



HELPING ZIMBABWE'S RHINOS & HUMANS LIVE SIDE BY SIDE

SUPPORT THE GREAT LAND SHARE PROJECT

Zimbabwe's Save Valley was once lauded as a huge conservation success story but, since the early 2000s, two factors have led to a crisis for

Zimbabwe's rhinos. The resurgence in poaching, together with the impact of the Land Reform policy, have created competition for resources between



humans and wildlife and a threat to the local rhino population. Amidst this backdrop, the Lowveld Rhino Trust's Great Land Share Project has huge potential to help communities in the Lowveld live harmoniously alongside rhinos and prosper.

Above: A new village in land previously safeguarded for wildlife; Increased livestock farming is putting pressure on rhino habitat – and bringing predator-livestock conflict

Opposite: Forest cut down to make room for crops and livestock. Trees are burned in an attempt to improve soil fertility

Katherine Johnston | Save the Rhino, Communications Manager, Save the Rhino Trust

Zimbabwe is one of most difficult places for rhino conservationists to work. It's where the current poaching crisis began, before quickly spreading into South Africa. Since 2006, almost 500 rhinos have been poached in Zimbabwe, as Viet Nam's newly wealthy business elite sent demand for the illicit product through the roof. But another threat has emerged that's even more challenging for Zimbabwe's rhinos: systemic habitat loss.

Back in 1992, Zimbabwe's Save Valley was a trailblazer in conservation; and effectively rewilded for rhinos. Before then, the land in a vast area known collectively as the Lowveld Conservancies covering some 755,000 hectares, was used predominantly for cattle ranching. Its semi-arid conditions were much more suitable for wildlife rather than livestock or agricultural farming, and the land was restored by its owners to its natural state. By the 1990s a population of black rhinos had been successfully translocated and made its home in the Conservancy, protected by electric fencing.

Rhino habitat under threat

Things changed in 2000. Fast-Track Land Reform policies saw areas previously safeguarded for wildlife suddenly experience unplanned human settlement. Wild land was turned over for low-yield subsistence farming and protective fencing taken down. This has had several unintended consequences. Poaching has increased, in part from organised criminal gangs looking to traffic rhino horn, but also from poaching for bush meat. And with the protective fencing removed, wild animals and humans are much more likely to cross paths, which sadly causes conflict – whether from elephants trampling crops, or predators attacking livestock. The risk of disease transmission from wild animals to livestock is also increased.

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has experienced spiralling economic woes, compounded by the withdrawal of international government donors as part of the sanctions regime. Amidst this difficult background it has seen an incredible growth in the rhino populations it monitors. But long-term, rhino monitoring, translocations, and even anti-poaching activities will only go so far. Save the Rhino has continued to support the Lowveld Rhino Trust, but we need people living near rhinos to champion conservation too. That's why our Christmas Appeal is such an exciting – and challenging – project, and one we hope you will be inspired to support.

Community Conservation

The Great Land Share Project is an ambitious and innovative pilot scheme led by the Lowveld Rhino Trust, in partnership with the UK Government's Darwin Initiative and Save the Rhino International. Its aim? To help educate people in the Lowveld living near rhinos so they can learn how to live alongside wildlife, feel the benefits of conservation, improve their livelihoods, and champion their natural heritage.

The Great Land Share Project – if successful – has the potential to scale and transform the local economy and safeguard Zimbabwe's wild spaces, for people and rhinos, for generations to come. To provide education and raise awareness, the initiative will recruit community representatives, called Wildlife Guardians. These will include women, and they will be tasked with sharing knowledge and empowering their local community to use it.

When communities learn about conservation and how they can generate income from wildlife – safely and without negatively impacting on the rhino population – then they will start to understand the benefit of protecting wild spaces, and protecting rhinos.

ALL IMAGES: LOWVELD RHINO TRUST

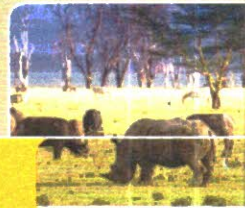


LITTLE GUARDIAN

Help educate the next generation of children living in Save Valley

£250 can pay for a school to take part in a rhino awareness scheme – and help its pupils become little guardians for wildlife

£53 can pay for a school to receive 250 exercise books for their students

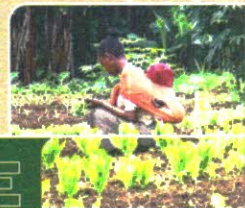


RHINO MONITORING

With community support and protected land, you can help Zimbabwe's rhino population continue to grow

£63 could pay for a Junior Rhino Monitor's salary for a week

£15 buys around 18 drums of helicopter fuel



WILDLIFE GUARDIAN

By sponsoring a Wildlife Guardian, you can help people and rhinos live side by side

£250 To train a Wildlife Guardian on a three-day course

£5 can pay for a training manual for Wildlife Guardians to provide to local people, to help train them on fire management, and livestock protection