

RANGER RIAN TO LOKORAN

Rianto is 35 years old and grew up in the local Maasai community in Laikipia, Kenya. He works at Borana Conservancy and says:

The reason that made me become a ranger is passion for wildlife since a young age, inspired by my Maasai father who is, naturally, a naturalist.

I'm proud of being a ranger and my responsibility for keeping rhinos on the face of our planet earth! Secondly, being a conservationist by profession, my career has contributed positively towards rhino conservation in Kenya by creating awareness in the general public. Wildlife tourism is one of the main ways for poverty eradication through creating jobs for our citizens. It's our responsibility to take care of rhinos, just like we do our children and our families. I believe that if we lose our rhinos, it's a sign that human life is also taking its course towards extinction as well.

At Lewa and Borana, we're working with co-operative, well-trained rangers with high standards of discipline spearheaded by 51 Degrees, which provides training and support. Working with 51 Degrees and as part of the Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries of Kenya has helped us become a stronger, united team. We now conduct joint operations with other conservancies like Lewa, Ol Pejeta and Ol Jogi, and have one Joint Operations Control Centre, based at Lewa.

My typical working day starts at 06:00 with the morning call at Lewa and Borana Conservancies. From 06:30–07:00 rangers working overnight in the field come back to camp to have breakfast. Then we take an hour for a morning run and our physical fitness routine to keep our team equally fit and healthy.

At 08:30 there's time for a quick shower and then we start routine classes from 51 Degrees to keep our knowledge fresh. This can be on map reading, weapon handling, First Aid or contact drills – what to do if we come under fire. We practise Monday to Saturday and always have a 30-minute test on the topic we covered that particular day.

At 09:30 it's time for a tea break and at 10:00 we then brief that day's patrol team on their route out in the Conservancy. The team will patrol the landscape from 10:15–13:00, looking out for any signs of illegal activity, before coming back for lunch and a rest. In the afternoon, we usually spend an hour out in the Conservancy taking down our rhino sightings – the animals we've seen and where – before compiling all our information and reporting back to the Radio Room at Lewa to input into our database.

At 15:30 we have another tea break and then it's time for an early supper at 16:00.



Left: Borana Anti-Poaching Unit before a night patrol

Below: Live fire contact drill

Then Senior Commanders come and brief the field patrol teams on the day's rhino sightings and their locations, and where the patrol will be deployed overnight as a result. At around 17:00 rangers drive out into the field where they stay overnight to protect the rhinos. From 18:00 until the morning, I'll be half sleeping, half-awake in case I need to spring into action and provide support.

For anyone thinking – "Now I know your routine" – remember that we like to shake things up so that we are not predictable!

The best thing about this job is that I'm in a position to prove to the whole world that what seems impossible is actually possible. In recent years we haven't lost any rhinos at Lewa and Borana. If you take the right decision, course, goal and action, and positively work towards them, then you can achieve it.

I enjoy working as part of a wider team of people who have a true passion for rhino conservation and a common goal: to see the number of rhinos increasing! The great support that we continuously receive from Save the Rhino International, its donors like USFWS, Sporting Rifle and the Anna Merz Rhino Trust, and *The Horn* readers makes this difficult job much easier.

My hope is to see Kenyan rhinos increase drastically in national parks, reserve, conservancies and other protected areas, reaching their carrying capacity. The big question will be where else could we develop new rhino populations?

Rianto was interviewed by Sam Taylor, Chief Conservation Officer at Borana Conservancy

