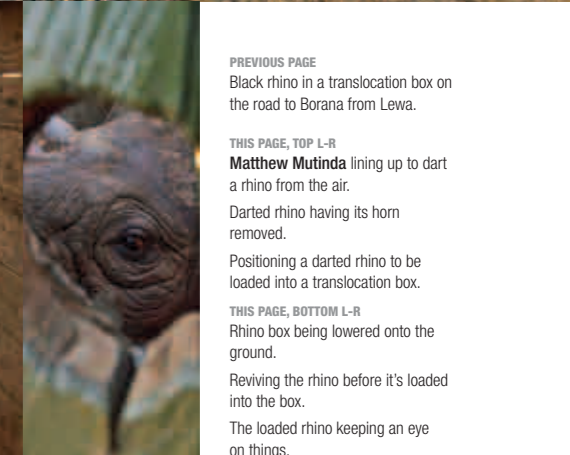




**BORANA IS CONTRIBUTING TO LEWA'S AND KENYA'S RHINO POPULATIONS IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY – BY GIVING THEM SPACE TO BREED.**



PREVIOUS PAGE  
Black rhino in a translocation box on the road to Borana from Lewa.

THIS PAGE, TOP L-R  
**Matthew Mutinda** lining up to dart a rhino from the air.  
Darted rhino having its horn removed.  
Positioning a darted rhino to be loaded into a translocation box.

THIS PAGE, BOTTOM L-R  
Rhino box being lowered onto the ground.  
Reviving the rhino before it's loaded into the box.  
The loaded rhino keeping an eye on things.

Over the course of ten days, 21 black rhino were tranquilised, boxed and transported from Nakuru National Park and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy before being free released on Borana.

The reasons for doing this have never been more glaring. With a national metapopulation facing one of the worst poaching epidemics in decades, the need to up the breeding rates as a measure to combat these alarming losses is just as critical to the survival of the species as are the anti-poaching initiatives.

Closer to home, the neighbouring conservancy of Lewa's undoubted success as a rhino sanctuary has meant that their carrying capacity had been reached. Lewa needed more space if the successful breeding of black rhino in the north of Kenya was to continue.

The obvious step was next door on Borana – 32,000 acres of sumptuous rhino habitat, with a dedicated team devoted to its protection.

Under the guidance of Lewa and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Borana began to develop its infrastructure – training and equipping its security teams, upgrading fencelines, and developing the systems of biological and security management needed to protect this critically endangered species.

It was a long drawn-out process and there were, understandably given the threats facing rhino, many hoops to jump through before the KWS finally agreed that Borana was ready.

## A NEW HOME FOR RHINO

ON 26TH AUGUST 2013,  
A PLAN THAT HAD BEEN  
NEARLY 15 YEARS IN THE  
MAKING FINALLY CAME  
INTO FRUITION.  
THE BORANA CONSERVANCY  
IN NORTHERN KENYA  
OPENED ITS GATES TO RHINO.

SAM TAYLOR

Chief Conservation Officer, Borana Conservancy

### The translocation

Finally a date was set and 11 candidates were carefully selected to be moved from Lewa, whose age, social standing and potential fecundity would establish a strong breeding line on Borana. A further 10 would come from Nakuru National Park, where declining breeding rates were being recorded due to an overreached carrying capacity.

At 9:00 am a young male rhino, appropriately named 'Songa' ('Move' in Kiswahili) was captured on Lewa, and manoeuvred with some reluctance into a crate where he began the hour-long trip west and up the road to Borana. He announced his arrival in somewhat belligerent fashion, charging the KWS veterinary car before storming into thick bush, huffing and puffing. Two more males followed that day from Lewa, both accepting their eviction with a little less indignation. A further three males arrived from Nakuru.

### Keeping track

From then on it was thick and fast for a week, with Lewa animals being brought on during the day and Nakuru animals concluding their long journey late at night or in the early hours of the morning.

The monitoring team, having all received training in Lewa, enthusiastically jumped to the task of tracking their new charges and, such was the excitement, the conservancy radio channel

rattled on permanently with excited whispers and then excited shouts as scouts got close initially – then too close!

A week later the founder 21 rhino were all on Borana, and already one or two of the new tenants had already settled down and made their own home range. Five months later, some still haven't moved! Though many sleepless nights lie ahead, it is difficult to describe how wonderful it is to see these incredible animals roaming about Borana much as they would have nearly a century ago.

### Learning to live with rhino

Already we are experiencing the highs and lows of rhino conservation. We have had our first calf born – the euphoria abruptly cut-short when he was trampled by another bull. We have had rhino breeding; rhino harassed by lion; rhino chasing cars: all the incidences that make looking after these animals so extraordinary.

Whilst financially it makes little sense, and in terms of stress and workload even less so, there is no doubt that this is undeniably the right thing to do. We do not see this as the newest private sanctuary in Kenya, rather an expansion of one of Kenya's oldest and most successful private conservancies: Lewa. We also know we are not alone. The support has been astounding. Leading conservationists in Kenya have given us lots of advice and huge encouragement. Conservancies have lent us

equipment. Charitable organisations, like Tusk, have granted funds to help us get started. Despite the doom and gloom that surrounds rhino conservation at present, the support and passion that people have towards ensuring their survival on a local, national and global level is truly uplifting!

We are most indebted to both Lewa and the KWS for their hard work, planning and guidance, not just over the translocation period, but in the years preceding it.

Similarly, the support we have received from Tusk through the Safaricom Marathon has been invaluable.



### Rhino watching

Looking after rhino on a day-to-day basis often means looking for rhino.

The importance of seeing each animal every day if possible cannot be underestimated.

Sadly, rhino succumb to more than just poachers; their poor eyesight makes them susceptible to falling down holes and banks; injured or sick rhino decline very quickly and swift action needs to be taken should they lose condition or eat unpalatable browse (especially

in a new and alien environment); predators are a constant threat, particularly to young.

And, of course, seeing couplings is of crucial importance to a new population for which we're trying to boost breeding rates.

Making time to get visuals on each rhino is time-consuming but very rewarding.

Following rhino down the path less trod can lead to exciting and unexpected discoveries such as this incredible sighting of a mother and calf nonchalantly browsing amongst a pride of lion.

