

MOTIVATION THROUGH THE BASICS

The uMkhuze Section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site has never been an easy park to run. uMkhuze has a long history of bush-meat poaching, mostly through the use of wire/cable snare traps and traditional hunting with dogs.

Eduard J. Goosen | Conservation Manager, uMkhuze Game Reserve

The field rangers of uMkhuze that have faced this constant onslaught of wildlife crime are battle-hardened and recognised as one of the most diligent and hard-working law enforcement teams. However, with 17 rhinos lost by August 2015, the old hands here will easily state that 2015 has been a hard year; if not the hardest to date.



In response to the sudden increase of rhino poaching at uMkhuze, law enforcement

officials have responded with an offensive strategy by taking the fight to the poachers. In

such funding proposals at uMkhuze have revolved around the improvement of services and the living and working conditions of our field rangers to ensure they are properly motivated to face their daily strive. A hot decent meal with a warm shower is as pivotal as the much-needed purchases of decent torches, backpacks, binoculars and other equipment.

It is no secret that government grants are insufficient to effectively run our protected areas, however it is critical that the funds received are used as effectively and efficiently as possible. The generous donations received from Sporting Rifle, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Save the Rhino over the last two years have been holistically applied to address a range of issues.

With current ongoing implementation, the 12 outlying picket camps that have no access to services such as electricity and running water are currently being supplied with solar geysers to provide hot showers, solar power systems, and boreholes to ensure a sustainable supply of potable water for domestic use. Whilst this may sound elementary, the positive spin-offs of these projects considerably improve management efficiency, as substantial savings are made on remote water delivery and supply of liquid petroleum gas.

Subsequently field ranger operations are supplied with basic services that previously were very expensive, problematic and erratic. This has undoubtedly improved field rangers' morale and motivation.

Additionally a number of rhinos have been notched to assist with population monitoring, a critical requirement of any protection system along with the eminent appointment of a contract rhino monitor. There are also plans to renovate the old environmental camp that is used for educational and awareness programmes. This camp is probably the most critical tool in the fight against rhino poaching and will be used to afford poor neighbouring communities access to the Park.

The future of rhinos and biodiversity conservation is largely reliant on such support and generous donations. I have the privilege of being part of a highly dedicated and motivated team of conservationists that daily places their lives on the line and we would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation.

Grants

Since November 14, Save the Rhino has sent a total of £35,163 to uMkhuze, including \$49,546 from USFWS.



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in conjunction with an awareness campaign that aims to raise the issue of rhino poaching and conservation to local communities surrounding the Park, we haven't lost a rhino in the last two months. However we realise that this might just be a temporary lull, the quiet before the storm. Our dedicated staff literally work around the clock in adverse conditions to secure our wildlife as well as the integrity of the Park.

With a total law enforcement complement of 59 field rangers, ensuring effective rhino protection is about managing people. After all, we are protecting rhinos for people. I have a very wise friend who says 'People respond to incentives, all the rest is commentary'. This is a philosophy that I embrace entirely. As

Above: Rangers on a training patrol

Main: Field rangers from Gwambani in front of the new ablutions

