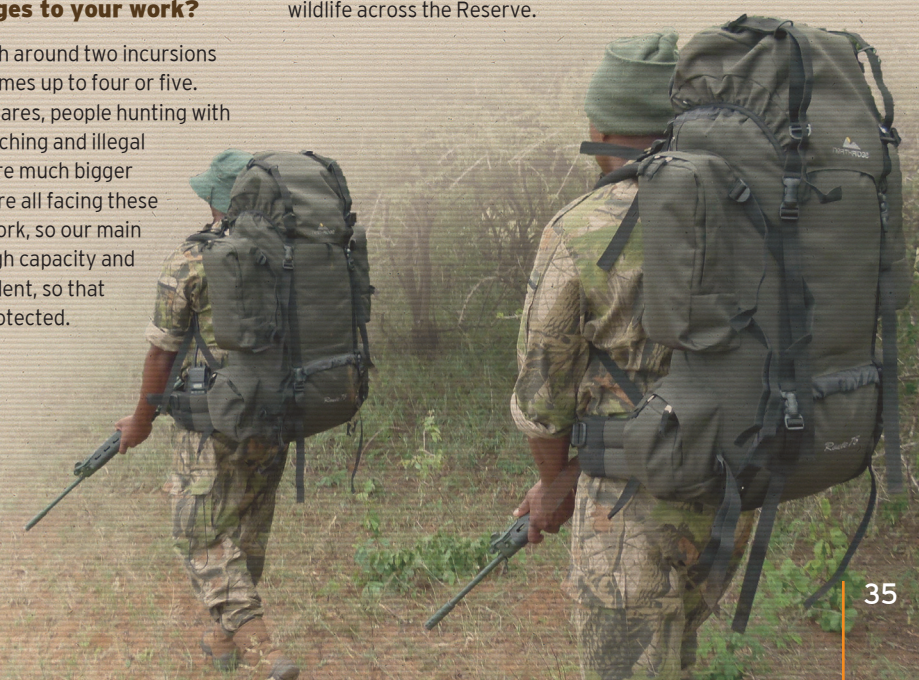
In March, when lockdown began in South Africa, many of our staff were on leave and weren't able to return to work for almost a month because of the restrictions. This meant it was very hard for others as they had to stay at work, with no break, for much longer than usual. Thankfully they were able to come back, but as tourism stopped, we have lost a significant amount of income, and this is our biggest challenge from Covid-19.

What's the hardest thing about your job?

I want to ensure that my team are doing their best and feel valued for doing so. We often don't have enough funds for more resources and I find this part of my job the most challenging. When we have a shortage of staff, it impacts all of our law enforcement operations and how we deal with anti-poaching patrols, so it's important to me that my team is happy.

What are your aims for the future?

I want to keep learning and build my career. I would love to be a Conservation Manager, supporting every effort to protect wildlife across the Reserve.



From POACHING to COVID-19

What next for our rhinos?

Keeping the rhino 'factory' breeding as fast as possible is the key to success and has largely provided us the buffer to weather the poaching blitz thus far. I would like to give you a whistle-stop tour of rhino conservation and the storms that are boiling over the horizon.

Dr Mike Knight
Chair, IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group

Successful rhino conservation is dependent upon a number of key issues. Foremost, we need to provide suitable and large habitats within a species' historic range to support large populations of free-ranging rhinos that breed entirely on their own terms.

Populations should be numbered in their hundreds, and ideally in their thousands, to really have conservation impact at scale. Good habitat is essential to provide the required food and nutrients: the better it is, the higher the densities of rhinos one can support.

The costs of securing our reserves has pushed the conservation model to focus on smaller, more manageable reserves. That does not mean forgetting the large parks – no, never. Good law enforcement goes hand-in-hand with efficient and effective management.

This must be supported by good intelligence to stop poachers before they get near our reserves. To do this, there must be good local and, ideally, regional cooperation with other law-enforcement agencies (Police, Customs etc.) to share intelligence. Unfortunately, this is where the law enforcement domain can be undermined by corruption and/or inefficiencies in the system. Having political will and support for conservation (and rhinos) is critical to its success. It can lead to a robust whole-government approach to addressing threats from poaching and organised wildlife crime.

Keeping rhino breeding optimally requires focused attention.

To do this, it is vital to maintain populations at productive sizes, because breeding rate declines if a population is at maximum carrying capacity. If a population is breeding well, surplus rhinos can be moved to other areas to establish new populations. This practice is crucial, as it spreads eggs into multiple baskets, places rhinos in safer areas, and spreads the burden of security.

Financial sustainability is essential for protected area management and rhino conservation efforts. Tourism and sustainable use (especially in southern Africa) have provided the funds for conservation in the state and private sectors. However, the huge and escalating costs (in financial and social terms) of protecting rhinos is driving many private land-owners, who receive little-to-no financial assistance from the state, to relinquish their rhino populations, in turn leading to a loss of rhino homes and habitat.

Then comes Covid-19!

Restrictions on international travel has seen a crash in the long-haul tourism market and conservation hunting that has been the cash-cow for many African range states. Namibia's nature-based tourism accounts for 14.7% of the national GDP and 15.4% employment, while up to 21% of Kenya's national income is derived from tourism. Covid-19 has seen this all but disappear, pushing many tourism operations to close, unemployment to rise, conservation organisations to the brink of failure and communities to be sceptical about the value of wildlife as a viable form of land-use.

South African National Parks, a model conservation organisation that prided itself on generating 80% of its own budget through tourism, is now dependent upon a cash injection from the state to survive.

So how do we respond?

Donor injections, with limited local government support, have helped plug some holes. This is not a sustainable long-term option as we ideally want these conservation initiatives to be financially self-sufficient (or as close as possible). Covid-19 has exposed how fickle the current nature-based tourism model is.

There has to be more introspection by the conservation authorities and private sector, looking to innovative means of diversifying income streams to provide greater social and economic resilience to these financial knocks. We want communities (as well as the private sector and governments) to see Africa's unique wildlife resources as an asset and not a cost. I see the need to diversify the local tourism market, explore more adventure tourism, include agricultural possibilities and expand sustainable-use options. If general conservation wins, so will our rhino conservation initiatives, although I fear at a somewhat lower level. Tough times lie ahead.

OPERATION BLUE RHINO: a game changer

Operation Blue Rhino has proven to be a game changer. That's the consensus amongst those at the frontline of rhino poaching in Namibia. Blue Rhino has been the catalyst enabling new, innovative and proactive approaches to counter wildlife crime. The breakthrough was achieved through strong partnerships.

Helge Denker

Above: A white rhino, most likely mid-mouthful!

Below: Black rhinos across the Namibian landscape, there is a lot of room for them to roam, and so a lot of area to protect.

Namibia has been very successful at rebuilding its rhino populations from historic lows seen prior to the country's independence in 1990. When rhino poaching first began to escalate again, around eight years ago, the Government implemented a variety of counter measures, with active support from NGOs, the private sector, rural communities and international funding partners.

New departments were created to deal exclusively with wildlife protection, intelligence and investigations. National security forces were deployed to the country's largest national park, Etosha, to counter poaching there.

While poaching was reduced, two aspects became clear: firstly, fast and flexible funding was essential to support dedicated wildlife-crime investigations; and, secondly, law enforcement and conservation staff had to work together. The answer was Operation Blue Rhino, a formal collaboration between the Protected Resources Division of the Namibian Police Force and the Intelligence and Investigation Unit of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

What the Blue Rhino Task Team has managed is a huge shift from reactive to proactive law enforcement. Instead of the discovery of a dead rhino initiating an investigation, would-be poachers are now regularly arrested while they are still conspiring to kill a rhino. During the first half of 2020, 30% of the 88 arrests related to rhinos were pre-emptive arrests of suspects conspiring to poach – before they had managed a kill. The figures of 2019 are even more impressive: 68 pre-emptive arrests out of a total of 131. That's more than half of all suspects caught before they managed to kill a rhino.



Close collaboration with prosecutors is also leading to convictions with appropriate sentences. Six perpetrators were convicted in May 2020 in two cases of conspiring to poach rhinos. All received sentences that send a stern warning to would-be criminals: "you are likely to get caught even before you find a rhino, and you will not get off lightly".

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the Blue Rhino Task Team are the arrests of a long list of dealers, middlemen, aiders and abettors, including international kingpins. This unravelling of crime syndicates forces dealers to expose themselves in their search for new buyers, creating a domino effect of further arrests.

Unfortunately, these successes don't mean that 'the war is won'. As long as there is a lucrative market for rhino horn and there are rhinos left to kill, poachers will attempt to get to them. But Namibian partnerships against environmental crime are making life increasingly difficult for the criminals, and steadily better for the rhinos.

Protecting rhinos with our community

I am delighted to report that despite the challenging times we are facing this year, Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) is doing well and our team's morale remains high.

Simson Uri-Khob | CEO, Save the Rhino Trust

Covid-19 has been tough for all of us at SRT. The overnight halt in tourism means that our budgets are extremely tight, many people within our community have lost their jobs and, without tourists looking out for wildlife, there are fewer people around to deter poachers. To improve the situation, we were able to continue our rhino-sightings bonus scheme, providing a small reward for our rangers and monitors each time they spot a rhino, helping our team members that may have been struggling, and ensuring that rhinos stay protected.

Covering an area of 25,000 km², the skills of our trackers are tested during long patrols on foot, on rough terrain, in an area with no national park status, no fences, and no controls over who enters and exits. Every time I spend time in the field with our teams, I am pleased to personally touch base with them, and be reminded of their motivations to keep up their monitoring and patrolling efforts to protect the Critically Endangered black rhino found in our region, in the Northwest of Namibia.

Engaging and empowering local people has always been central to our community-based rhino conservation model. This area is home to the world's largest truly wild black rhino population. While ensuring proper monitoring (i.e. 'boots on the ground') is fundamental to minimise the negative

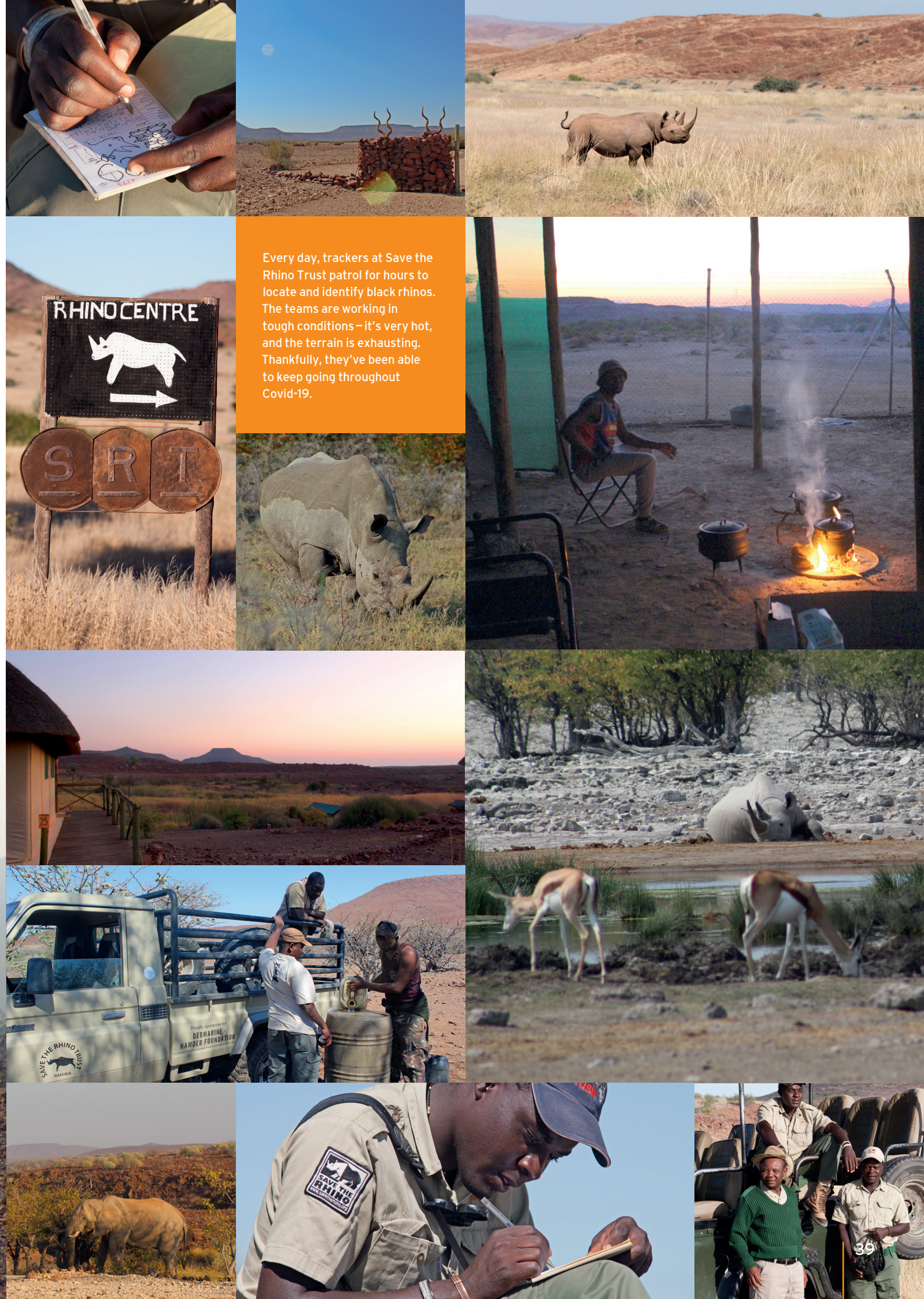
impacts of poaching, our core belief is based on who fills those boots, and how we can be successful by harnessing the values that they attach to saving the rhinos they monitor.

Designing the right mix of incentives is key to cultivate pro-rhino' behaviour. Our community-based approach is underpinned by Namibia's National Black Rhino Custodianship Programme, initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, which helps to benefit communal conservancies.

Through our Conservancy Rhino Ranger (CRR) incentive programme, initiated in 2012, we support conservancies to fulfil their monitoring obligations and maximise benefits. The programme is jointly implemented between a consortium of field-based support organisations, providing a suite of incentives to maximize local-led monitoring and income-generating opportunities from rhino conservation.

Since the inception of the CRR programme, monitoring outputs such as field days have increased 12-fold, and rhino sightings across the region increased five-fold. Critically, rhino poaching has virtually been eliminated: only six cases have been recorded in the region within the past three years. Thanks to the support of local people, the teams have also prevented dozens of probable poaching attempts, saving rhinos before it's too late.

However, our success has also brought increased costs and challenges at a critical time when poaching pressure remains high and the Covid-19 pandemic presents new threats. Many rural Namibian households have lost their only source of income, with recovery a distant hope. We cannot afford to relax our efforts to protect our rhino, but I know we can count on the unwavering dedication of our team.





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