

Looking after orphaned rhinos doesn't come cheap

The Laikipia District, which straddles the Equator, is home to approximately 293 (46%) of Kenya's national population, and 37% of the total subspecies' African population, of Eastern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*). These are held across several private and community conservancies, which are all members of the Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries (APLRS). Laikipia's rhinos, which remain state-owned, are actively managed as a metapopulation by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) through the APLRS.

Cathy Dean | Director

The largest of these conservancies is OI Pejeta Conservancy (OPC), which holds 14% of the confirmed black rhino population in Kenya. On 10 April 2010, OPC released the following:

'We are thrilled to announce that on Sunday 28 March, one of our white rhinos named Ariemet gave birth to a very healthy calf. This new birth brings the total number of rhinos on the OI Pejeta Conservancy to 100, with 84 black rhinos and 12 Southern white rhinos and four Northern white rhinos.'

In addition to a pro-active translocation programme for optimum population growth, it is also occasionally necessary to respond re-actively to poaching

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threats or emergencies, e.g. capturing and providing veterinary care for an injured animal, or removing a dominant/aggressive bull, or recapturing an animal that has broken through a fence. While individual conservancies like OPC pay

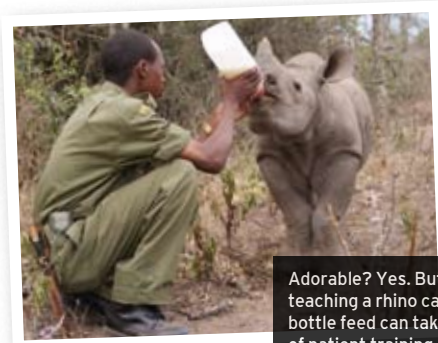
for planned translocations or restocking, there is no central fund for a response to such emergencies that usually must be coordinated between several organisations, and while some of the conservancies in Laikipia have crates and vehicles etc. suitable for use for rhino translocations, none has all that is required.

Earlier this year Save the Rhino offered to put together a proposal to USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service) requesting funding for a central Capture and Translocation Facility, based at OPC. We are delighted to report that this was approved and we'll report on the building of the Facility in the next issue of *The Horn*.

We now need to help OPC/APLRS fundraise for the Emergency Fund. We cannot predict exactly how many emergencies there will be during one year; however, experience shows that, on average, seven animals need treatment per year: four sick or injured requiring capture, boma care and then re-release; and three breakout animals that need capture and re-release.

An incident on 15 June illustrates why the Fund is needed. Lola, a 3-year old female who had been hand-reared by Lewa Wildlife Conservancy staff (her mother was blind and had a habit of 'losing' her calves) and recently released into the wild, was fighting

with a dominant male black rhino. She is too young to mate and Ibong, the male, was chasing her out of his territory and almost killed her twice. Knowing they had to find her a new home, the Lewa team called OI Pejeta for help and decided to transfer her



Adorable? Yes. But teaching a rhino calf to bottle feed can take hours of patient training.

into the safety of the Northern white rhino enclosure at OPC.

In collaboration with the KWS and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, OPC sent its new capture truck and a team to Lewa to help dart and capture Lola. In two or three years, Lola will be released in the wild to mingle with the rest of the OI Pejeta's black rhino, thus contributing to the breeding programme.

Fortunately, Lola did not need veterinary treatment. The cost of capturing, treating and then re-releasing into the wild a sick or injured animal works out at approximately £3,650 – it's really not a cheap business looking after rhinos. Even a capture and re-release costs some £1,150. The Emergency Fund is estimated to need £18,100 a year. The conservancies will pay half of the costs, and Save the Rhino is contributing £2,050. That leaves another £7,000 to find...