

Tagging Endangered Black Rhinos

The Masai Mara National Reserve, home to one of Kenya's two free-ranging, wild eastern black rhino populations, recently undertook a significant conservation effort. Thirteen critically endangered black rhinos were ear-notched and fitted with GPS trackers during a seven-day operation. This initiative involved nearly 50 professionals from various government agencies and conservation organisations, including the Kenya Wildlife Service, The Safari Collection Footprint Trust and 51 Degrees Ltd and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, which provided crucial aerial support.

Ear-notching, which involves clipping a small section of the rhino's ear for identification, is part of Kenya's Black Rhino Action Plan. The goal is for 60% of the population to be notched and identifiable by 2026. This operation also allowed for the collection of valuable biological samples to enhance conservation knowledge.

Despite an increase in rhino numbers from a low of 11 in 1984 to around 55-70 individuals today, challenges such as habitat loss and insufficient surveillance persist. The



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new GPS technology aims to improve real-time tracking, aiding the efforts of the 37 Mara Rhino Rangers who monitor the vast reserve.

Grant Burden from 51 Degrees highlighted the importance of balancing tourism with conservation needs, while Samwel Leposo from the County Government of Narok emphasized the difficulty of tracking these elusive animals without

TOP RIGHT

A black rhino receives ear notches, giving it a unique identification code

BELOW

Black rhino in the Masai Mara, newly ear notched and tagged

advanced technology. This operation marks a critical step in securing the future of the eastern black rhino in the Masai Mara.

