

# msafiri

WWW.KENYA-AIRWAYS.COM | EDITION 126 | JULY 2016

free  
YOUR COPY TO KEEP

## SAVE OUR RHINOS

JOIN US IN  
THE FIGHT  
AGAINST  
POACHING

**High & mighty**  
Kenya's best climbs

**Smart living**  
The future of our cities

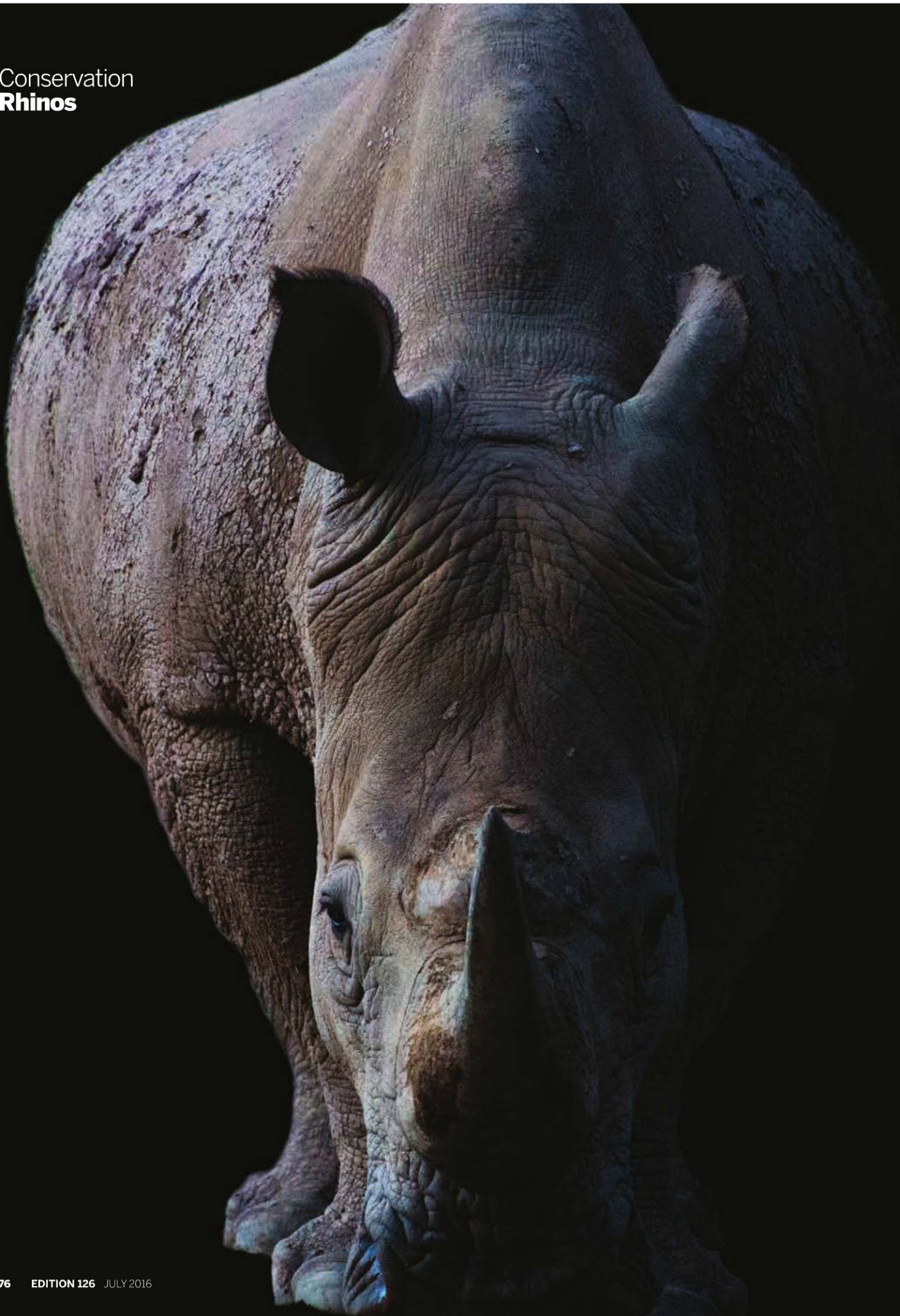
**Cape Town**  
5 great reasons to visit

VOTED AFRICA'S  
LEADING AIRLINE  
WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS 2016

Connecting Africa to the world

 Kenya Airways   
The Pride of Africa

Conservation  
**Rhinos**



# Worth more alive

*msafiri* examines the plight of the rhino and explores  
the challenges in protecting them from poaching ▶

WORDS: KATHLEEN GARRIGAN

White rhino – approximately 20,000  
near-threatened white rhinos  
remain in Africa

AWF / DYLAN HAYES MEFFAN

# Conservation Rhinos

**I**t was exactly two minutes to midnight when Daniel Mwaniki got the call over the radio. A rhino had been found on the eastern sector of Ol Pejeta Conservancy, a private, 364.2 sq km wildlife conservancy in Kenya's Laikipia Plateau. It was Ishirini, a 19-year-old female and one of the conservancy's 108 eastern black rhinos. Both of her horns were gone, carried away by poachers who were already moving toward the conservancy's perimeter under cover of night. Their escape route would be lit by a full moon – a poacher's moon – the same moon that earlier led them to Ishirini.

Mwaniki, Ol Pejeta's deputy manager of security and a National Police Reservist, recalls there had been no gunshot on that clear February night, nothing to alert his patrol team that there had been an attack. Instead, the poachers had used a poisoned arrow to bring down their victim.

"The poaching style we used to know from 2011 until about 2013 has completely changed," says Mwaniki. "People used to use guns and we could hear a loud gunshot. Poachers are killing them now silently, using poison or medicine."

On finding Ishirini, Mwaniki contacted the police and a nearby Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) station to alert them of the incursion. His team then split up. One unit set up roadblocks to search all vehicles on roads outside the conservancy. Another unit pursued all possible exit routes the poachers may have used. A team would walk the fence line in the morning if nothing turned up.

"Someone who has just a little knowledge of Ol Pejeta would be able to access [the conservancy] even without breaking a single wire," Mwaniki explains, noting that the conservancy fence was built to keep wildlife from getting out rather than prevent people from getting in.

In the end, two people with a car (alleged to be linking up with the poachers) would be arrested on a road next to the conservancy. In the following days, authorities would arrest three more people and recover Ishirini's horns.

While Ishirini would be Ol Pejeta's first victim of 2016, she would not be the last. Two months later another female rhino, seven-year-old Asha, would suffer the same fate.

## POACHING TRENDS

**The loss of Ishirini and Asha** at the hands of poachers has become an all-too-familiar narrative in Africa. An estimated 1338 rhinos were killed by poachers in Africa in 2015, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission's African Rhino Specialist Group. That loss is out of a total population of approximately 25,000 African rhinos: 20,000 near-threatened white rhinos and 5000 critically endangered black rhinos. (Of Africa's two rhino species there are five living subspecies, including the eastern black rhino, south-central black rhino, southern black rhino, southern white rhino and northern white rhino. The western black rhino was declared extinct by IUCN in 2011.)

South Africa, which is home to 80 per cent of the continent's rhinos and has suffered the bulk (85 per cent) of the rhino poaching in Africa, lost 1175 rhinos to poachers in 2015. While this represents the first decrease in South Africa's poaching numbers since 2007, Zimbabwe and Namibia both reported an increase in rhino poaching in 2015.

In Kenya, where the majority of eastern black rhinos are found, the story is a little different. Rhino poaching in the East African country has declined in recent years, from a peak of 59 rhinos killed by poachers in 2013, to 11 rhinos in 2015.

Kenya's decline in rhino poaching today directly contrasts with the trend more than three decades ago, when the country's rhinos were nearly wiped out. From a population of about 20,000 free-roaming eastern

black rhinos in the 1970s, a poaching wave left Kenya with fewer than 400 by the mid-1980s. It was then that Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi declared the country's black rhinos a special species deserving of special protection, and his government established a national rhino conservation programme.

The government decided that in order to save its rhinos, it would build fences around many of the populations that remained. Rhinos were corralled into government-run protected areas such as Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary and Nairobi National Park. Private sanctuaries such as the Solio Game Reserve and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy also shared the burden by dedicating land and resources for rhino protection. ►

### Estimated 1338 rhinos killed in Africa in 2015

That loss is out of a total population of approximately **25,000 African rhinos: 20,000 near-threatened white rhinos & 5000 critically endangered black rhinos.**



POULOME BASU



“To ensure Africa’s natural heritage does not become a casualty of the continent’s growing prosperity, we must advocate on their behalf, in wildlife trade and conservation conferences, but also in Africa’s boardrooms, its ministerial meetings, and at national, regional and international forums where the future of the continent is being decided. This goes beyond a commitment to stop poaching and wildlife trafficking. It is about prioritising space for wildlife in the mad scramble for land. It is about ensuring infrastructure

growth is deferential to the continent’s vital ecosystems. It is about defining a new model for growth and success, one where both wildlife and people thrive. It begins with conservation having a seat at the table.”

**KADDU KIWE SEBUNYA** AWF PRESIDENT



MAURICE SCHUTGENS



PETER CHIRA/AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

**Top:** Eastern black rhinos at Ol Pejeta Conservancy  
**Above:** A ranger on patrol in Ol Pejeta Conservancy, which is home to 108 eastern black rhinos  
**Left:** Kenya’s ivory and rhino horn destruction event on 30 April. Kenya destroyed 1.35 tonnes of rhino horn, and 105 tonnes of ivory – nearly its entire stockpile

## SANCTUARY

**Ngulia valley in Kenya's Tsavo** ecosystem is prime habitat for black rhinos. The valley's moist soil produces a varied and always available buffet of vegetation impossible for the hook-lipped browser to pass up. Before poaching hit Tsavo in the 1970s, somewhere between 5000 and 8000 rhinos roamed the area. By the time President Moi issued his decree to protect rhinos, only a handful of this population remained.

In 1985, Kenya's government established the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary deep inside the 9000 sq km Tsavo West National Park to save what remained of the area's rhinos. According to Benson Okita, former co-ordinator of Kenya's National Rhino Programme and the deputy chair of the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group, the vast expanse of the Tsavo ecosystem made it next to impossible to provide adequate protection for rhinos unless they were fenced. An experiment next door, in the 11,000 sq km Tsavo East National Park, proved the point.

"In the 1990s, the government decided to try and establish another rhino population that was free ranging in Tsavo East National Park," recalls Okita. Between 1993 and 1999, 56 rhinos were introduced into Tsavo East.

"It put a strain on KWS's ability to protect them, and that was a big lesson that we learned," says Okita. "In these expansive areas, it is very difficult to protect and monitor rhinos. It was during that period when Somalia's government was becoming destabilised, so we had a lot of Somali poachers coming into Tsavo East. That population got poached to such a level that we decided that free-ranging rhinos were just too difficult to protect. As we speak, there is a sanctuary that is being created in Tsavo East."

Rhino range states in Africa face different circumstances and conditions on the ground, and each has tried different tactics to protect their rhinos, says Dr Philip Muruthi, vice president for species protection at the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and a member of Kenya Wildlife Service's technical committee for the national rhino conservation programme.

"Protecting Kenya's rhinos is a shared responsibility. It takes commitment from government agencies like KWS but also conservation partners and private stakeholders," **Muruthi says.**

"Conservationists have tried everything from dehorning to implanting tracking devices inside the horn to better monitor rhino movement," says Muruthi. "Each has its pros and cons, with a mix of success and failure. In Kenya's case, the decision to fence in its rhinos was most effective in safeguarding them."

Ngulia proved to be a good model for rhino conservation, and within a few short years the population began to grow. It has been growing ever since, with few incidences of poaching. Out of success, however, has come a different kind of problem: space.

"Having adequate, suitable space is key for rhino conservation," explains Muruthi. "Not enough space can negatively impact population growth."

In the three decades since Ngulia was established, the 10 sq km sanctuary has undergone three expansions, supported by AWF – today it stands at 97 sq km. Kenya Wildlife Service also established an unfenced Intensive Protection Zone around the sanctuary, where it has released a number of rhinos. All are heavily monitored and guarded.

It is, however, expensive to maintain a sanctuary. AWF's support to Ngulia over the years has included everything from maintaining the solar-powered fence to building ranger housing and providing stealth cameras for rhino monitoring.

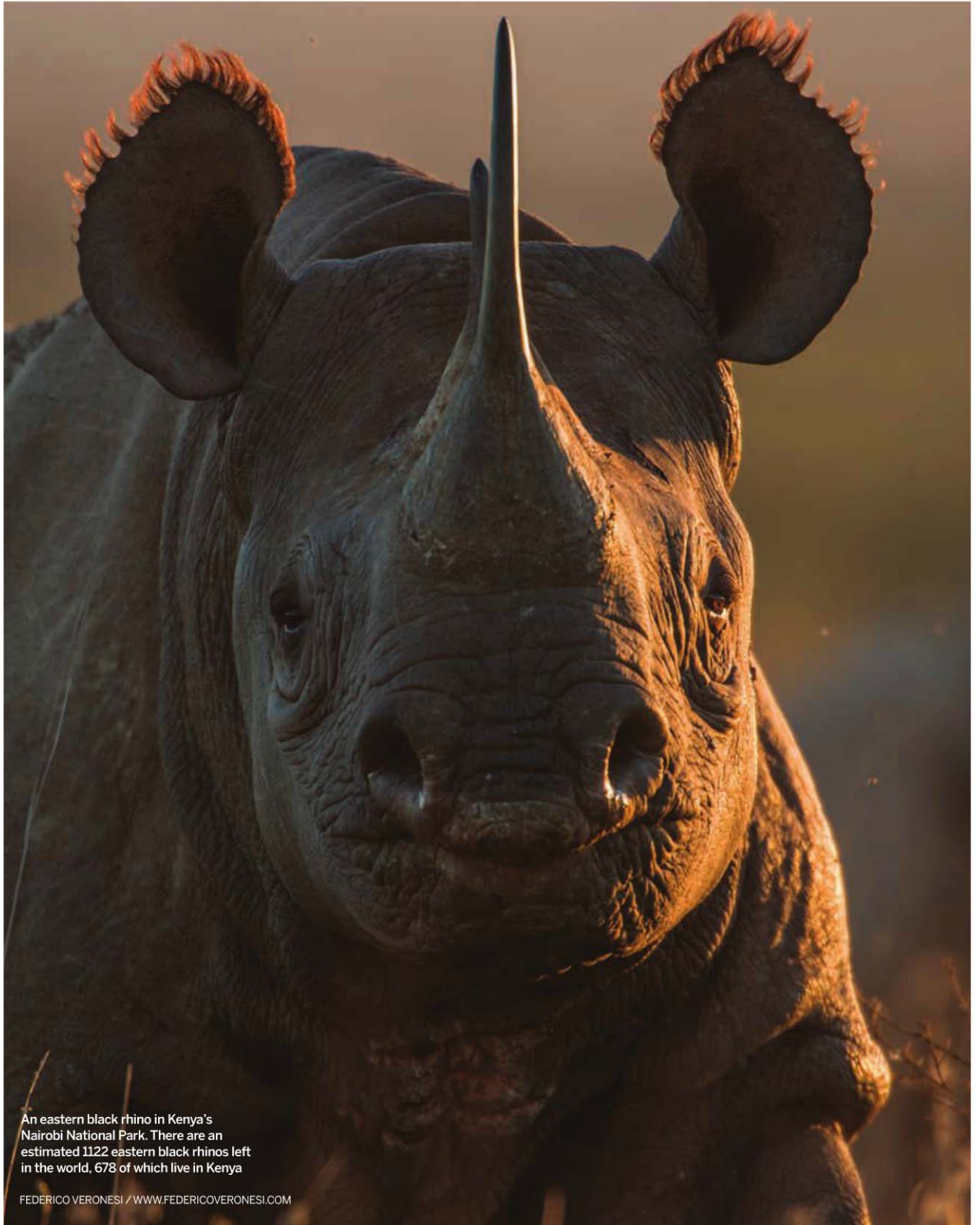
"Having adequate, suitable space is key for rhino conservation," **explains Muruthi.** "Not enough space can negatively impact population growth."

"Protecting Kenya's rhinos is a shared responsibility. It takes commitment from government agencies like KWS but also conservation partners and private stakeholders," Muruthi says.

He adds: "We can't go on addressing the symptoms and not the disease itself, though. The false belief that rhino horn is medicine is what drives poaching on the ground. Reduce the demand, and you reduce the poaching."

## SHUTTING DOWN DEMAND

**The camera focuses in on** Sir Richard Branson gnawing on his fingernails. "I don't usually bite my nails, but I wanted to point out that rhino horn is simply made of keratin," the 65-year-old billionaire business ►



An eastern black rhino in Kenya's Nairobi National Park. There are an estimated 1122 eastern black rhinos left in the world, 678 of which live in Kenya

FEDERICO VERONESI / WWW.FEDERICOVERONESI.COM

## Conservation Rhinos

magnate explains to the viewer. "It's exactly the same as your fingernails. Yet rhinos are being brutally slaughtered for their horns. If you're thinking of buying rhino horn, please don't. Just bite your nails instead."

Branson's message, delivered in a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) to be aired in Mandarin, Vietnamese and English, is part of a campaign by AWF and its partner WildAid to reduce demand for rhino horn in key markets. Other celebrities such as Chinese actress Li Bingbing and Vietnamese singer Thanh Bui have also signed up as campaign ambassadors. Through press conferences, PSAs, nationally broadcast TV shows, billboards and other awareness-raising activities, these celebrities are taking on the false belief that rhino horn can somehow cure cancer, hangovers and even poor libido.

"It's a sad story of superstition and misinformation on one end of the chain that is responsible for mass slaughter and suffering on the other," writes Branson in a blog on his Virgin website, shortly after meeting with local business leaders in Vietnam.

AWF President Kaddu Kiwe Seburya is the first to acknowledge that it can be difficult to change behaviour and beliefs overnight.

"As Africans, we, too, have strong beliefs and centuries-old cultural practices, and we understand the power these can have over society," says Seburya. "But we cannot sit back and watch a species (or several) be driven to extinction because of certain beliefs that most in the science and conservation fields agree have no medical merit. Someone has to step in and speak on behalf of Africa's rhinos. We are their voice."

That voice will be important in September when the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) holds its seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Johannesburg, South Africa. Countries that have joined CITES, known as Parties, voluntarily agree to adhere to the restrictions the Convention places on international trade in fauna and flora.

In April, Swaziland submitted a proposal to lift the ban on international trade in rhino horn, only a week after South Africa backed away from submitting a similar proposal. Now the question of whether to legalise rhino horn trade will be a subject of much debate at the upcoming CITES conference, even if the probability of such a proposal passing remains low.

"There is no appetite for this kind of trade, not while we are still in crisis with our rhinos,"

says Seburya. "Legalising trade at this point in time would amount to a dangerous trade experiment, and Africa's rhinos could very well end up paying the ultimate price."

Instead, Seburya says strong, clear messages, like the one Kenya broadcast to the world when it destroyed its ivory and rhino horn at the end of April, are needed.

"It takes time to change hearts and minds, but we will get there faster if Africa's rhino range states are unified and unequivocal in their message – that a rhino's horn belongs only on a living rhino," he says.

**KATHLEEN GARRIGAN** IS MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER FOR THE AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

### KQ & the Born Free Foundation

Kenya Airways is committed to the conservation of Africa's natural heritage and is proud to be partnered with international wildlife conservation charity, the Born Free Foundation.

Kenya Airways' Marketing Director Chris Diaz says: "We want people of all ages and from all nations to have the thrill of seeing our unique and charismatic wildlife; to witness the beauty of some of the world's greatest wildlife in some of the world's most spectacular settings. By burning over 100 tonnes of ivory, Kenya has shown its determination to #Stopthetrade of illegal wildlife trophies and ivory trade.

"It is critical that we protect our beautiful country and natural heritage for the millions of guests now and in the future. We invite guests across the globe to enjoy our truly warm, caring, African hospitality. Please join us in the journey to save our beautiful and vulnerable wildlife. You can start by contributing your change in the Born Free and Kenya Airways' envelopes found onboard our flights. Your change will go a long way to protecting wildlife in Africa. We thank you for your support." ▶







WILDAID

**Left and below left:** Chinese actress Li Bingbing appears on a billboard in Chongqing's Liberation Square in China. As an ambassador for AWF's and WildAid's 'Nailbiter' campaign, Li is raising awareness about the spurious claim that rhino horn, which is made of keratin (the same thing fingernails are made of), has medicinal value



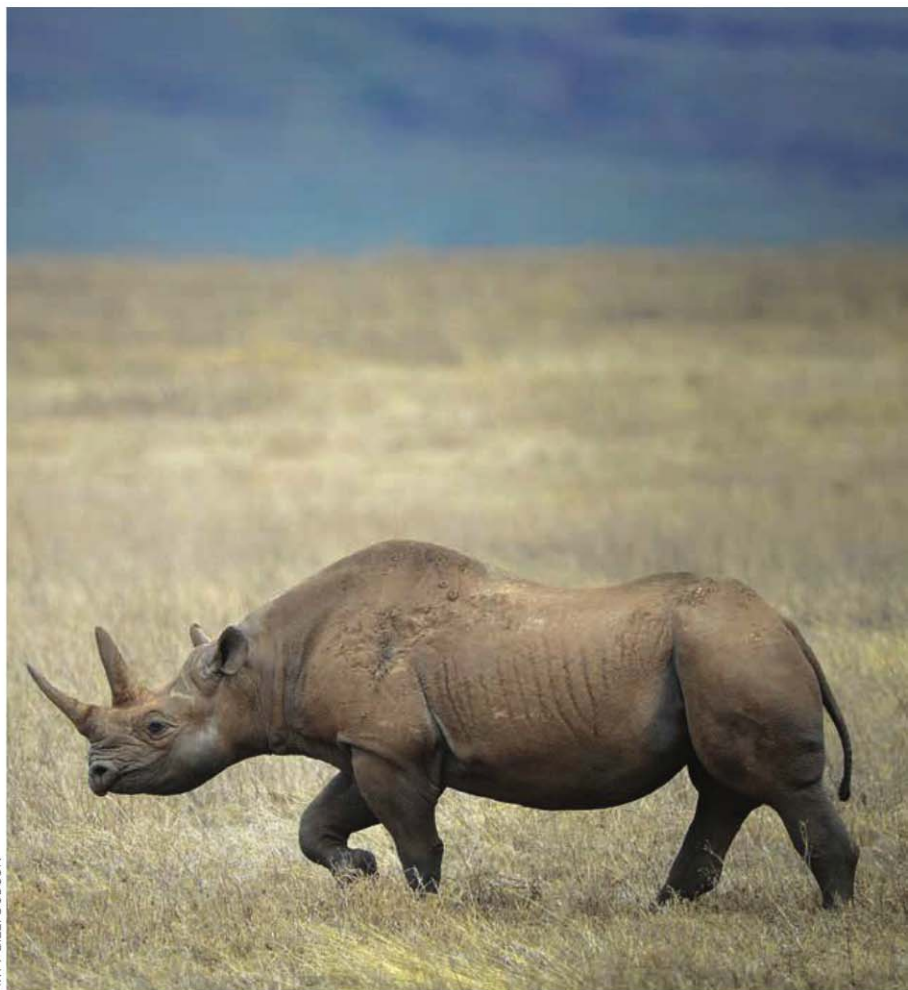
WILDAID



WILDAID

**Above:** An ambassador for AWF and WildAid's 'Nailbiter' campaign, Sir Richard Branson is raising awareness about rhino poaching in Africa. The poaching crisis is fuelled by demand for rhino horn, which many believe has medicinal value

**Right:** A black rhino enjoys the freedom of its natural setting



AWF / BILLY DODSON

## Conservation Rhinos

### Where to stay

Responsible wildlife tourism can contribute positively to the conservation of rhinos. Try out one of these options for a trip to remember...

#### OI Pejeta Conservancy

Make your own conservation mark when you camp or lodge at OI Pejeta Conservancy. OI Pejeta offers accommodation to fit any budget, from luxuriously appointed tented camps (Sweetwaters Serena Camp: US\$115-\$400 pppn) to more budget-friendly camping options (The Stables: US\$45 pppn). Visitors can track lions, go on a bush walk or game drive, bottle-feed a rhino, visit the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary and take part in community projects. Tourism revenue supports OI Pejeta's conservation and community work.

► [WWW.OLPEJETACONSERVANCY.ORG/](http://WWW.OLPEJETACONSERVANCY.ORG/)

#### Finch Hattons Camp

Live out your dreams when you stay at Finch Hattons, a luxury bush camp located in Tsavo West National Park. Finch Hattons offers 14 luxury tented suites, two-room luxury suites and a presidential tented suite, called the Finch Hattons Suite. Rates range anywhere from US\$590 per person for a luxury tented suite in the low season to US\$3750 for the presidential suite in the high season.

► [HTTP://FINCHHATTONS.COM/](http://FINCHHATTONS.COM/)



© AWF/CHERYL SAMANTHA OWEN

### Detection dogs

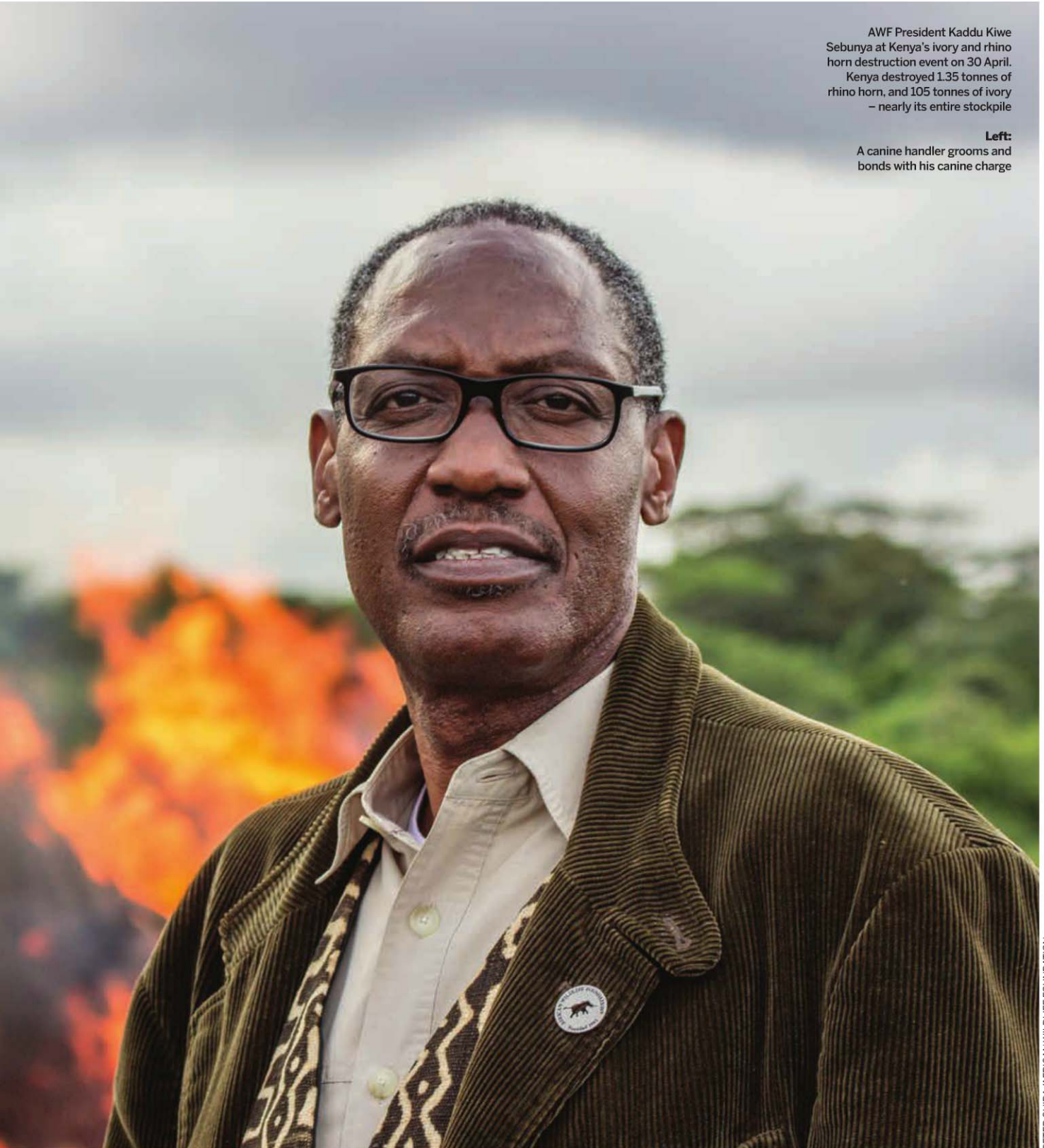
Last year AWF began training detection dogs to sniff out ivory, rhino horn and other wildlife products at Africa's airports and seaports. Canine handlers specially selected from national wildlife authority ranks are trained alongside the dogs during a two-month, intensive programme. In partnership with KWS, new detection dogs have been deployed to Jomo Kenyatta and Moi International Airports. Another canine class is undergoing training for deployment to Uganda and Mozambique. 

## AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Founded in 1961, AWF is the primary advocate for the protection of wildlife and wild lands as an essential part of a modern and prosperous Africa. AWF's programmes address land protection, wildlife conservation and community development. To combat poaching and wildlife trafficking, AWF is supporting critical rhino populations in Africa, including two eastern black rhino populations in Kenya, at OI Pejeta Conservancy and Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary. AWF also supports a population of desert-adapted black rhinos in Namibia, and populations of both black and white rhinos at public and private reserves in South Africa. ► [WWW.AWF.ORG](http://WWW.AWF.ORG)

AWF President Kaddu Kiwe Sebuya at Kenya's ivory and rhino horn destruction event on 30 April. Kenya destroyed 1.35 tonnes of rhino horn, and 105 tonnes of ivory – nearly its entire stockpile

**Left:**  
A canine handler grooms and bonds with his canine charge



PETER CHIRIA/AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION