

Bringing the world to Borana and boosting ranger morale

Ensuring there are enough funds to get the right equipment for our rangers is always of critical importance, so that we can provide the jackets, tents, socks and meals that are all needed for one day in this job. But almost as significant is the interaction that rangers have with visitors to Borana: the tourists, the donors. Without visitors, we wouldn't be able to pay for those items that keep ranger morale high, but we also wouldn't be able to show our rangers just what their day job is achieving for the world.

Sam Taylor | Wildlife Manager, Borana Conservancy



Above: Rangers at the camp in Borana

Left: Rangers patrol everyday to monitor rhinos and keep them protected

Most of Borana's rangers are employed locally, within 5 km of our boundaries. Many didn't receive much conventional schooling and most have travelled no further than Nanyuki, our nearest town, just 40 km away. Their worldview is therefore focused on our region in Kenya.

Initially, they protect wildlife and wilderness because they are paid to do so. It is a noble cause because they are looking after their ancestral lands, their heritage. However, do they recognise the scale of concern and support that others around the globe have for their work? They know that people travel long distances to come and see the wildlife, and they know too that organisations such as Borana have forsaken cattle ranching (something I would assume is baffling to the Maasai, who hold livestock in such esteem) to focus on protecting rhino.

From a short conversation with visitors, suddenly our rangers understand that they are part of a planet whose wilderness is vanishing, they are not just part of rhino protection efforts in Laikipia. Suddenly they are aware of a world that cares about what they do and what they are achieving. Suddenly they understand the importance of their role, on a global stage, and with that comes pride in and ownership of their task.

We're one of a very select few rhino conservancies that tries to cover all of its operating costs by its own commerce and so we want tourists to see exactly what their stay is contributing towards. We encourage lots of communication between guests and rangers, offering insights into what are often very different worlds. The rangers see the importance of their everyday work to people who live many thousands of miles away.

A while ago we had the opportunity to show all the rangers a film called Warlords of Ivory, brought by a guest. It was a fascinating documentary that followed tracked elephant tusks into central Africa



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and into the hands of people that sold them for firearms to arm small children. The men were outraged. As they all have close family cultures, they couldn't fathom the evil that makes men arm children to kill.

Suddenly they saw their position in a different light. Their protection of rhino and elephant served a higher purpose, and went beyond "protecting their heritage". Their part in protecting wildlife (particularly rhino) was also stemming the tide in human trafficking, the drugs trade, and local crime. It was a breakthrough moment. There was renewed pride in their work.

Every interaction increases morale in our team. It makes rangers prouder, more committed and contributes every bit as much as the kind funds received to buy boots and warm socks.

This year, we hosted part of Save the Rhino's and Beyond the Ultimate's inaugural ForRangers Ultra marathon. The rangers were busy protecting runners from errant rhino and wandering herds of elephant. They loved it. They saw these mad visitors suffering, sweating, with blisters and heat stroke, charging across the wilderness to raise funds for rhinos and rangers. How gratifying it must be for the rangers who operate in difficult conditions to see all these people enduring so much, and all for them.

Above: Being a ranger isn't an easy job, building morale is crucial

Left: Each ranger takes pride in their work, protecting wildlife and making a difference

