



Continual adaptation to the rising poaching threat

Two more rhinos have been born this year and we are slowly gaining ground on reaching a viable population for the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary. It is still the only rhino sanctuary in Tanzania and we are delighted to be advising the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) on its plans to create a smaller rhino sanctuary in Mkomazi National Park to boost tourist visits.

Lucy Fitzjohn | Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, GAWPT

As always, security dominates our daily lives and our priority remains to continually improve security and adapt to the increasing poaching threat. Save the Rhino has played a major part in helping us upgrade security efforts, supporting the full spectrum from boots on the ground to environmental education and everything in-between.

Over the past year we have worked with Save the Rhino to raise funds for a Toyota Landcruiser double-cab pickup, a new security outpost, running costs for 'Rafiki wa Faru' and the enormous task of Sanctuary fence repair and replacement.

We were in critical need of a dedicated and multi-purpose vehicle to assist all aspects of the Sanctuary's operations. This includes:

- security patrols
- dropping-off and collection of security guards and tracking teams
- deploying fence maintenance and patrol teams,
- reacting to emergencies
- supplying teams camped externally to the Sanctuary on specific duties
- and the movement of the new tracker dogs and their keepers

Over many years, it has been challenging to juggle all the older vehicles, (some of them date back to the 1970s) to keep them working. The new Toyota, funded by USFWS, is therefore an incredible boost to operations.

Sanctuary security was also boosted this year with the arrival of two Dutch Malinois tracker dogs. They are being trained by Daryll

Pleasants of White Paw Training in deterrent work, tracking and anti-poaching. A special camp was established for the dogs and their four keepers. Daryll and Donna Pleasants raised the funds for fantastic specialist equipment for the dogs and keepers and Daryll returned recently to undertake the second stage of training.

These dogs are now mobilised and invaluable to the security operations, and there will be more training ahead. A vehicle is being modified with a transport cage and benches for the keepers. The cage is fully meshed to lessen the impact of tsetse flies whilst in transit. TANAPA is very supportive of this project and has offered support on many levels, including veterinary and ranger assistance.

We are in the process of constructing a security outpost in the section that holds the Port Lympne female rhinos along with the Dvur Kralove Zoo breeding pair plus their two calves. The security outpost will be in a strategic area so that the tracking team and guards have a view over a large part of this section. It has been an enormous privilege to see these zoo-bred rhinos fairly close together, breeding, settled and back in the wild.

We employ traditional protection methods for the rhinos but we have also sought to change attitudes in the local communities with the delivery of a black-rhino-focused environmental education programme, 'Rafiki wa Faru'. Since its launch in 2008 we have brought in approximately 6,000 students for a tightly constructed, well-orchestrated and memorable day in Mkomazi.

Save the Rhino has been with us from the very early days when the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary was just a hand-drawn map. Our job is to ensure that things get better, not worse, in spite of all the odds facing us. All we can do is work and keep our eyes and ears open and try not, ever, to relax our guard or our systems. We are incredibly grateful to Cathy Dean and her team for such tremendous support with these endeavours over all these years.

Grants

Since October 2014, Save the Rhino has sent grants totaling £74,314 to Mkomazi, including \$84,044 from USFWS for the new Toyota Landcruiser, \$16,385 from USFWS for Rafiki wa Faru, and the rest from our own core funds towards these two projects and the construction of a new security outpost.



Top right: The new Landcruiser and the Rafiki wa Faru environmental education bus

Main: Two Malinois dogs are the latest recruits to join the Mkomazi Security team

