

Using EQUIPMENT effectively to combat poaching



Modern day conservation has evolved dramatically in the last decade. This is especially so for critically endangered wildlife species, particularly those whose demand value has acutely inflated in recent times. Rhinos are one such species, when the illegal demand price for their horn has escalated by an estimated 3,000% in less than three years.

Jamie Gaymer | Wildlife and Security Manager, Ol Jogi Conservancy (picture above)

As conservation entities strive towards the most economically viable model to combat this wave of poaching, it is inevitable that equipment requirements have to become more diverse.

The use of different tools in conservation is multi-faceted but, ultimately, they increase efficiency, improve wildlife protection and enhance ranger safety. Security, ecological management, education and communication are a few examples of the dynamic mosaic of considerations that require our attention.

Whilst equipment can greatly enhance our ability to proactively and reactively address conservation issues, we ultimately rely on human resources for the provision of services. Equipment, be it technological or physical, acts as a supportive layer to improve safety and efficiency for the men and women who are engaged on the ground.

Similarly, there is no 'silver bullet' application of resources that will fix all conservation challenges. The mosaic is as dynamic as it is complex and it continues to evolve at a startling rate. We must critically evaluate all equipment opportunities and learn from the experience of others, whilst also being effective given our unique status as individual conservation entities. Legislation and regional policy also dictates the equipment that can be used in conservation, and this varies in different countries throughout Africa.

It is unfortunate, tragic even, that the protection of wildlife has deteriorated into a deadly battle in some instances. Whilst the focus in recent years has been on security in response to the upsurge in poaching, equipment is still used proactively for biological management, awareness, education and healthcare, amongst other uses.

Managers should strive to invest in the most efficient combination of equipment and assets that can improve their efficiency by supporting boots on the ground.

It is impossible to list all of the equipment that we require, but for just for our anti-poaching purposes, we tend to need:

- Personnel equipment: uniforms, boots, webbing, day-sacks, sleeping bags
- Vehicles: 4x4s, motorbikes, quad-bikes
- Aircraft (pictured below): fixed-wing and helicopter
- Thermal-imaging equipment and night-vision goggles
- Weapons (including firearms) and associated equipment (ammunition, scopes etc.)
- First aid equipment
- Communication equipment: radios (digital in some cases), mobile phones, satellite phones
- Internet and computer networks
- Remote motion-sensor cameras
- Detection equipment: magnetic, sound triangulation, radar
- Psycho-physiological detection of deception and multi-layered voice analysis (commonly known as polygraph tests)
- Analytical software
- Mapping imagery
- Fences and associated technologies
- Drones
- Equipment for canine unit support
- Wildlife monitoring hardware and associated software

