

Large Scale Community-based Rhino Conservation in North-West Namibia

Annual Progress Report - 2018

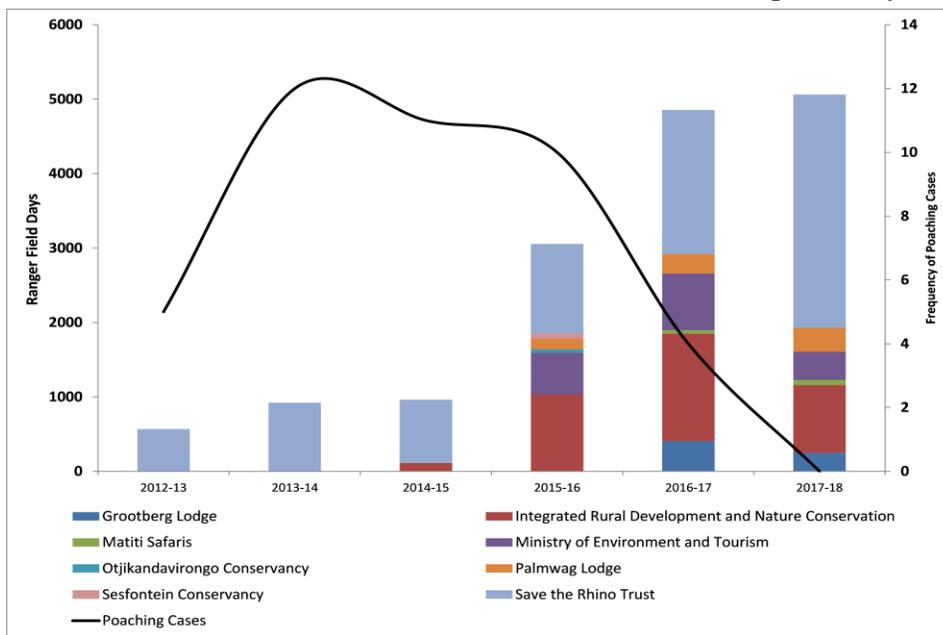


A rhino cow with a new born (< 1 month) calf photographed by a Conservancy Rhino Ranger. 2018 was an exceptional year not only for record numbers of rhino calves born but also zero poaching!

As the 2018 calendar comes to a close, we look back at the achievements and accolades for our collective efforts to protect Africa’s last truly wild population of black rhino in Namibia. Overall, 2018 can be seen as yet another milestone year with the most important achievement - for the first time since the poaching began in 2012 – a **full 12 months with ZERO poaching!**

A tribute to the incredible collaborative effort which has helped catalyze and sustain a tremendous boost

for necessary trained, equipped and motivated local ‘boots on the ground’.



The graph on the left illustrates the relationship between the reductions in poaching rates (*solid black line*) and local engagement in rhino protection (i.e. Rhino Ranger patrol effort) bolstered by our team approach – *each field partner’s contribution towards Conservancy Rhino Ranger patrol days is indicated by different colors in each annual bar*



Firstly, despite a watershed year in 2017, our **Conservancy Rhino Ranger Program** continued to advance community-based rhino monitoring to new levels of achievement. All our effort and event indicators have continued to climb including the Conservancy commitment with total growth since inception from **18 to presently 64 Conservancy employed rangers**. Below are a few specific milestones:

1. **Rhino Ranger patrol days have increased an astounding 98% since 2017 and helped increase overall patrol effort by 1,200% since 2011 (before program inception)**
2. **Rhino Sightings have increased by 26% from 2017 and helped increase overall rhino sightings by 523% since 2011 (before program inception)**
3. **Rhino monitoring efforts now produce verified sightings of at least 65% of the region's rhino each month, up from only 25% in 2012**
4. **Awarded the prestigious William Conway International Conservation Award Top Honors by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (230 member institutions around the world)**
5. **Selected as First Round Case Study profile for IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group's new online sharing and learning platform 'People Not Poaching'**
<https://www.peoplenotpoaching.org/conservancy-rhino-ranger-incentive-program>
6. **More than 200 rural farmers** living within or adjacent to the rhino range were directly engaged by Conservancy Rhino Ranger patrol teams during monthly farm visits (see below)
7. **We have now gone 15 months (26 August 2017 – 25 November 2018) with ZERO poaching**
8. **Over the past 18 months of at least 16 independent potential poaching gangs were stopped and removed from the area by law enforcement BEFORE they could poach - 11 of these cases were made possible through pre-emptive intelligence collected by local informer networks**





Rhino Pride CAMPAIGN

Following our successful inaugural year in 2017, the Rhino Pride Campaign continued its march to improve the value local people attach to saving rhino. Below are a few specific highlights from 2018:

1. **Over 500 Conservancy leaders, members and rural youth participated in Rhino Friend Pledge** ceremonies led by local Chiefs and respected community leaders
2. **Over 1000 area youth participated in rhino-themed sporting leagues and tournaments** throughout the year and about 750 Rhino Friend Sweatbands were distributed to athletes who participated in the Second Annual World Rhino Day Sports tournaments held in Okanguati and Khorixas
3. A **new rhino song and music video ‘Save the Rhino’** was created together with Mondessa Youth Opportunity school in Swakopmund
4. Over 60 Conservancy leaders from 22 Conservancies located in the remote far northwest participated in **‘Rhino Movie Night’** which shared a number of rhino music videos and rhino protection documentaries from the area to remote, ‘off-the-grid’ areas.
5. Our Rhino Hero campaign **awarded 32 rangers with custom Rhino Hero jackets** who had committed at least 5 years of service to rhino protection and achieved more than 100 verified rhino sightings. Collectively, the first group of **‘Rhino Heroes’ have accumulated over 440 ranger years of rhino protection!**
6. **Our 14 Rhino Friend Youth Clubs engaging over 200 local youth** conducted a number of rhino-oriented activities including two rural area clean-up campaigns, school debates, camping with Rhino Ranger teams, and local marches to demonstrate their support for rhino conservation (See photo right)



PHOTOS



An IRDNC staff member makes a 'Rhino Friend Forever' pledge in front of peers and Conservancy leaders led by the chairman of the Kunene Regional Conservancy Association. More than 500 formal pledges were conducted in 2018.



A joint SRT – IRDNC – Conservancy Rhino Ranger team took Prince William rhino tracking. *'I am impressed by how local communities, the ministry of environment and NGOs are pulling together in Kunene to keep rhinos safe. It is a model that I hope others can follow, both here in Namibia and across the continent,'* he said.

Photo: Kensington Palace / Twitter

PHOTOS



The strength in our approach is the genuine collaborative nature of how we work. This team approach has helped increase patrol effort by over 1,200% since the poaching began in 2012. Here a patrol team comprising NGO (SRT), Conservancy Rhino Rangers, Conservancy Game Guards and Namibian Police.



Four Conservancy Rhino Rangers receive their Rhino Hero jackets in front of their local community during a World Rhino Day event hosted by the Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism

How We Got Started

In 2011, in the face of an escalating poaching threat, local community leaders and game guards saw the need to improve their capacity to protect the rhino on their lands and better fulfill their obligations as 'Rhino Custodians'. A small group of dedicated field conservationists together with support from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism formed an informal working group that sought to provide targeted support to these Communal Rhino Custodians. Our first initiative was to design and implement a programme to strengthen and expand the capacity for Communal Rhino Custodians to monitor the rhino on their lands. We called this the Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme. This program utilizes specialists from dedicated field-based organizations, namely Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation and Minnesota Zoo, to train a new generation of "rhino rangers" - highly talented groups of



A Rhino Ranger in action

local people, chosen by and accountable to their communities to conduct rhino monitoring. The program provides an enhanced training curriculum, state-of-the-art rhino monitoring and field patrol equipment, and performance-based cash bonuses that enable and incentivize rhino ranger teams to complete quality patrols. Once rhino ranger teams acquire the basic skills needed to effectively monitor the rhino on their land and pending necessary approvals, training in rhino tourism will help guide the development of community-led rhino tourism activities that would improve rhino security by generating the critical finances needed to sustain rhino monitoring and enhancing the value that people place on keeping rhino alive. At the heart of this approach is the belief that a future for Africa's wild rhino will only be secured when poaching is simply not tolerated by the local people, when rhino become more valuable alive than dead, and where innovative solutions – grown from the grassroots – are supported through authentic partnerships between government, NGOs and private sector.

We deeply thank our main donors & partners:

(who's gifts directly support the Conservancy Rhino Rangers)

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Field Partners: Thirteen Communal Conservancies (Puros, Otjikondavirongo, Sesfontein, Anabeb, Omatendeka, Ehirovipuka, /Khoadi #Hoas, Torra, Doro !Nawas, Sorris Sorris, //Huab, Uibasen/Twefelfontein, Tsiseb), Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, Namibia Nature Foundation, Conservancy Safaris Namibia, Camelthorn Safaris, Journey's Namibia, Ultimate Safaris, Wilderness Safaris Namibia and the Minnesota Zoo