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WILDERNESS  TRUST  
W I L D L I F E



## OTHER PROJECTS

THE FOLLOWING ARE PROJECTS THAT THE TRUST IS ABOUT TO EMBARK UPON

### BOTSWANA RHINO RELOCATION & REINTRODUCTION PROJECT

The White Rhino Reintroduction Project is a true success story: Collaborative conservation efforts between Wilderness Safaris, Wilderness Trust, Botswana's Department of Wildlife (DWNP) and the Botswana Government have realised a dream with the successful re-introduction of the white rhino into the Mombo area of the Moremi Game Reserve.

By the 1970s, both black and white rhino populations had declined alarmingly in northern Botswana; the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) had previously been confined to the Kwando-Chobe area but the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) had been common throughout the area until the middle of the 20th century. As a result of over-hunting by illegal hunters and worldwide demand for their valuable horns, as well as inadequate protection by the government, even rhino that had been reintroduced from South Africa were drastically reduced. A survey in 1992 showed 19 white rhino while the black rhino was classified "locally extinct" in Botswana.

To rectify the situation, the Botswana Defence Force and the Department of Wildlife reacted by creating Africa's finest anti-poaching operation, laying the groundwork for the reintroduction of rhino into the country. All surviving white rhino were moved to protected sanctuaries until such time as they could be released back into the wild, in national reserves.

#### Conclusion

Joint monitoring patrols with the DWNP Anti-Poaching Unit are achieving good results, and are also successful in tracking rhino as they move further away into new areas to find the very best grazing.



Thanks to the project, breeding populations of both African rhino species have been re-established in the Okavango Delta, and aside from the value that is added to world rhino numbers and population distributions, guests of Wilderness Safaris' camps have the privilege of encountering rhino on game drives an encounter that enhances the concept of changing the lives of people and Africa.

#### WHITE RHINO

In 2001 Wilderness Safaris together with the DWNP initiated a programme that has resulted in more than 32 white rhino running free and wild in the Okavango Delta. The first group of four white rhino arrived at Mombo in November 2001, Wilderness Safaris having purchased the first three and Gaborone Game Reserve donating one – a bull. As soon as these animals were freed, they became the property of the state and Moremi Game Reserve.

Wilderness also financed the construction of bomas, much of the transport and the monitoring costs. A further 22 rhino arrived as a result of an innovative 'rhino-for-roan' swap between South Africa and Botswana. Despite challenges and setbacks – poachers killed two rhino in October 2003 – the project team has continued to work with undiminished fervour. A week after the crime, security was upgraded, the poachers caught and three new rhino released, sending a powerful message that the rhino have returned!

The ultimate accolade, though, came from the rhino themselves. Since August 2004, no less than five rhino calves have been born in the wild, all to mothers released in the programme. The total white rhino population now stands at over 32, and it is likely that there may be more births in the coming months, as the rhino have clearly settled down in their new home.

#### BLACK RHINO

The classification of the black rhino as "locally extinct" became redundant as of October 2003, when the first four black rhino – two males and two females – were released into the Okavango Delta. Since then, other negotiations include the 'sable-for-black-rhino' deal between the South African and Botswana governments, as well as initiatives with the Africa Conservation Science Centre, the International Rhino Foundation and with Wilderness guests.