

Anna Merz

A Champion for Conservation

Anna Merz ranks as one of the world's foremost champions of the black rhino. This is not only in her public profile but also in her hands-on approach which has contributed enormously to the survival of Kenya's black rhino. In 1982 she persuaded the Craig family, who own Lewa, to set aside some 5,000 acres as a rhino sanctuary. This was named the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary.

In 1984, the sanctuary received its first rhino, a white rhino male called Mukora. By 1988 the sanctuary had 16 rhino, five of whom were born here. In that same year, the size of the sanctuary was doubled to more than 10,000 acres within Lewa Downs. Not only was Anna Merz the driving force behind the establishment of the sanctuary, with the full support of the Craig family, but she personally financed the project.

By 1994, the whole of Lewa Downs as well as the government-owned Ngare Ndare Forest Reserve had been enclosed within a 2.5-meter-high electric fence, creating a 61,000 acre rhino sanctuary. For three and a half years Anna hand-reared a female black rhino calf that had been abandoned at birth by its mother, and then successfully re-introduced her into the wild. This rhino, called Samia, subsequently mated with a wild rhino and had a calf, named Samuel. Tragically, both mother and calf plunged to their deaths over a steep cliff in 1995.

Anna Merz is internationally renowned for her pioneering work in rhino conservation and is the author of the best-selling book "Rhino: At the Brink of Extinction".

In 1996, she retired to South Africa, from where she continues her involvement with the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. She is a member of the Lewa Board of Directors and is also a member of the board of the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) in America.

Anna came to Lewa with two dreams. One developed in the late 60's while working for the Ghana Game Department and that was the concept of community wildlife management. It did not work then. The second, on arrival at Lewa many years later, was that Lewa would eventually breed enough black rhinos to re-populate the north of Kenya. One dream, thanks to Ian's work and foresight has already born wondrous fruit in the communities to the north. The second is starting to happen and again it is thanks to the security that Lewa provides and the communities have come to appreciate.

Source: lewa.org

