

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RANGER

With the help of Save the Rhino International, Borana Conservancy in Laikipia, Kenya, has embarked on a massive upgrade of its ranger accommodation. Borana places great emphasis on the welfare of its rangers, who are charged with protecting and monitoring its most valuable asset—the rhinos!

Sam Taylor | Chief Conservation Officer, Borana Conservancy

A day in the life of a ranger is arduous to say the least. A rhino scout may cover upwards of 25 km on foot, through thick bush in testing, hot conditions. Looking after rhino on a day-to-day basis often means looking for rhino. The importance of seeing each animal every day, if possible, cannot be underestimated. Sadly, rhino succumb to more than just poachers; their poor eyesight makes them susceptible to falling down holes and banks; injured or sick rhino go down hill very fast and quick action needs to be taken should they lose condition or eat unpalatable browse (particularly in a new and alien environment); predators are a constant threat—particularly to young; and, of course, when establishing a new population of these animals and trying to boost breeding rates, seeing couplings is of crucial importance to us.

Each day, the patrol scouts set out into their patrol zones. The terrain is vast and diligent tracking is necessary. Each rhino is identifiable by its unique tracks. Subtle differences distinguish this rhino from that, and the men know them well. They may get a helping hand from a supervisor who, with the aid of telemetry points them in the right direction, but tracking on the ground is crucial. They might pick up tracks of poachers. They might find tracks of an encroaching male, in which case it's possible that there may have been some territorial fighting. Finding that rhino is crucial. Trying to make time to get visuals on each rhino is time consuming but rewarding. Following rhino down the path less trod can lead to exciting and unexpected discoveries.

The peripheral scouts are also on patrol. They too are on the lookout for tracks and signs, all the while repairing and measuring fence voltages. Their job is crucial. They are protecting our neighbours and their crops from elephants and their livestock from lions. The fences they maintain also keep our rhino protected.

These are the men who are charged with saving a species. The long days and nights they spend in the field are the key to keeping rhino alive. Rhino on Borana are often hard to find and extensive tracking is both mentally and physically draining. Having warm, comfortable accommodation to return to each evening, to rest and recharge is much needed after a long day. Borana has upgraded three scout camps in various corners of the Conservancy, all with lovely new ablution blocks, so as to get a good shower in to wash off the day's dust.

The armed team, which operates almost exclusively at night, also now has a dedicated headquarters separate from the rest of the Conservancy staff. This ensures our nocturnal protectors can get some peace and quiet away from all the noise of daily life on the Conservancy. A kitchen, and mess



Left, below: Thanks to your support we have upgraded rangers' accommodation

area have also been built so that can get some downtime, but also plan operations discreetly and privately.

Borana is hugely grateful to Save the Rhino's supporters help in funding this critical infrastructure, which helps us look after the men who look after the rhinos!



Grants

Since November 2015, we have sent: \$20,048 from the Anna Merz Rhino Trust, \$5,000 from the Lubin Family Foundation and \$78,341 from USFWS RTCF for ranger accommodation; £1,295 raised at our Sundowner dinner auction; \$11,875 from donations to SRI Inc.; £7,000 from the estate of Anne Speight; £1,150 from the Kiboko Trust and misc. donations; \$20,000 from the Charles Engelhard Foundation; and £10,657 from *Sporting Rifle Magazine*.

SPORTING RIFLE

Thank you to *Sporting Rifle* and their readers for their continued support for Big Game Parks, raising essential funds through its auctions for vital equipment such as bullet-proof vests and bikes, and enabling essential upgrades to remote ranger outposts—including protecting water tanks from elephants and providing elevated roofed sleeping quarters, solar charging units for lighting as well as radio and torch batteries, equipment required for firearms handling, and basic ranger-training courses for 51 rangers and ten police officers from the Operational Support Services Unit. Recently, *Sporting Rifle* has also provided much appreciated support to Borana Conservancy, too.

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