

**THE  TIMES**

## Prince strikes a blow for the rhino



Prince William with a black rhino Chris Jackson/Getty Images

**Jessica Hatcher in Nairobi and Valentine Low**

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With five rhinos killed in a fortnight, it was nothing less than a slaughter. After one of the best protected sanctuaries in Africa saw the bloodiest month of the bloodiest year on record, the Duke of Cambridge has called for urgent action to stop the killing.

The deaths came at the Lewa Wildlife Sanctuary in Kenya, where the Duke has been a regular visitor. In the space of two days at the beginning of last month, four black rhinos were found shot dead. Two weeks later, a recently weaned four-year-old calf was discovered dead riddled with bullets.

A St James's Palace spokesman said: "The Duke is concerned that action must be taken now to stem the tide before it is too late and these magnificent creatures become lost to the wild forever."

When Prince William spent part of his gap year at Lewa there had not been a single poaching incident on the reserve. Twelve years later they have lost 11 animals, five in one

year. Lewa's 126 remaining rhinos face the highest threat level in history.

"Species conservation is something the Duke feels passionate about," the spokesman said. "He has been keeping a close eye on the poaching crisis ... and is alarmed by the increase in the numbers being killed."

The illicit trade in rhino horn and elephant ivory is bigger now than ever before. In South Africa an estimated 650 rhinos were killed by poachers in 2012, an astonishing increase on the total number of 13 in 2007.

Africa had about 1.6 million elephants 25 years ago. Now, their numbers are estimated at a quarter of that.

Poachers are operating in organised crime syndicates. Increasingly evidence points to the illicit horn and ivory trade funding the operations of terror organisations including al-Shabaab in Somalia, and the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa.

A voracious consumer appetite, primarily in southeast Asia, means that the financial rewards are higher than ever. Rhino horn fetches up to £25,000 a kilo and a poacher in Kenya can earn more than the average annual salary in one night if successful in acquiring a single horn.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, formerly a family-owned cattle ranch, spans 62,000 acres of pristine conservation land and is home to more than 10 per cent of Kenya's black rhino population. "Lewa is now more than ever determined to counter these threats by increasing our security and monitoring efforts," said Mike Watson, the sanctuary's chief executive.

Lewa's 150 armed wildlife rangers are trained to British army standards and granted Kenya Police Reservist status, allowed to carry automatic weapons and make arrests. One man has been held after last month's killings.

The Duke, whose visits to Lewa inspired him to become patron of the UK wildlife charity Tusk Trust, has spoken publicly against poachers, most recently in June when he called those involved as "extremely ignorant, selfish and utterly wrong", and warned of the effects on African tourism. Charlie Mayhew, chief executive of Tusk Trust, said: "There are real alarm bells ringing. It is Kenya's economic assets that are also being hit, not just the animals."

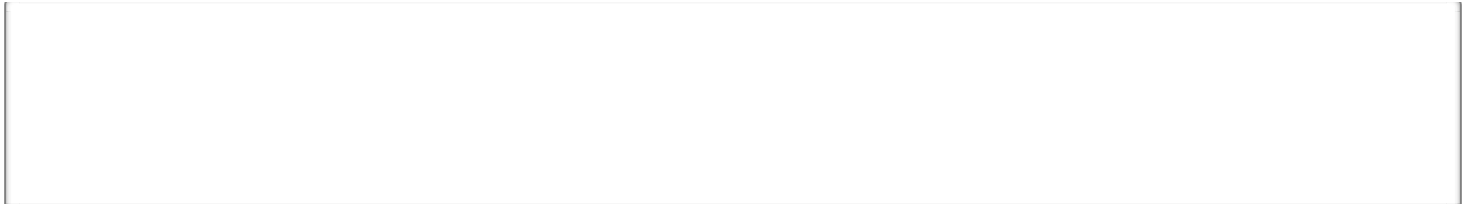
All eyes are on a key meeting of the international wildlife trade watchdog, Cites, in March, where lobbyists will fight for the international watchdog to close a loophole that allows the domestic trading of ivory.

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**David Hicks**

2 hours ago

The horde of nouveau riche, and newly middle class, Chinese and Southeast Asians are not only polluting their own air and water, but are also destroying wildlife, and nature in general, on other continents. With a population of well over one billion, the Chinese economic juggernaut is trampling vast areas of wilderness throughout the world with highly polluting mega-sized mines and other rampant construction projects, on a scale the world has never before seen. Wealthy Vietnamese naively believe they will be cured of cancer with a little rhino horn powder. Furthermore, the new middle class multitudes created by such devastation, well beyond their own borders, love to show off their instant status by filling their homes with carved ivory. Elephants are paying a heavy price for having extra long teeth, while rhinos are slaughtered for their protruding, curved keratin. These animals, along with their families and herds, suffer physically and emotionally from such cruel, senseless and barbaric greed. This annihilation must stop soon or the world will become devoid of these megafauna and the beauty they once manifested so majestically.

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