



Species

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IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group



Dr Mike Knight (Chair)

NAME: CHAIR / CO-CHAIRS	Dr Michael Knight
NAME: RED LIST AUTHORITY CO-ORDINATOR	Dr Richard Emslie (Scientific Officer & RLA Coordinator)
LOCATION / AFFILIATION	South African National Parks
NUMBER OF MEMBERS	49

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote the development and long-term maintenance of viable populations of the various sub-species of African rhinos in the wild.

SUMMARY OF MAIN ACTIVITIES 2015

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) carried out the following activities in 2015:

- 1) The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) Chair and Scientific Officer (SO) facilitated another two Range States meetings that developed the first African Range States African Rhino Plan. The Chair and SO also drafted a plan following the meeting which is currently with Range States for review and approval.
- 2) Facilitated development of a revised Zambian National Rhino Plan (a draft plan has been produced).
- 3) Co-facilitated the development of the first Ugandan National Rhino Plan (a draft plan has been produced).
- 4) The South African White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plan has been officially approved and gazetted by the South African Minister of Environment.
- 5) Contributed data and comments on a major EU African conservation document and attended a meeting to discuss the document.
- 6) Worked on funding and planning for the February 2016 AfRSG meeting to be held in Kruger National Park, South Africa.
- 7) The SO communicated intersessionally with the Chair of the CITES Rhino Working Group in the run up to SC66 (helping to produce a report with recommendations for CITES Standing Committee 66).
- 8) The 3rd IUCN SSC Leaders' Meeting attended by the AfRSG Chair, Vice-Chair and SO/Red List Authority Coordinator. A meeting was held with IUCN Red Listing experts to discuss AfRSG proposed methods for the revision of the Red List assessment of the African rhino both continentally and regionally.
- 9) Participated in SADC Rhino & Elephant Security Group/Interpol Environmental Crime Working Group meeting in Swaziland to deliver a number of invited presentations.
- 10) Carried out an independent assessment of the demographic performance of South Africa's largest semi-wild captive-bred white rhino population.
- 11) Participated as part of the advisory board for the RhODIS rhino DNA project and lab.
- 12) Provided information on request to the Slovakian CITES management authority.
- 13) Provided information for a Rhino Impact Investment project being undertaken under the United for Wildlife banner at ZSL, in London. A number of members attended a project advisory board meeting and a technical committee meeting.
- 14) Comments provided on project proposals, as requested, including for Save Our Species (SOS).
- 15) A number of media interviews given including an op-ed piece published by CNN on their website regarding hunting.
- 16) Members assisted with the tenth survey of white rhino on private land in South Africa.

IMPACT ON CONSERVATION

- 1) The AfRSG continues to enhance rhino conservation through the development of rhino conservation plans, strategies and policies, including facilitating the development and drafting of the first Continental African Rhino Range States Plan and national plans in South Africa, Zambia and Uganda.
- 2) The AfRSG seeks to provide the CITES Secretariat and CITES Parties with the best information and recommendations to assist Parties make informed and balanced decisions. In 2015, through intersessional contributions to the CITES Rhino Working Group, the AfRSG has helped contribute to the development of recommendations for SC66.
- 3) Through the development of plans and provision of other guidelines (e.g., on rhino reintroductions) and training materials (on rhino monitoring), the AfRSG has recommended best practice and capacity building to Range States and their rhino programs.
- 4) The AfRSG continues to facilitate rhino conservation mechanisms through liaison with conservation agencies and through planning and organising the second meeting of the East African Community Rhino Management Group (for January 2016).
- 5) Through multiple media interviews and presentations, the AfRSG has facilitated the spread of information on rhino-related issues amongst Range States and civil society through enhanced communication and awareness activities.
- 6) By commenting on project proposals, the AfRSG has been able to assist donors in making informed and strategic decisions on project applications.
- 7) The AfRSG seeks to assist in minimizing illegal rhino-related activities, by enhancing prosecution of rhino crimes, assisting through its participation in the new RhODIS advisory board and through collation of information on live sales and economic consequences of increased poaching.

FUTURE GOALS & ACTIVITIES

- 1) To hold the AfRSG meeting in February 2016.
- 2) To assist with the compilation of documents on rhinos for CITES CoP17 and also participate as part of the IUCN delegation at CoP17.
- 3) To continue to participate in SADC Rhino & Elephant Security Group/Interpol Environmental Crime Working Group meetings.
- 4) To continue to assist Range States (on request) with revision and development of plans.
- 5) Complete the revision of IUCN Red List assessments for African Rhino both continentally and regionally (for Swaziland, South Africa and Lesotho).
- 6) To continue to collate and disseminate information on rhinos to conservation agencies and the media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Critically Endangered Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) © Richard Emslie