

DBs THE RHINO

Remembering David Back

As a passionate conservationist and brilliant wildlife photographer, David Back will be missed by everyone that knew him, but remembered in many ways.



Above and below: DBs the rhino with his mum. DBs, named in honour of David Back, has a unique and wonderful character, and is loved by all at North Luangwa National Park.

Growing up in the city – he was originally from Edmonton, London – David's passion for wildlife was ignited through family trips to London Zoo, learning about creatures that otherwise lived thousands of miles away. Inspired by the wildlife he encountered, David went on to lead a life full of rich and wild experiences, supporting initiatives that helped make a real difference.

At university, David studied architecture in London, but spent his summers escaping the urban metropolis, opting to enjoy time in the remote South Luangwa National Park, Zambia, some 4,700 miles away. The more David learnt about South Luangwa, the more he wanted to do to be part of its support network. During his summer visits, he trained as a safari guide and was soon leading tours and developing his love for Zambia – and its black rhinos!

In 1979 when David began as a guide, there were 100 or so black rhinos still roaming the area, but by 1990, they were all gone. Of course David felt compelled to do something and so he did.

In 2009, the 'Horny@50' campaign began. Over the course three years, David organised several fundraising events with celebrity guest speakers, which were gratefully supported by his many business and conservation friends and colleagues.

The campaign was a huge success, raising more than £130,000 to support three rhino projects; £80,000 translocated eight black rhinos back to North Luangwa to help re-establish the species, £25,000 helped create a second anti-poaching camp in and bought a patrol boat, Unicorn 1, for Kaziranga National Park, India, and £25,000 supported efforts to breed Sumatran rhinos at the Sumatran

Rhino Sanctuary in Indonesia and another patrol boat, Unicorn 2, for Way Kambas National Park.

But of course, David did not stop there, he wanted to do more to help the people in North Luangwa: David knew that it is whole communities that protect endangered species. In 2016 after he was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease, Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, David established the North Luangwa football initiative.

The initiative was simple: football leagues for local communities. Each team was named after a local endangered animal, in the hope that children would love their animal mascots and protect their future. The leagues evolved from simply playing to win a football cup (the Samalani Nyama Cup, to be precise); the initiative is a time for communities to come together and celebrate. Today there are also women's teams within each league – a huge leap when most of the rural communities did not believe women could play the same sport as men.

Beyond David's incredible passions, he was an esteemed wildlife photographer winning categories in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. He also escorted photographic safaris to various parts of the world and his photographs and articles featured in various travel and wildlife magazines.

David passed away in April 2019 from Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. He will always be remembered by his family and friends for his enthusiasm, dedication and true love for wildlife, especially rhinos. Now, his legacy will continue in North Luangwa, as the team named a young male rhino calf in his honour: DBs (pronounced 'Deeb's'), the name his wife, Karen, and two children, Daniel and Georgia, called him.

Just like David, DBs is a true character and will have a home in North Luangwa for many years to come.

