

# Kenya:

## Pachyderms return to Mugie, Laikipia

Over the past ten years, the Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) has placed Laikipia District firmly at the forefront of Kenyan wildlife conservation.

**Dr Jonathan Moss**  
Executive Director, Laikipia Wildlife Forum

Laikipia is increasingly acknowledged as one of the most important areas for biodiversity not only in Kenya, but across Africa. Given that it is a non-protected area, the fact that its biodiversity values are not only being sustained, but in many cases enhanced, is a remarkable achievement for community based conservation. In contrast to much of Kenya, Laikipia continues to record increasing overall wildlife numbers, and has more endangered mammals than anywhere else in Kenya, including Jackson's hartebeest, wild dog, Grevy's zebra, and reticulated giraffe.

More importantly, Laikipia now hosts seven heavily protected rhino sanctuaries, which together hold over half of Kenya's black rhino population. The latest sanctuary has just been developed within Mugie Ranch, which has recently taken on Daniel Lomoe, previously one of the LWF's Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) supported by Save the Rhino.

In the early 1970s Mugie Ranch, on the far north-western side of Laikipia, right on the edge of the Great Rift Valley, was habitat for a great variety of game including numerous black rhino. With poaching on the increase throughout the 1970s, and significant land-use changes, wildlife populations declined and only two rhino remained in the area by the end of the decade. In the 80s these two rhino were captured and moved to a secure environment elsewhere. Since that time Mugie Ranch has gradually succeeded in re-establishing a balance between livestock rearing and wildlife conservation.

Now over half of the 49,000 acre working ranch has been set aside as a rhino sanctuary and in August last year, with help

from KWS, 20 black rhino and two white rhino were translocated to Mugie from Nairobi National Park, Lake Nakuru National Park and Solio Game Reserve. The translocation was a great success and the rhino have settled well, thriving in their ancestral home and already beginning to breed.

Wildlife conservation has given landowners a new perspective on land use and many ranches in Laikipia have established ecotourism facilities. Mugie is no exception and operates a lodge called Mutamaiyu House. Daniel Lomoe continues to work closely with the LWF and coordinates Mugie's support for community projects on neighbouring community land. These projects include the Kaptuya Wildlife Conservancy - 20,000 acres dedicated to conservation and community-based ecotourism development - and the Luoniek Cultural Boma, both of which receive visitors from Mutamaiyu House on Mugie. Daniel also hosts students brought to the

ranch through the LWF's Environmental Education Programme, whose Environmental Education Officer and Education Bus have been funded by Save the Rhino and a consortium of donors. This outreach programme aims to support teachers in implementing an environmental curriculum, and to introduce schoolchildren to wildlife and conservation, through talks, video shows and field trips.

The LWF is extremely grateful to Save the Rhino and Daniel Lomoe of Mugie for their continued support for community conservation and environmental education in Laikipia.

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MUGIE