

The Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Programme has become one of Namibia's most effective conservation and rural development initiatives. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and partners have, over the past ten years, translocated approximately 8,000 animals to conservancies in communal areas. This has helped build the local resource base for the generation of income and other benefits, and at the same time has helped to re-establish the historic biodiversity of the different regions. Remarkably, these biodiversity gains have taken place outside of protected areas which has significantly expanded the impact of the protected area network.

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It has been the strong commitment from conservancies to sustainably manage and restore wildlife and other natural resources that has driven the ecosystem-based economic development of conservancies. Rural communities have become empowered as resource managers who not only derive benefits from wildlife but who also assist the Government in achieving national biodiversity goals.

The ability of conservancies to generate benefits from wildlife has created a shift in attitude from animosity to one of ownership, management and pride. This recovery and resulting range expansion of the black rhino subpopulation in the Kunene Region has been largely instigated by a growing demand by local communities for rhino-based tourism development.

During 2005 a Biological Management Workshop, it was agreed that the original range of the black rhino, from the Ugab in the south to the Kunene in the north, should be repopulated.

Due to the rugged and remoteness of the area, traditional methods using ground retrieval equipment could not be used so a Super Huey helicopter was used to lift the rhino.

As a result of rhino being translocated into communal places previously used for stock, farming land has been set aside by communities as wildlife areas, thereby benefiting other important species besides rhinos. Namibia has taken the bold step to engage stakeholders at all levels in the management and conservation of rhino and the success in rhino conservation in Namibia can be related to the partnerships between government, resource managers (both freehold and communal land), NGOs and the private sector.

While protected areas are critical to the conservation of the species, the Namibian conservation model of rhino providing a focused tourism value in select conservancies, has certainly underlined the need for a partnership approach to rhino management.

The specific objectives of the 2010 translocations were to:

- enhance the existing black rhino population at Okongue in the Purros Conservancy
- enhance the existing black rhino population at Secret Springs and Mudorib in the Palmwag concession area
- start a new population of black rhino in the Orupembe conservancy
- reduce the black rhino density in Zone 6 of the Palmwag concession
- remove excess black rhino bulls in Zone 4b of the Etendeka concession area

How to suspend a rhino in mid-air:

- 1 A suitable animal is located, either by a tracking team or spotter plane
- 2 The darting helicopter with darting crew is summoned and, if the located animal was one of the required individuals, it is darted
- 3 The spotter plane informs the retrieval crew and guides them to the site
- 4 Once the animal is down, the veterinarian and darting team attend to the animal whilst the retrieval crew disembark and ready the slinging equipment
- 5 Depending on the distance to be travelled, the animal is slung hanging by its feet or fastened to a pallet
- 6 On arrival at the processing site the animal is ear-notched, a tag and/or transmitter fitted, the animal measured, samples taken and the animal loaded into a crate
- 7 Animals are transported by road to locations near release sites and then slung into areas inaccessible to vehicle

Thanks

Our grateful thanks to Opel Zoo in Germany, which paid for an orthodontal camera for MET, which can be used during such operations to help determine age, to check for abnormalities or deformities, and the animal's suitability for translocation.

How to suspend a rhino in mid-air

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