

# THE RHINO REPORTER

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## IN THIS ISSUE

### 2 POACHING TRENDS UPDATE



### 4 OUR PROJECTS - UPDATE



### 6 RHINO CONSERVATION AWARDS



### 8 RHINO PARADE



### 10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## EDITOR'S NOTE LAUREN VAN NIJKERK

In May 2014 I ventured to Somkhanda Game Reserve with a heavy heart. The trip was driven by a response to four poaching incidents at the reserve and a decision to dehorn all the rhino inhabiting the reserve in an attempt to curb the demand for their horns. I was in full support of removing the iconic horn to eliminate the temptation of poaching, but nothing could have quite prepared me for what I witnessed.

The process is detailed in this newsletter, but no explanation can prepare you for the sight of a hornless rhino. It is heart-breaking to watch such a powerful creature walk away "powerless" and without the one characteristic that has defined it for so many years. I suppose you just need to remind yourself over and over again that it ultimately means their survival, and then grapple with the fact that these are the measures we have to take in order to protect our heritage.

I also witnessed the post-poaching scene of our two beloved rhino – Jonah and Eddie. Let's just say my stomach battled with the sight as much as my mind did. I was curious to see what reality had in store for me, but honestly regretted the sighting. The complete disregard for life was very apparent and riled up an anger in me that was difficult to contain (thankfully I was among friends!). It also gave me a new found respect for the Wildlands staff that work at this interface daily. They literally put their lives in danger, day in and day out to protect these animals. They are driven by passion and a tangible love for rhino and are really the unsung heroes in among this chaos. To the staff of Somkhanda Game Reserve – I salute you and words cannot explain how grateful we are for the amazing work that you do and the sacrifices you continue to make.

We must also extend our thanks to all of you (our readers) who have contributed in some way to make our conservation efforts possible. I hope this newsletter gives you sufficient insight into what we have invested your funds into.





## POACHING TRENDS UPDATE

### RHINO POACHING STATUS UPDATE

by Kevin McCann

Fuelled by the continued growing demand for rhino horn primarily in China and Vietnam and driven by international criminal syndicates, rhinos around the world are under serious threat of extinction. During 2012, both the western black rhino and Vietnamese populations of Javan rhino were declared extinct, and there are approximately six northern white rhino left in Africa. This threat is growing by the day, and has now dominated South African conservation activities for the past 5 years. The absolute need to ensure our rhino populations do not go extinct has led to millions of Rands being invested into improved security, providing anti-poaching support, aerial surveillance, legal and community interventions. Despite these interventions, our rhino continue to be slaughtered at an unprecedented rate.

As of the end of 17 August, a total of 659 rhino had been poached so far this year in South Africa, compared to 536 at the same time last year, and 296 in 2012. This indicates a doubling in the poaching intensity within the past 2 years! The Kruger National Park continues to take the biggest hit, with 418 of these rhino this year having been poached in our iconic national park. Limpopo, North West and KwaZulu-Natal also continue to be hotspots for these illegal criminal activities, and are putting serious pressure on the conservation authorities of these provinces. The overall picture of the current status is shown in the table on the right.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN RHINO POACHING STATISTICS

REGION	2012	2013	2014
Kruger National Park	428	609	418
Gauteng	1	8	3
Limpopo	59	114	84
Mpumalanga	28	92	35
North West	77	87	44
Eastern Cape	7	5	11
Free State	0	4	4
KwaZulu-Natal	66	85	57
Western Cape	2	0	1
Northern Cape	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>1004</b>	<b>659</b>

With the unrelenting rhino poaching situation at present, the South African government has committed to addressing this issue through a number of integrated strategic interventions, as deliberated in cabinet on 6 August 2014. Government has finally realised that they cannot watch idly as the successes of rhino conservation efforts 50 to 60 years ago are destroyed, where the translocation of 350 odd rhino from Imfolozi Game Reserve to the Kruger National park has resulted in a current population there of more than 10 000 white rhino.





## POACHING TRENDS UPDATE

We recognise that poaching is part of a multi-billion dollar worldwide illicit wildlife trade. Addressing the scourge is not simple. It is in this context that cabinet has decided that we need to implement these more vigorous integrated strategic management approaches aimed at reducing the threat to rhinos and the biological management of the species.

**The integrated interventions adopted by cabinet are:**

Compulsory interventions - including pro-active anti-poaching initiatives, the implementation and improvement of actionable intelligence as well as the introduction of responsive legislation and policy amendments to address rhino poaching.

The increase in rhino numbers – this would include the biological management of rhino as well as the translocation of rhino from areas where they are threatened (e.g. eastern boundary of Kruger National Park), as well as areas where environmental conditions and high rhino densities restrict breeding and increase mortalities. Previous experience has shown that biological management, which includes translocations, has resulted in the growth of rhino numbers in South Africa.

International and national collaboration and cooperation - interventions on international collaboration will further strengthen efforts to address not only rhino poaching, but illegal wildlife trade in general. It is internationally acknowledged that illegal wildlife trade results in devastating impacts on species, ecosystems, sustainable livelihoods, economies, and national and regional security. Collaboration between range, transit and consumer states is therefore essential to address this challenge effectively.

Long-term sustainability measures - cabinet authorised the Department of Environmental Affairs to explore the feasibility of possible trade in rhino horn. There is no final decision on this matter as cabinet has established an inter-ministerial committee and a panel of experts to consider all possibilities. This would be linked to the creation of alternative economic opportunities for communities bordering protected areas; creating incentives to promote / facilitate rhino ownership.

## Dehorning Somkhanda's Rhino

by Kevin McCann

With the continued increase in rhino poaching in South Africa in 2014, very few rhino populations remain untouched by these barbaric poachers. With 659 rhino poached at present in South Africa as of 17 August, Somkhanda Game Reserve (the very first community-owned game reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal) has now also become a victim of this senseless activity, having lost 4 white rhino during April / May this year. The loss of these white rhino is a significant blow to the Gumbi community and Wildlands Conservation Trust, who are partnering together to make Somkhanda Game Reserve a model conservation initiative.

As the rhino poaching crisis intensifies, it becomes more and more difficult to protect our rhino. Somkhanda Game Reserve has invested in a number of strategies to safeguard the rhino, including improving the security on the reserve, ensuring regular aerial patrols over the reserve, fitting all rhino with GPS tracking technologies, and supporting the intensive monitoring of the rhino population. Despite this investment, Somkhanda Game Reserve has still lost rhino!

David Gilroy (Community Conservation Manager), and Kevin McCann (Deputy Director of Conservation) of Wildlands, remove a horn off a White Rhino in Somkhanda Community Game Reserve





## POACHING TRENDS UPDATE

Ask anyone involved in protecting rhino, and they will support the notion that no single strategy will protect them. What we need is a range of different strategies that all work together to change the risk vs reward dynamic – we need to make it more risky for the poacher, with less reward. For this reason, Wildlands Conservation Trust and the Gumbi community took the decision to dehorn the rhino on Somkhanda Game Reserve, as an additional strategy to reduce the risk of poachers coming after these rhino. Dehorning is not a new idea. Namibia was the first country to dehorn its rhino in 1989, with Zimbabwe following suit in the early 1990s. In South Africa, dehorning is being increasingly utilised as a strategy in mainly the private sector. However, in all these instances, the dehorning was supported by investment in anti-poaching infrastructure. In the absence of effective security, dehorning alone does not help. With Wildlands currently improving the armed security on Somkhanda Game Reserve, our logical next step was to further reduce the risk to the rhino by dehorning.



David Gilroy (Community Conservation Manager at Wildlands) comforts a rhino that has been dehorned - as part of the strategy being implemented at Somkhanda Game Reserve to curb rhino poaching statistics.



## OUR PROJECTS UPDATE



Fitment of transmitter onto a rhino

## Project Rhino Tracker

By Mark Gerrard

Game reserves continually have to intensify their rhino security operations, as well as find new ways of managing their game efficiently with limited resources available. Poaching operations perform as highly effective businesses, changing their operations as security initiatives evolve. It is therefore vital that reserve managers have real time information about the rhino population, and also have a good understanding of their general location and movements.

At the same time, there is huge support from the public for conservation with many people desperate to get involved and assist in any way they can, but with no avenue to do so. Wildlands Conservation Trust, together with Wildlife ACT Fund, have put together a model to try and combine these two needs; raising funds for necessary work on game reserves, while also bringing ordinary members of the public onto reserves to experience such work and directly understand the needs and challenges involved.



## OUR PROJECTS UPDATE

In order to obtain real time information on the rhino population, the management of Somkhanda Game Reserve have decided to fit all rhino with tracking devices. This allows the monitoring of the rhino to take place efficiently, giving good information on animal movements, identify high risk areas and collect ecological data. This information feeds directly into the armed field ranger team, allowing them to focus their efforts and resources into the necessary areas. In order to carry out this work, funds have to be secured to cover the costs of helicopter flying time, vet time, immobilising drugs and equipment. By allowing people to take part in this, each individual pays a portion of the total, thus making it a more affordable operation, while at the same time, getting the public involved.

There are often concerns about the direction of funds raised for conservation efforts and how these funds are being spent. By getting people onto the operations, we as conservationists are able to raise awareness with a larger audience and demonstrate the actual needs and the reality of the situation. This involvement also often sparks a passion in certain people which is worth far more than the monetary amount, creating conservation ambassadors for life.



ZAP Wing pilots showing the certificate where ZAP-Wing was elected as runner up in Mail & Guardians' 2014 Green the Future Awards (Rhino Conservation category).



## Project Rhino Aerial Support ZAP Wing update

Wildlands, through Project Rhino KZN and a number of other generous donors, continue to fund the aerial surveillance carried out through ZAP Wing. Despite numerous challenges, 2014 has been a good year for ZAP-Wing who has continued to provide Zululand with great support in rhino anti-poaching. The operation has been officially included in the Police Joint Operation Protocols which serves to confirm the difference being made in the province by the unit. As further confirmation of this, ZAP-Wing received the runner-up award for the prestigious Mail & Guardian 'Greening the Future Awards' while the ZAP-Wing Coordinator, Lawrence Munro, has also recently been awarded the Game Rangers Association of Africa's 'Top Conservation Practitioner Award' for rhino conservation.

In order to improve the efficiency of ZAP-Wing operations, a centrally based operations room (Ops Room) has been established in Hluhluwe. It has already proven its worth during a recent reaction where the Ops Room provided coordination and support to the helicopters during their deployment. It is evident that good communications is a critical component of effective aerial support to the ground teams. The Ops Room will serve as the nerve centre for ZAP-Wing, from where all flights will be monitored via radio and live satellite tracking. The rhino conservation community in Zululand is also encouraged to make use of the Ops Room to activate assets, be they aircraft or any other resource.



## OUR PROJECTS UPDATE

ZAP-Wing are currently in the process of appointing an Ops Room Manager who will man and oversee the running of the facility.

*RIGHT: Lawrence Munro, Zap Wing coordinator, receiving his award at the Game Rangers Association of Africa's 2014 Rhino Conservation Awards for the most prestigious acknowledgement of 'Best Conservation Practitioner'*



## Flight Stats 2014

ZAP-Wing continues to grow and increase in its usefulness to its members. During the period of January to July 2014 the fleet of four aircraft have flown a combined number of 711 flight hours, comprising of 574 patrol hours over 342 flights and 136 hours on reactions over 98 flights. The Cheetah has flown 158 hours on 60 patrol flights. ZAP-Wing was also assisted by the Bateleurs while the Cheetah was out of service due to scheduled maintenance. The Bateleurs flew more than 10 hours during this period. The Bateleur hours are not included in the ZAP-Wing totals above.

The successes relating to these flights are shown in ZAP-Wings instrumental involvement in a number of arrests and

the recovery of a significant number of illegal firearms that are used for rhino poaching. Although it is important to note that the role of ZAP-Wing is not to perform arrests or recover horns or weapons but more to support the law-enforcement personnel who do. Successes therefore, are closely tied to theirs.

We firmly believe that ZAP-Wing will continue to entrench itself as a leading role-player in aerial conservation in South Africa. Looking ahead we aim to incorporate technology such as thermal imaging and improved radio communications to build on our effectiveness.

## RHINO ARMY

Rhino Army have strengthened their partnership with Wildlands and maintain their support of aerial surveillance work being carried out in the province. They endeavour to raise funds through the sale of their badges and other products while also raising awareness about rhino conservation among the public. While they continue to provide funding assistance to ZAP-Wing directly, they have also doubled up their efforts with a focus on bringing the Bateleurs into the picture and supporting their needs where possible. The Bateleurs is an organisation of volunteer pilots who are strictly coordinated and fly for the environment.



**RHINO ARMY**  
To Serve & Protect



## RHINO CONSERVATION AWARDS

### Awards presented to honour Rhino Conservation efforts

The key to the success of protecting the rhino will lie in the dedication of all the people involved in the fight against rhino poaching in Africa. These people often do selfless and unrecognised work to save a heritage that could be lost forever. Sometimes this happens in the face of physical danger, political opposition and financial constraints. These factors make the contribution of each role player even more worthy of recognition – hence the reason for these awards.

The Rhino Conservation Awards 2014 were held on 31 July 2014 at the Montecasino Ballroom, Fourways, coinciding with the celebration of World Ranger Day as proclaimed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The annual Rhino Conservation Awards were first held in 2012, having been founded by Dr Larry Hansen, in an effort to create awareness of rhino conservation issues while recognising exceptional individuals and organisations for



## RHINO CONSERVATION AWARDS

their efforts in protecting Africa's rhino population. The awards are held in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Affairs of South Africa and the Game Rangers' Association of Africa (GRAA).

In 2014, the stature of the awards was confirmed as Prince Albert II of Monaco accepted the position of patron of the Rhino Conservation Initiative and the Rhino Conservation Awards. Prince Albert is committed to the protection of species dangerously close to extinction, through the support of his foundation to various preservation projects. It is hoped that this patronage will encourage international publicity and lead to the reduction of rhino poaching. Barclays Africa Group Ltd also joined as co-sponsor along with the existing sponsor, Xiaoyang Yu, Founder Partner of China New Enterprise Investment (CNEI), a China focused growth capital fund, and one of the originators of the awards.

The awards were attended by members of the DEA, the South African National Parks Board, media, sponsors and organisations and individuals involved in rhino conservation. This year, nominations were invited from African Rhino Range States in five categories, namely; Best Field Ranger, Best Conservation Practitioner, Best Political and Judicial Support, Best Science Research and Technology, and Best Awareness, Education or Funding. The nomination process was open to anyone to nominate any candidate that they felt was worthy of an award. A large number of nominations were received and the executive committee carefully reviewed all nominations to draw up a shortlist of finalists in each category. A panel of adjudicators then identified the winners in each category, to be honoured at the gala dinner ceremony.

The winner in the Best Field Ranger category was Mpho Malongwa, working at Wilderness Safaris Botswana, while the Best Conservation Practitioner category was won by Lawrence Munro from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The winner of the Best Political and Judicial Support category was Botswana's President, President Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama. In the Best Science, Research and Technology category, the winner was Saving the Survivors, Onderstepoort, while the final category of Best Awareness, Education and Funding was won by the SANParks Honorary Rangers, Counter Poaching Region.

The Rhino Conservation Awards recognise those that are willing to sacrifice of themselves and their resources to ensure that this iconic species is not lost to future generations. Wildlands Conservation Trust is proud to have had David Gilroy nominated in the Best Conservation practitioner



Winners of the various Rhino Conservation Award categories

category. During the past 12 months, David has played a critical role in transforming Somkhanda Game Reserve from a poorly managed protected area, to a reserve with much improved community support, employing over 60 local Gumbi community members, all having been trained and currently undergoing significant mentorship, resulting in a revitalisation of Somkhanda Game Reserve. Somkhanda Game Reserve is critical for rhino conservation, in being the first community-owned recipient of black rhino as part of the Black Rhino Range Expansion Programme. As a result of this overall improvement of Somkhanda Game Reserve, the rhino population is therefore more secure, is better monitored and managed and has a far greater chance of surviving this poaching onslaught. Although David did not win his category, we salute him for his continued commitment to conserving a critical rhino population in northern KwaZulu-Natal.



From L to R , Kingsley Holgate (Second runner up in the Best Awareness, Education and Funding category), Kerrin and Lawrence Munro (Winner of the Best Conservation Practitioner category) , Sheelagh Antrobus (Project Rhino KZN), and Chris Galliers (WESSA and GRAA chairman)



## RHINO PARADE

### EXCITING NEWS

**RHINO PARADE** now  
has its very own  
**WEBSITE!**

Visit [www.rhinoparadesa.co.za](http://www.rhinoparadesa.co.za)



## Sibusiso Vilane stands up for Rhino

An event held at King Shaka International Airport on Monday, 23 June, saw the unveiling of the 15th rhino sculpture in the 'Rhino Parade' campaign. The Wildland's Rhino Parade is an innovative fundraising campaign based on the internationally renowned Cow Parade concept. The campaign seeks to raise funding for, and increase awareness around the war on rhino poaching by getting truly great South African's to adopt and help design a ¾ life-size black rhino sculpture.

The sculpture unveiled on Monday was that of inspirational mountaineer, expedition guide and motivational speaker, Sibusiso Vilane. In 2005 Vilane became the first black person to summit Mount Everest from both sides. He then embarked on the Seven Summits Quest, which involves climbing the highest mountain on each continent, and was also the first black person to achieve this. Since his first ascent of Kilimanjaro in 1999, Sibusiso has summited that mountain 14 times, twelve of which have been guiding trips. Vilane has also run and completed 4 Comrades Marathons. He is truly inspirational.

"We are all born to win," said Vilane. "I am inspired by all who strive for greatness regardless of their background. My favourite quote (and something I try live by) is by Zig Zigler 'You can have everything in life you want if you can help as many people as possible to get what they want'," said Vilane. Sibusiso is a selfless man



CEO of Wildlands, Dr Andrew Venter, standing with inspirational expedition guide, mountaineer and motivational speaker Sibusiso Vilane, together with his almost life-size rhino sculpture.





## RHINO PARADE

that not only achieves great things, but inspires and helps others to dream big and achieve their dreams. Vilane has achieved what most considered impossible, and he hopes to contribute to the anti-poaching cause in a similar way – we CAN win this fight. “The rhino poaching in our country is devastating; we must all come together, unite and fight to save our precious animals. If we work together to fight this challenge, then we can indeed save the rhino for our future generations,” said Vilane.

“Sibusiso is a truly inspirational chap,” said Elizabeth – Ann Ross who designed Sibusiso’s rhino sculpture. “His open arms and broad smile tell you that he is a giver and wants the best for all who surround him. He has come from a very humble background and made a name for himself; not because he wanted to be rich and famous, but so that he could change the lives of others for the better. The climbing rope made into traditional-type jewellery on the sculpture, symbolises the protection of the horn, as it protects mountaineers, like Sibusiso, from falling on treacherous mountains,” commented Ross.

Wildlands Conservation Trust (the custodians of the Rhino Parade campaign) CEO, Dr Andrew Venter, was truly blown away by the contribution made by Vilane, and ACSA to the trusts conservation efforts. “We need more donors like King Shaka International Airport that donate towards our conservation projects, especially for rhino,” said Dr Venter. “Unfortunately rhino poaching has become a stale topic for the media and public alike and we need to make it current again. It is more relevant now than ever, with statistics climbing daily.”

King Shaka International Airport has supported the Rhino Parade since 2012, not only through donations but also by “babysitting” these interesting sculptures in the terminal building. Colin Naidoo, Communications & Brand Manager at ACSA, said “We are very passionate about doing our part in protecting this critically endangered species. It is also an honour to be associated with such inspirational individuals like Sibusiso Vilane and also stand by his statement in us needing to UNITE to win this fight against poachers. We believe that the airport is a great platform to showcase the sculptures and send out a strong message about the protection of these magnificent animals.”



*Left to right: Busiko Muleya, Yvonne Maseko, Ven Moodley, Dr Andrew Venter (Wildlands), Nokuthula Mcinga, Sibusiso Vilane (Celebrity Rhino Ambassador), Jackie De Villiers and Slindile Zama of ACSA stand proudly next to the new addition to the Rhino Parade.*



*Sibusiso Vilane, rhino ambassador for the Wildland’s Rhino Parade campaign, together with graphic designer Elizabeth – Ann Ross, who designed this rhino to reflect the personality and achievements of this inspirational mountaineer and expedition guide.*



*Sibusiso Vilane makes his mark on the rhino sculpture he inspired.*

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN HELPING US FIGHT THE RHINO POACHING CRISIS

## A SPECIAL MENTION MUST GO OUT TO THE FOLLOWING

Ambi Lube  
AN Goldstuck  
Belgotex  
Chris Edwards  
Cobra  
Colin Naidoo  
Elizabeth – Ann Ross  
Embury College  
Ferrobrake  
Filippo Faralla  
G. Moor Trust  
Grant Kelly  
Grindrod  
Highbury Preparatory School

I Make a Difference  
Helen van der Berg  
Jean Cooper  
Jenny Williams  
Jonny Lowe Memorial Trust  
K. Bain  
K. Geske  
King Shaka International Airport  
Life Residential  
Pat Goss  
Pat Lambie  
Peter Eastwood  
Peter O'Farrell  
Project Rhino KZN

PWC  
Rand Merchant Bank  
Rhino Army  
Richard Boxford  
SA Rugby Legends  
Sean Williams  
Sibusiso Vilane  
Shaun Pollock  
Stan Kozlowski  
Stihl  
Thompsons Africa  
Thoroughbred  
Timothy Hancock  
Waltons  
WWF-SA

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!  
WE COULD NOT DO THIS AMAZING WORK WITHOUT YOU!**