

# Cooperative conservation: a united front

Rapidly increasing numbers of poaching incidents are causing rhino owners across southern Africa to step up security, making the work of poachers more difficult. Although obviously the right course of action, this has serious implications for neighbouring countries. As rhino reserves in South Africa become more secure, syndicates will begin to look elsewhere for easier targets.

Adam Brown | Michael Hearn Intern

**F**or this reason, although poaching has yet to hit Namibia with its full force, rhino conservationists are strategising and implementing plans to increase security. **Depressingly, it is not a matter of if the poaching will come to Namibia but when.**

During my visit to Namibia in May, I had the great privilege of attending the rhino security workshop for the North West region. This was a fantastic opportunity to see cooperative conservation in action. The meeting included staff from Save the Rhino Trust, the Ministry of Environment

and Tourism, Namibian Police, IRDNC, members of the private sector and local community game guards. with grass up to your waist. In the 2011 rainy season, Namibia experienced up to 10 times the usual level of rainfall causing this dramatic change in scenery. With so much standing water, rhino are no longer bound to waterholes but have spread far and wide, making an already tough job for the trackers even more difficult.

Spending my birthday with the camel team and their donkeys was an experience I'll never forget! Nor the next day when we rode from sun-up to past sun-down in search of our quarry. The resilience demonstrated by these guys is nothing short of heroic; our energy that day was rewarded with my first sighting of a black rhino in the wild.

In stark comparison, during my time with Kapoi's team, we were greeted by two male rhino not 10 minutes' walk from the door of our tent. The power in these animals was intense, they'd been fighting all evening, but even bloodied and worn out they still appeared a formidable sight. It was a great demonstration of the unpredictable nature that is common place when working with wildlife.

I spent my final days with SRT at Desert Rhino Camp, a cooperative venture with Wilderness Safaris. It was a brilliant opportunity to see the positive impact the tourism industry can have on conservation. Unstressed rhinos, very satisfied tourists: the only way to sustainably maintain a successful conservation tourism venture. This experience and the whole trip taught me valuable lessons that will live with me forever.

During the meeting, a draft version of the security plan was discussed and debated over. Everyone recognised that when making decisions and plans such as this, it is vital to include all members involved in order to ensure that everyone feels a degree of ownership and in turn a willingness to put plans into practice. Some great advances were made within the two-day workshop, which has created a secure foundation for future work on the security of the area.

Immediately after these meetings, I was whisked off to spend 10 unforgettable days with the tracking teams of Save the Rhino Trust. Having been told about the Kunene Region by a number of regular visitors, the words 'like the surface of the moon' rolled around my head. What I found when we headed north was a complete surprise; the Region that I had heard was barren and rocky was luscious and green,

The remote and rugged terrain of the Kunene Region provides natural protection for the rhino



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## Thanks and welcome

Our extremely grateful thanks to USFWS for its continuing magnificent support of SRT, and to Krefeld Zoo in Germany, David Casbon and Simone Niedhauser for their donations. We would also like to welcome SRT's new Fundraising and Communications Manager, Sue Wagner: we are really pleased to have you on board!