



An insight into the life of a Rhino Ranger

In August, during a two-week field trip to learn more about rhinos in Namibia with Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), we were lucky enough to spend time with Mensley Karutjaiva, a Rhino Ranger in Namibia's Kunene region.

Darion Moore | Partnership Communications Officer, Save the Rhino International
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Mensley (above), like the other Rhino Rangers here, is employed by one of the local community conservancies, who all come together to support tourism as well as track and protect rhinos. SRT supports Mensley and other Rhino Rangers like him, providing extra resources to help their work, in return for regular rhino reports. We sat down with Mensley to learn more about his work with SRT.



My camera went flying one way and the GPS the other. With no other option, I froze. Thankfully, it moved on.

Name: Mensley Karutjaiva

Role: Rhino Ranger

Nationality: Namibian

Time in current role: Seven years

How long do you stay in the field?

When we are on patrol, we stay at the camp for 22 days. I miss my family, but I know that I need to bring food home for them, so I need to be out working. If I stayed at home, we'd have no bread on the table.

How does Save the Rhino Trust support you when you're in the field?

For every kilometre that we walk, we receive some extra money, because the more you walk, the more rhinos you're able to monitor. We also get diversity and photo bonuses for the rhinos we are tracking, making sure we find different rhinos and record their photos as much as possible. The bonuses are extremely helpful. We really appreciate the support from SRT. If we didn't get the bonuses, our salaries would not be enough.

Why did you become a Rhino Ranger?

I want to protect animals for future generations to see. I don't want to have to show them drawings, I want to be able to show them the animals in real life.

Above: The team takes GPS coordinates and photos of a footprint while on patrol.

Right: Mensley and his colleagues cooking together at camp.

What is your daily routine like as a Rhino Ranger?

When on duty, I stay in a remote bush camp in the Kunene desert alongside one of my colleagues and a law enforcement officer. Every morning, I wake up at 6:30 am and set up my GPS. Then I go down to the waterhole to start my patrol. As soon as we see fresh tracks, we start tracking rhinos.

What difficulties do you face in your role?

The main challenge is wild animals. When you are tracking on foot, you might come across lions, scorpions, or snakes. Encountering them can be fatal.

We're always extremely careful around rhinos too. For example, by staying downwind so that the rhino doesn't catch our scent. If it does, it will do one of two things: charge or run away. Once, I saw a rhino's footprints at the waterhole and we began to track. When we came closer to the bushes, we lost the tracks. Suddenly, I saw the rhino stand up and start coming towards us. There were no trees to hide up, and no stones to climb, so I decided to sit down. The rhino was already close to me, and it hit me on my side.

