

THE STORY OF JAMILI

by Kate O'Connor | York University Student and Lewa Intern

Getting updated information on adopted or named rhino actually takes quite the effort. This season, I had the privilege of being sent out into the field at Lewa with one of the researchers to take photos from a safe distance, and interview Silas Kimathu Nabea, one of the two rangers that look out for Jamili. Jamili's update is the perfect example of this process, because just days after we captured his photo, and received the information saying "Jamili is now 3.4 years of age and is in good health; He is very close to his mother and follows her everywhere..." Jamili's mother Nashami, gave birth to her second calf. Following the rhino tradition, Nashami chased Jamili away on his own so that she could nurse her new arrival. Almost instantly, however, Silas noticed that Jamili's behaviour was out of the ordinary, and communicated to the radio room that he suspected Jamili might be visually impaired.

The very same day Jamili fell down into a steep, 25-metre deep ravine. Miraculously alive but trapped, Lewa personnel spent the next 24 hours devising a plan, cutting a path in the edge of the narrow gorge, and then assembling as many hands as they could muster. Together we were able to rescue Jamili from the depths of the crevasse. He was sent right away to the OI Pejeta Conservancy for further monitoring, where they have excellent rhino holding facilities.

Getting Jamili out of the ravine was an ordeal. After discussing and planning, the vet ran everyone through their instructions and a practice session of how they would be working to help



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Jamili to the top of the cliff. Then Dr. Chege went down to where Jamili was and darted him with an immobilizer. Once asleep the team worked to strap Jamili up from behind, putting ropes on his legs to

help him inch forward. Once ready, the vet then administered a small dose of the reversal drug to help Jamili partially wake up. Jamili was drowsy but with pushing support from behind and pulling support from above, he took a few steps before he slumped back down, needing a rest. After a few minutes another small dose was given, and a few more steps were taken. Another dose. Another few steps. It was a slow process. On and on it went like this until Jamili

was finally on a landing that was flat enough for his moving crate to descend.

The hill was so steep that the tractor couldn't haul Jamili's crate down, so more ropes and more manpower was needed. Still, Lewa's working party didn't give up. We had come this far. Finally Jamili was positioned in front of the crate and the ropes were removed from around his tired, battered body. Dr. Chege gave him the final dose and as the rhino fully awakened he was guided into the box, and the door shut quick before he could let us all know how he was feeling. When he arrived at OI Pejeta, Jamili was inspected by Dr. Chege, including x-rays. It was quickly concluded that he was blind in the right eye with vision impairment in the left eye. After a few days, Jamili started showing signs of weaknesses. And he died a few days after. The necropsy revealed that, as a result of his fall, Jamili had suffered internal injuries that were simply fatal. This was devastating news for all of us who put so much effort into rescuing Jamili.

As you can tell, great efforts are always put towards taking care of these majestic animals. Lewa is proud to be a stable home to one of the most critically endangered populations in the world. Although mishaps such as Jamili's episode do happen in nature, we are committed to doing everything we can to provide the black rhino with a safe, healthy, and species-appropriate environment.



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