

Rhinos back in Uganda





PHOTOS BY: RHINO FUND UGANDA



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LEFT PAGE:
Augustu a male rhino who is now 8 years old.

TOP: Bella with her calf Donna.

Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt Jr, the 26th President of the United States of America who served from 1901 to 1909, was a man of vision. Even when it came to rhinos -- and especially the Northern white rhino. The Northern white rhino is extinct in the wild today -- with only three sole survivors in Kenya’s Ol Pejeta Conservancy under 24-hour armed guard -- and there is no hope of ever seeing it in the wild again.

Sudan -- the old male -- and mother and daughter, Najin and Fatu never mated. With no offspring -- despite attempts to freeze their cells to have test-tube babes -- nothing worked.

Uganda was the last stronghold of the Northern white rhino – until Idi Amin’s bloody regime from 1971 to 1979 and the 1979 Liberation War. National parks became the haunt of rebel soldiers and poachers. Uganda saw its last Northern white rhino disappear from Murchison Falls National Park in 1982.

Uganda also boasted of having the black rhino – the eastern one – which was last seen in

Kidepo National Park in 1983. Since 2010, this subspecies - *Diceros bicornis michaeli* can only be found in Kenya – whereas up to a few decades ago, its range included Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania.

TEDDY AND THE RHINO

Roosevelt was convinced that the Northern white rhino would be vastly diminished in numbers over the ensuing decades, much like the American bison that once roamed the American prairie in their hundreds of thousands, until the 19th and 20th centuries when they were hunted close to extinction.

His big plan after his presidential term was to come to Africa -- accompanied by scientists -- to collect specimens for the American museums. His reasoning was that in the event that these big animals faced the fate of the bison, future generations could see stuffed ones displayed in the museums. (Bison numbers are now on the increase after serious efforts to stop them from being wiped out).



In Roosevelt's list were all the big game, including the elephant and the rhino. The big prize was, however, the Northern white rhino. He had done his homework on rhinos.

In 1900, there were still a million black rhino on the African continent.

In contrast, the Southern white (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) -- first described in 1817 -- had been hunted to near extinction by big game hunters -- with a handful surviving in only one area in South Africa. Today, the revival of this species is one of the greatest success stories in conservation -- with 11,500 compared to 3,100 blacks in Africa.

Then in 1900, a new subspecies of white rhino was discovered -- thousands of kilometres to the north in the Lado enclave of northwestern Uganda and western Congo. In the natural world, this was unusual and even then this subspecies was rare.

Hence, Teddy's eye was on the prize -- the coveted Northern white rhino. Of all the species, it was the one that the respected Smithsonian Institution would likely never have an opportunity to collect again -- and it funded part

Kori with her calf Justice. Kori was captured in the wild at the age of approximately 5 years and moved to Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary in July 2005. Sadly her oldest calf Justice, died at the age of 5 from injuries inflicted during a fight.

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of the expenses. Today, a Northern white rhino, shot by the 26th President of the United States of America -- dubbed the Roosevelt Rhino -- is still on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC.

TIMELINE

In 1924, the Zoological Society of New York published an article to draw attention to the extinction of the Northern white rhino, prompting serious efforts to save it. Protected areas like national parks were created.

By 1968, there were more than 100 Northern white rhino in Uganda down from 350 because of poaching for its horn.

PRESENT DAY

A whole generation of Ugandans grew up not seeing a live rhino. It is a different story now.

In 1997, Rhino Fund Uganda - an NGO was established. It embarked on the goal to reintroduce rhinos in Uganda in conjunction with the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

In 2005/2006, the fund accomplished its prime objective when it saw the introduction of six rhinos at the 70-square-kilometre Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary -- about halfway between Kampala and Murchison Falls National Park. These are the Southern white rhino.

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INTERVIEW WITH Angie Genade

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RHINO FUND UGANDA

Are you planning to re-introduce black rhinos that were once found in Uganda? And if so - when and where?

It is part of the mission and vision of Rhino Fund, but at this stage there is nothing in the immediate planning.

You now have 20 white rhino, when was the most recent born?

Apache. Born on 26 July 2017 to Moja (father) and Nandi (mother). This little guy was named by a donor in honor of the work his parents committed their lives to with the Apache tribe in the United States. Apache really had us worried as his birth came two weeks later than we had expected. He is a very active little rhino and is keeping his mom Nandi very busy. A couple of days after birth Apache experienced his first



TOP AND BELOW: Angie with some RFU rangers darting Taleo.

rain. It looked like he was trying to catch the rain and had us all smiling.

How have Ugandans taken to rhino after two decades of none?

They are very excited when they do come to the sanctuary. They want to see rhinos back in the national parks.

Are there still plans to repopulate other Ugandan national parks with white rhino?

Yes. However this is something that has to be done in conjunction with the Ministry and UWA. We are still waiting for the Uganda National Strategy Plan to be signed off and then we can start planning what to do and how.

How are the rhinos at Ziwa doing?

Beyond expectation. Very well. All the rhino are in a very good condition.

Who trains the rangers?

Rhino Fund Uganda has its own trainers and we make use of expat trainers who are willing to donate their time.

Is poaching for rhino horn a concern?

Of course it is always a concern. Therefore we try to keep our security at the highest level possible at all times.

What challenges do you face?

Funding is always a challenge. Not easy to get.

What's the carrying capacity of White rhino at Ziwa?

According to the original feasibility study done, about 45-50. However I do believe that if we do another one it could climb to about 60-70.

