



ANNUAL REPORT

2012



RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

KUNENE RHINO CONSERVATION PROJECT*Coordinator: Simson Uri-Khob*

The overall aim of the project (November 2010-October 2011) was to enhance the security of the desert-adapted black rhino within the Kunene area, aid in the monitoring efforts of Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), and to deliver outreach and training to neighbouring “Custodian” community conservancies.

Over eight months, all four of SRT’s tracking teams were deployed, and Community Game Guards (CGGs) trained and audited. Further activities included the attendance of Simson Uri-Khob at various meetings as a representative of SRT and delivering presentations to prospective donors and various other groups. All field data from rhino identification forms and field patrol reports were checked and verified, the data put into the database each month during the reporting period.

All SRT’s tracking teams were involved in a joint capture operation with Namibia’s Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in March 2011, where 32 animals were immobilised, some fitted with tracking devices and then translocated. The animals would not have been found so easily had SRT’s trackers not had such an intimate knowledge of the six ecozones involved and of the individual animals.

During the reporting period, a total of 5 637km was travelled during 17 night-time patrols in key areas. These high ‘at-risk’ areas are identified by a vulnerability index using a threat score that takes factors such as the proximity of rhino sightings to roads as well as the ruggedness of the terrain into account.

Finally, eight joint ground patrols with MET staff were successful in meeting training needs and improving the monitoring skills of both MET and SRT staff. In addition, a very successful air-to-ground joint exercise with MET was undertaken in July 2011.

Challenges during 2011 included very high rainfall which impacted on monitoring activities, and a poaching incident, the first in 17 years in the Kunene region: SRT’s Southern Team found the carcass of a rhino calf caught in a cable snare with both horns removed.

SRT update: CEO Rudi Loutit retired from SRT as both CEO and Trustee on 15 November 2011. Rudi dedicated most of his working life to conservation and, for the past five years, managed the Trust under difficult circumstances. The Wilderness Wildlife Trust would like to acknowledge the immense contribution made by Rudi over the past years to the conservation of this iconic species.