

# Liwonde Black Rhino Monitoring & Protection Project

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HERBIVORES

*The conservation, management and monitoring of the endangered black rhino population in Liwonde National Park, Malawi*

Black rhino conservation efforts have been conducted in Liwonde National Park under the auspices of a partnership comprising Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), Central African Wilderness Safaris, Malawi (CAWS), and Wilderness Wildlife Trust (WWT). The results include the Rhino Monitoring Regime, a Rhino Sanctuary Surveillance Fence and Maintenance Project (with primary support by Mr Bentley Palmer, stakeholder) and a conservation ecology PhD project.



Following a major darting/collaring operation in November-December 2012, monitoring rhino in 2013 became considerably easier. Regular daily monitoring (aided by new tracking devices on the individuals) began disclosing a wealth of interesting information about the cross-seasonal habitat use and browse preference of individual rhino. Near rhino home ranges and territories, illegal human activities (e.g. poaching) were detected and countered.

A new research vehicle (Nissan Hardbody 3.2) began operating on 18 April 2013. During the course of the year no fewer than five darting and/or rescue operations were mounted, which were sponsored by a number of stakeholders and helped by a number of voluntarily assisting friends. In these rhino capture operations the primary aim was to fit transmitters on as many rhino as possible in order to maximise monitoring efficiency in the face of intensifying poaching pressure in Liwonde, as well as to respond to crises, usually involving the rescue and treatment of poached animals. In fact, a large part of the efforts involved snare removals off individuals, thereby saving the lives of a number of Liwonde's black rhino.

Other conservation measures and activities conducted by the project included large-scale snare sweeps and support of fire regime work.

**Table 1:** Operations that took place in 2013

Date	Vet	Operation	Results
24 May	Dr Dave Cooper	Darting Operation	Leonard ♂ successfully captured and wound treated
10–18 June	Dr Pete Morkel	Darting Operation	Namagogodo ♂ successfully fitted with VHF collar
23 July – 15 August	Dr Amanda Salb, Dr Pete Morkel & Mr Bruce Carruthers	Darting Operation	Failed attempt to dart and treat gin-trapped Justerini ♀. The old female's desiccated carcass was found 15 October. VHF collars fitted to Julia ♀ and Knockando ♀.
17–29 Nov	Dr Pete Morkel	Darting Operation	VHF transmitters fitted on five individual rhino. Some old or non-functional collars replaced.
21–23 Dec	Dr Pete Morkel	Darting Operation	Successful darting and snare wound treatment of Nyanyale ♂. New VHF horn implant fitted.