

HELP A RANGER SAVE A RHINO



So far this year, nearly 800 rhinos have been brutally slaughtered for their horns in South Africa alone, putting 2014 on track to be the worst poaching year on record. This is the year when rhino populations are predicted to go into decline.

Katherine Ellis | Office and Communications Manager

Behind these shocking statistics, teams of dedicated rangers are battling round-the-clock to protect our magnificent rhinos from ruthless criminal syndicates.

Save the Rhino has helped fund rhino conservation efforts in South Africa's Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park since 2006, and right now the rangers need our support more than ever. With the increasing poaching threat, funding for ranger equipment is urgently needed in order to replace old items that have worn through and equip more rangers to expand proactive and reactive patrol coverage in the Park.

So far, Kruger National Park has been the hardest hit. However there are concerns that, as Kruger becomes better protected following major philanthropic grants, poachers will switch attention to other reserves, such as Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. Christmas and the New Year have been the most dangerous time of the year for rhinos, with poaching gangs hitting hard. This is why Save the Rhino has launched our Help a Ranger, Save a Rhino appeal. In addition to the grants we have recently sent over, we need your help to raise £20,000 by Christmas to fund essential equipment to give the ranger teams the best possible start to combat poaching.

According to Dirk Swart, a Section Ranger in Hluhluwe:

“Our field rangers are the most important guys on the ground. They are our eyes and ears, they are the front line, they pick up poachers, they monitor the rhino and put their lives at risk to protect the reserve.”

Rangers on the frontline

‘As field rangers we are proud of our work, we are proud of saving rhinos, so that is why my team is always out in the field trying to stop poachers’, says Sibonelo Zulu.

Sibonelo is an Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) officer in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. Being part of an APU is an incredibly challenging job - the teams spend 21 days straight camping in the remote field environment covering huge distances by foot, often working with just two or three hours sleep per day. APU rangers are highly skilled and adept at life in the bush, living alongside dangerous animals such as lion and buffalo. With increasing poaching levels, Sibonelo says ‘The APUs have to spend more days in the field - the poachers come during the darkness, especially during moonlight.’ Sibonelo and his team work throughout the night to detect and ambush poachers, and are often the first to react to poaching incidents.

It's not just rhinos that are facing danger; each day rangers are also risking their lives, with an increasing likelihood that they will encounter armed and dangerous poachers. Sibonelo explains ‘Poachers, they want to shoot at us, we have to defend ourselves.’ Bullet-proof vests, first-aid kits and pepper spray are essential kit items, which are often in short supply.

Hooves on the ground

Doris, Derick, Igamalikhho, Nkunzana and Nkhalakatha are five very special horses, assisting with the battle against rhino poaching. Under the supervision of Dennis Kelly, a Section Ranger at the Ngumeni horse establishment, Ze and Corporal Simon Nyawo are two rangers who have close bonds with these horses and conduct regular horseback patrols to protect the Park's rhinos.

Dennis explains ‘The advantage of having horses on patrols is to assist with ground cover, as horses can cover much more distance than we can on foot and we can get to places that are further away from our temporary bases. Horses are a lot more neutral in the bush compared to human beings, and other animals don't seem to be disturbed.’ The presence of field rangers on horses is a good poaching deterrent and horses are also important for enabling closer black rhino monitoring.

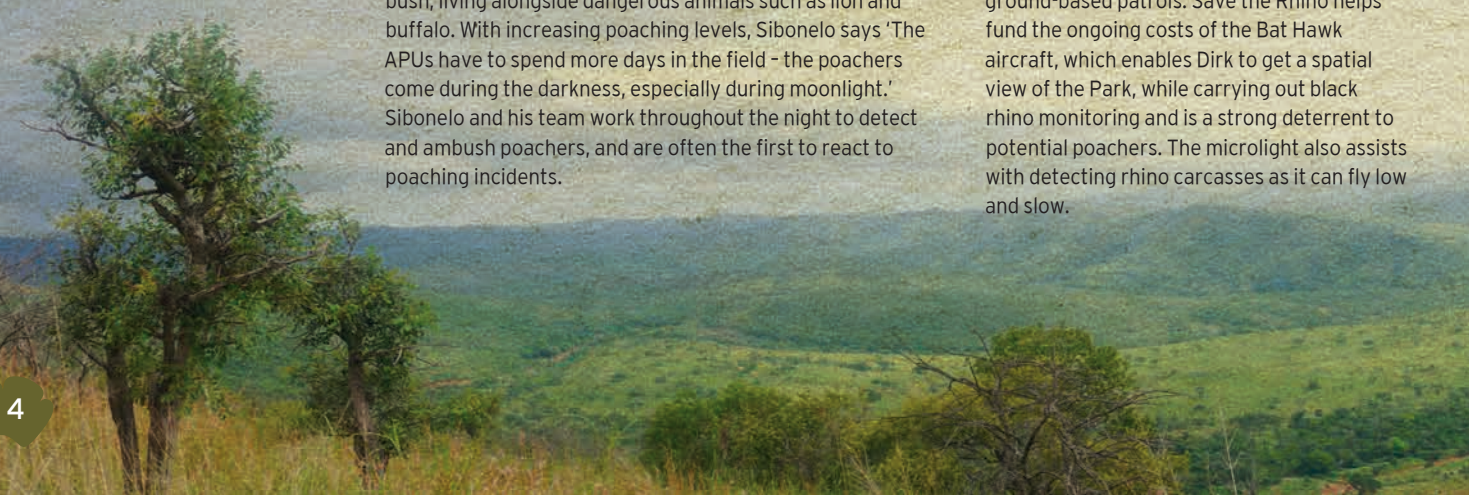
However, maintaining the horse establishment is very expensive, and ongoing funds are needed for the horses' veterinary care such as wound-spray, de-worming tablets and vaccinations. Funds are also needed for equipment such as brushes, saddle soap and helmets.

Eyes in the skies

Aerial surveillance is crucial to supplement ground-based patrols. Save the Rhino helps fund the ongoing costs of the Bat Hawk aircraft, which enables Dirk to get a spatial view of the Park, while carrying out black rhino monitoring and is a strong deterrent to potential poachers. The microlight also assists with detecting rhino carcasses as it can fly low and slow.



Rangers patrol the Park on foot, by horse and from the air to protect rhinos





£20

First Aid kit

But funds are needed for equipment and training to expand aerial surveillance in the Park. Dirk says 'We need funding for fuel running costs, the maintenance of the plane and other equipment such as cabinets and safes.'

Deep in the wilderness

The iMfolozi Wilderness area is a vast expanse of pristine rhino habitat, where no development of any kind is allowed – no roads, no lodges, no tourist vehicles. Ian Pollard is a Section Ranger in iMfolozi and explains the difficult job the rangers face.



It is not uncommon for field rangers to walk 15–20km per day and they do that 24–25 times per month.

With such large distances being covered, the rangers wear through their boots extremely quickly. Ian adds 'The most basic things are required, like uniform; my field rangers don't have raincoats, so they get very, very wet.'

Rangers are dedicating their lives to protecting rhinos. Ian says 'We have to sacrifice a lot, the guys are constantly in the field and on standby, they are not surprised when they get a phone call at 2am to say you need to get out of bed. This has a massive impact on our work, and even on our personal lives, as you don't get to see the people you care for.'

While we enjoy Christmas in the comforts of our own home, rangers will not be taking a break. 'We live on 24-hour alerts and work 365 days a year.'

Please donate to our 'Help a Ranger Save a Rhino' appeal to support rangers with the essential equipment they need to protect South Africa's rhinos.

Grants and thanks

For HiP's rhino monitoring and anti-poaching work this year, we have sent several grants from regular and new donors: €7,650 Vrienden van Safaripark Beekse Bergen; €2,000 Safari de Peaugres; ZAR 111,473 Davmark; €2,000 Montpellier Zoo; €1,250 Golf de Lille Fleurie; \$190 SRI Inc.; £1,590 Woburn Safari Park; £2,000 Zoological Society of East Anglia – Africa Alive!; £650 International Animal Rescue Foundation; £3,900 Ales Weiner; £5,374 Colchester Zoo Action for the Wild; \$24,985 USFWS; and many individual donors including Mat Hartley (Braai 365), the Association of Veterinary Students and Peter de Wit.

Thank you to Tom Rowland and Sam Bond for filming and editing our 'Help a Ranger, Save a Rhino' video series. We are incredibly grateful to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and staff at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park for hosting Katherine, Tom and Sam during their visit in April this year.

HELP A RANGER SAVE A RHINO



£110

Camouflage uniform



£60

Camelbak rucksack



£20

Canvas boots



£25

LED

handtorch

YOU CAN HELP A RANGER SAVE A RHINO

Donate online Visit www.savetherhino.org/helparanger to donate online by card and leave a message of support for the rangers

Donate by post Cheques can be UK£, US\$ and Euro€, made out to **Save the Rhino International** to Unit 5, Coach House Mews 217 Long Lane London SE1 4PR and marked 'Help a Ranger Save a Rhino' on reverse

Donate by phone Call us on (+44) 020 7357 7474

Fundraise Become a fundraising champion and raise money for ranger equipment. Find out more www.savetherhino.org/helparanger

Watch our youtube video series about Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park www.youtube.com/savetherhinoofficial

Get in touch Email katherine@savetherhino.org with any other queries