

African Wildlife News

Art Wolfe

1961-2006

YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK IN THE AFRICAN HEARTLANDS

45TH

Home to elephants, rhinos and more, African Heartlands are conservation

landscapes large enough to sustain a diversity of species for centuries to come. In these landscapes—places like Kilimanjaro and Samburu—AWF and its partners are pioneering lasting conservation strategies that benefit wildlife and people alike.

Inside THIS ISSUE



page 4

AWF's 45th Anniversary Milestones

Explore AWF's 45 years of conserving Africa's wildlife and wild lands.



page 6

Go WILD with Holiday Gift-Giving!

Find the perfect gift for family and friends in AWF's Wildlife Adoption Center.



page 7

Walkathon Supports Women's Education

Learn how AWF's partner BEADS is breaking the chains of illiteracy.

 **45TH ANNIVERSARY**
AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION®
www.awf.org



Darryl & Shama Balfour

A mother and baby black rhino, like the two shown here, were killed by poachers in Kenya's Tsavo East National Park.

Rhino Mother and Calf Killed in Alarming Poaching Incident

Although the once rampant killing of Africa's rhinos has declined in recent years, the threat from poachers remains, says AWF's Director of Conservation Science, Dr. Philip Muruthi.

He should know. Over the summer, Dr. Muruthi was taken by rangers from Kenya's Tsavo East National Park to see the carcasses of two rhinos—a mother and a baby who had been killed by poachers just days before.

"It was a grisly scene I will never forget," reports Dr. Muruthi from AWF's

Nairobi office. "The horn had been hacked from the mother rhino. Her calf, perhaps two to three years old, lay dead by her side."

Kenyan officials launched a manhunt for the poachers, who had crossed into Tsavo from neighboring Somalia. With the aid of aerial reconnaissance, the poachers were soon confronted by Kenya Wildlife Service rangers. The rhino horn—some have brought as much as \$25,000 on the black market—was recovered, but the lives of the rhino and her calf were lost.

The ancestors of today's rhinos can be traced back 40 to

50 million years. Fossil records show they once lived throughout North America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. As recently as the 1960s, there were at least 100,000 black rhinos in Africa. Today there are only 3,600.

Rhinos have been driven to near extinction. The world population has fallen by more than 90 percent in the past 30 years. At one time, there were 30 species of rhino on the planet; today only five remain. Two species—the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) and white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*)—are found in Africa. Three species remain in Asia.

continued on page 3

Rhino Poaching

continued from page 1

AWF has been at the forefront of rhino conservation since the 1970s when skyrocketing demand for rhino horn took a devastating toll on the besieged animals. Partnering with other conservation groups, AWF launched a number of emergency measures. By the 1980s however, it became clear the only way to ensure the rhino's survival was to protect them in heavily patrolled sanctuaries.

The good news today is that wherever protected rhino habitats are receiving the support they need to keep poachers at bay, black rhino populations are recovering slowly but steadily.

At Kenya's Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, for instance—which AWF helped establish in 1986—rhinos are reproducing at rates that scientists hope will one day allow the rhinos to repopulate more of their historic range.

"These rhinos are alive because of support from several groups, in particular AWF," says Richard Kech, formerly officer-in-charge of Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary.

 You can help stop poachers in their tracks: Send a donation in the enclosed envelope, or protect a rhino through AWF's Wildlife Adoption Center (see page 6), or donate online at <http://support.awf.org/helptherhinos>. Whichever option best suits your needs, all of us at AWF thank you for your continued support!

And at Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, in a section called an Intensive Protection Zone, there has not been a single incident of rhino poaching since 2004 when AWF secured emergency anti-poaching funds for the area.

AWF's Dr. Muruthi greets these milestones with optimism, but cautions that continued vigilance is critical. "We simply need more of everything," says Dr. Muruthi. "More equipment for rangers' communications, monitoring, and surveillance equipment; more petrol for patrol vehicles; more funds for spare parts; more access to aerial surveillance; more tents, binoculars."

Last year, AWF delivered \$15,000 in field communications equipment to the Kenya Wildlife Service. With your support and that of other generous donors, we hope to do even more in the coming months.

If Africa's rhinos are to survive, they need protection around the clock. Tragically, poachers only need one window of opportunity to strike—as they did this summer. ■

Why the Demand for Rhino Horn?

Rhino horn is worth its weight in gold in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, where it is prized for both medicinal and ornamental purposes. In traditional Chinese medicine, for instance, powdered rhino horn has been used for thousands of years to treat ailments like headaches, boils, fever, and food poisoning. Meanwhile, in oil-rich Yemen—where young men have long coveted carved rhino horn for the ornamental handles of their ceremonial daggers—skyrocketing oil prices in the 1970s boosted the country's per capita income, and the demand for rhino horn rose dramatically. The world population of rhinos plummeted by more than 90 percent.



AWF is aiding park officials to combat poaching, but more help is needed as rhinos are still under threat.

This drastic decline was finally checked in the 1980s when AWF and others helped establish a handful of specially designed rhino sanctuaries. Today, rhino populations are slowly recovering within these heavily guarded areas. AWF and others hope that one day the sanctuaries' rhinos can be safely released into larger national parks where they will have more open space to breed and thrive. ■

In Tribute

Dedicated Game Officer and Friend of AWF Killed by Elephant Poachers

AWF mourns the loss of Mr. Emmanuel Muyengi who was shot and killed by elephant poachers in April.

A collaborator with AWF on conservation programs in the Maasai Steppe Heartland, Mr. Muyengi was the District Game Officer of Simanjiro, an important habitat for elephants and other wildlife in northern Tanzania. Mr. Muyengi was leading the April 16 raid in Simanjiro when he was singled out by poachers and shot. Though the poachers escaped during the confusion of the ensuing shoot-out, authorities were able to recover the elephant tusks. Mr. Muyengi was rushed to the hospital, but died the next day.

As long as there is a market for ivory, rhino horn, and other wildlife products, the lives of rangers and the magnificent creatures they are working to protect will continue to be in jeopardy. While progress has been made

To support their heroic efforts, AWF is providing more anti-poaching resources to the region.

to curb poaching and the black market demand for illegal wildlife products that drives the poachers, there is clearly a need for even greater vigilance.

Mr. Muyengi's tragic loss is also a significant blow to conservation efforts in the Simanjiro Plains, a focal point of AWF programs in the Maasai Steppe Heartland. Despite being understaffed and stretched thin for resources, the District Council of Simanjiro and Wildlife Division continue to confront poachers head on. To support their heroic efforts, AWF is providing more anti-poaching resources to the region. Sadly, Mr. Muyengi's loss is just the latest example of the extreme risks which AWF partners, and occasionally our own staff, face in the line of duty.

Our sincere condolences are extended to Mr. Muyengi's family and his colleagues at Simanjiro District Council. ■