

## Camera-trapping in the Chyulus

The Chyulu Hills' rhinos are a difficult population to work with; they live in dense bush and are completely wild, unfenced and unmanaged. Their first reaction to human presence is to charge and/or run away.

**Craig Millar** | Security and Field Coordinator, Big Life Foundation

**E**arlier this year, I spent two months in the rhino area, tracking rhino every day. During this period, I saw a rhino on only three occasions and each time I had to climb a tree pretty quickly! On average, the team of 50 rangers, from Big Life Foundation and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) see rhino around 25 times a year.

This makes monitoring the rhinos very difficult, from both a scientific



Using the camera traps, we get an additional 70 to 100 sightings each year



Left: Camera traps capture both rhino images and detect poacher incursions

Using camera traps we get an additional

Near left: Cathy the rhino, named after Save the Rhino's Director!



70 to 100 'sightings' each year. While these are mostly at night, many images can lead to immediate rhino identification. And by measuring the tracks from low-quality images we can identify rhinos nine times out of 10.

In addition to the six camera traps used on rhino wallows, rhino paths and waterholes, we have four GSM camera traps on access paths to rhino area, which have been cleverly disguised using old bits of wood carved by one of our talented rangers. These cameras can send images to a phone at the HQ and have already proved effective. In October, a group of poachers went into the rhino area, an image was received and a joint effort by KWS, Big Life and the combined services Rapid Deployment Unit based at Hunters Lodge prevented any poaching taking place and led to the arrest of one would-be poacher.

The 10 camera traps have made a massive difference and the prospect of additional camera traps from a ZSL grant to the Tsavo conservation area is very exciting. If this much progress has been made with 10, imagine what we could do with 50! Ideally we will have an extensive grid system of camera traps so we can monitor each rhino to a satisfactory standard. This will lead to increased data for research and more effective security for this special population.

### Grants

We sent over £12,500 from Chester Zoo towards the costs of building a second, more secure waterhole inside the Park. We also sent £2,289 from USFWS to pay for the costs of three of BLF's rangers to spend a fortnight with trackers from Save the Rhino Trust in Namibia—report to follow!

and security perspective. Prior to this year, the only way to estimate the population was through DNA analysis of dung found by rangers. This gave a minimum of 14 rhino in 2011, and was little help in identifying individuals on the ground.

The years since 2011 have been tough on rhino and we are no exception; every rhino loss pushes us closer to the point of no return, where the population stops being viable. We lost one bull in 2012 and three rhinos in 2013 (one bull and a mother and calf).

The best way to get information on these rhino is through camera trapping. Big Life and KWS now operate 10 camera traps in the rhino area, for both rhino monitoring and security. This year, a monitoring system using a combination of camera traps and track measurement has yielded results—we are now constantly evaluating the rhino population, identifying individuals and keeping track of breeding, territories and habits.

The new system has confirmed the identification of 11 rhino, with suspicions of at least three more. The rangers have

# VIFARU MILELE!

'Vifaru Milele' – **Rhinos forever** was the key theme of World Rhino Day celebrations in Laikipia, Kenya, on 22 September 2013.

**Samuel Njoroge |**  
Environmental Education  
Officer, Laikipia Wildlife Forum

**T**he celebrations aimed to create public awareness of the plight facing rhinos and elephants, since Laikipia is home to half of Kenya's black rhinos, including Kenya's newest rhino sanctuary in Borana Conservancy.



The use of sports, excursions to wildlife sanctuaries, billboards and rhino exhibitions for children helped appeal to people's sense of pride. Although Laikipia has several rhino sanctuaries, many people have never seen rhinos and other wildlife found in their county. It is sad that local residents have not been exposed to the landscapes and experiences that tourists seek in Laikipia. The aim of celebrating World Rhino Day was to create exposure and begin to build a sense of pride amongst Laikipians for their wildlife and other natural resources.

The Laikipia Wildlife Forum, through support from SRI, celebrated World Rhino Day by engaging Laikipians and mostly youths in sporting activities, including cycling, volleyball and rugby. A huge fibreglass rhino made the rounds in Nanyuki town and villages (*below*). Kids were engaged in painting and drawing competitions in which they were required to interpret the theme 'rhinos must live'.

The week preceding World Rhino Day was a good opportunity for Laikipians to see rhinos for the first time. The town of Nanyuki was sent into a frenzy as people tried to secure space on the bus taking people to Ol Pejeta Conservancy, which Laikipia Wildlife Forum uses for environmental education purposes.

We would like to thank our partners Save the Rhino and Ol Pejeta Conservancy for being key to the success of the day.

## Grant

Save the Rhino made a grant of £4,900 from our core funds to help cover the cost of the LWF's World Rhino Day events.



## 'Treasured' success

We are very pleased to report that Save the Rhino's recent 'Treasured' auction event raised a fantastic £6,000 for rhino conservation.

Leading up to Valentine's Day, Save the Rhino auctioned 16 original artworks on eBay, all starting at a bargain price of 99p!

CTRL "S", Ekkard Altenburger



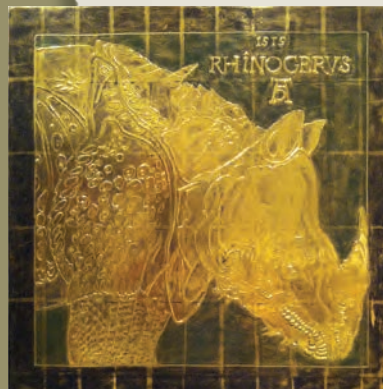
The bidding took place over 10 days, with Richard Long's 'LIFEDEATH' fetching the highest price of all of the artwork – an amazing £1,250.

All of the artworks were inspired by our theme of 'treasured' and whilst one piece was inspired by listening to favourite music (Trevor Sutton, 'Music 2013'), another depicted the scene of a much-cherished walk (Elisabetta Mutty, 'Treasured'). The works ranged from more literal interpretations, working with gold, the classic 'treasure' (Tennant & Tennant, 'Well-travelled rhino' *left*) and to our delight, quite a few canvases that depicted rhinos.



Grayscale, Mr Kobo

Thank you to each of the artists who took part by creating a piece for auction!



Well-travelled rhino, Stella Tennant and Issy Tennant

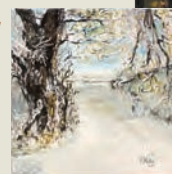


LIFEDEATH  
Richard Long



Music,  
Trevor Sutton

Treasured,  
Elisabetta  
Mutty



Special Memories, Allan Offord

ALL VIFARU MILELE IMAGES: LAIKIPIA WILDLIFE FOUNDATION