

We're fundraising **ForRangers**

It's been a busy second year for ForRangers, the initiative formerly known as 'Running for Rangers', the rebranding because we wanted to encourage anyone and everyone to get involved in doing whatever they wanted.

Sam Taylor | Chief Conservation Officer, Borana Conservancy

What started as an informal jog through the Sahara Desert in 2015 (aka the Marathon des Sables) has grown into something far beyond anything we might have imagined. It's unclear what is more astonishing: the numbers of people prepared to do extraordinary, painful feats of endurance, or the numbers of people who stepped up to support the Africa's rangers.

Knitting ForRangers was a mooted idea from a lovely lady in an old people's home. Whilst sadly that never eventuated, we did have Kayak ForRangers, an arduous 1,000-km paddle across down the Yukon River. The ever-indefatigable Pete Newland managed to run 250 km in Peru, another 250-km race in Iceland followed by the New York Marathon, a Brecon ultra, and a casual 500-km yomp across the frozen wastes of the Yukon – all in the space of four months.



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The Cycling ForRangers team is, at the time of writing, half way along the epic trip from Cape Town to Nairobi and has raised an incredible £28,000. The support we have had from people keen to join has been fantastic, and strong

friendships have been forged along the way.

We will continue these adventures to capture the imagination of the public and raise awareness, but we also need to find sustainable ways to raise funds. Our families now know we are not only bonkers but capable of surviving these challenges, so we need to recruit new volunteers. As such we have partnered with Save the Rhino and Beyond the Ultimate to host Kenya's first ultra-marathon, the ForRangers Ultra, due to take place in August 2018. In the home of long-distance running, we are encouraging people to take part in a gruelling-but-thrilling 250 km run across four of Kenya's most famous rhino sanctuaries.

We have had an enormous amount of support from outside the masochistic endurance community. In particular, Kelly Eastwood of The London Chatter and Amelia Bainbridge of Auree Jewellery have raised (and continue to raise huge sums) with their Tembo collection of bracelets. All proceeds – more than £15,000 so far – have been donated to ForRangers.

The plight of the rangers has touched the youth of Kenya too. At Pembroke School, the kids paid to dress up as rangers for a day, raising US\$1,000. Similar efforts at Peponi School in Nairobi saw them raise much-appreciated funds.

In November 2016 we held our inaugural dinner. It was a wonderful occasion

and it was an enormous privilege to have five rangers from Kenya join us. The team at Prestige Events set up an incredible evening, with a particularly powerful speech by Ian Craig OBE, the founder of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. An amazing assortment of fine art was donated to ForRangers for the auction, raising US\$150,000. The top-selling piece was 'Mean Buff', a painting and accompanying bronze of a buffalo, donated and crafted by Mike Ghau, the father of Hattie, our marketing guru. Mike's wife, and one of ForRangers' earliest and most enthusiastic supporters, Debbie, tragically passed away the day before the event, making the dinner especially poignant. Our next ForRangers dinner will be on Monday 11 December 2017 at LSO St Luke's, held in conjunction with Save the Rhino.

Whilst there has been some positive news from the international community, and poaching seems to be declining, these are small gains. Elephant and rhino are still being poached at a horrifying rate. Alarming, rangers still face extreme hardship. The numbers of ranger injuries and casualties for 2016 ran into the hundreds. They still need whatever support we can provide.

Since ForRangers' inception in 2014, the team has managed to raise nearly US\$500,000 in cash and the same in in-kind equipment. We continue to support rangers from various African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia), through various organisations including African Parks, North Luangwa Conservation Project, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Mara Elephant Project, Big Life Foundation, Borana Conservancy, Gashaka Gumti, Ol Jogi, Turtle Watch, the Bio Ken snake farm, Ol Pejeta Conservancy and the North Rangelands Trust.

