

SOLIO:100 NOT OUT AND LOOKING THERE TO STAY

BY FELIX PATTON

On January 21, the four-and-a-half year-old female Moraa became the 100th black rhino to have been bred at Solio Game Reserve and moved to a new home. On this occasion Moraa was relocated to the newly designated Ruma National Park in western Kenya.

Moraa was the seventh rhino captured by the specialist KWS unit as part of an operation to move 11 black rhinos from Solio to Ruma as founders for a new breeding population along with nine other rhinos moved from Mugie Ranch.

Commenting on the translocation, Solio Director and General Manager Edward Parfet said: "It was a special

moment to see the 100th black rhino leave Solio. My deceased father, who was instrumental in breeding rhinos to help stock other sanctuaries throughout Kenya, would have been proud to see we are continuing his work with great success".

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Mr Courtland Parfet, then owner of Solio, the first fully-fenced wildlife sanctuary in Kenya, agreed to look after 28 black rhinos for the Kenyan government. The excellent habitat meant that these rhinos bred rapidly and so the population grew too big for the facilities. By the end of the 1980s new rhino sanctuaries were being started and Solio's rhinos were in great demand to start new breeding populations. National Parks such as Nakuru, Tsavo East and Aberdares have benefitted along with private sanctuaries including Lewa Downs, Sweetwaters/Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Ol Jogi and Mugie Ranch.

KWS Senior Veterinary Officer and Senior Warden in charge of capture and translocation, Dr Isaac Lekool, thanked Solio for the 11 rhinos for Ruma and for having made such a special

contribution to rhino conservation in Kenya.

Having reached the milestone of 100 black rhino translocations, Solio has no intention of slowing down. During the capture of Moraa, her mother Nanjala was seen with a new calf as the reserve continues its breeding success. Perhaps one day this calf will be among a group from Solio to be founders for another, much needed, new rhino sanctuary in Kenya. ●

1. Dr Isaac Lekool, KWS Senior Veterinary Officer and Senior Warden in charge of KWS Capture and Translocation Unit (left) and Edward Parfet, Director and General Manager, Solio Ranch Limited with the black rhino Moraa, the 100th to be moved from Solio to other reserves in Kenya.
2. Moraa lies quietly anaesthetised prior to it being prepared for shipment to Ruma.
3. Four and a half year old black rhino Moraa walks in Solio Game Reserve before its capture.
4. Female black rhino Tope takes a dim view of KWS trying to catch it to move out of its Solio home.

