

African Rhino Specialist Group

Co-Chairs: Michael Knight and Benson Okita

Scientific Officer and Red List Authority Coordinator: Richard Emslie

Location/affiliation: MH Knight is based in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and is affiliated with South African National Park. Ben Okita is based in Nairobi, Kenya, and is affiliated with Save the Elephants organization. R. Emslie is based in Hilton, South Africa.

Number of members: 43



Michael Knight



Benson Okita

Mission statement

The mission of the African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) is 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 in 2014

Provided the CITES Secretariat and CITES Parties with the best information to make informed and balanced decisions

- (1) Actively contributing to work of CITES Rhino Working Group intersessionally and at CITES Standing Committee Meeting 65, keeping the international focus on Mozambique and Vietnam. Produced information document for delegates attending CITES SC65.
- (2) Updated continental rhino poaching statistics for 2014.
- (3) Detailed comments/review on UNODC 'Guidelines for forensic laboratory methods and procedures for ivory sampling and analysis guidelines'.

Facilitated rhino conservation through liaison

- (1) Regular engagement with the Chair: IUCN SSC, and other IUCN members/staff.
- (2) Organized/participated/contributed to SA Parliamentary Portfolio Committee meetings; the SAf Ministerial Committee of Enquiry on rhinos; CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force in cooperation with ICCWC, Kenya; South African Private Rhino Owner association (PROA); 65th CITES Standing Committee, July 2014; regular liaison with senior DEA members; Botswana translocation plans; Joaquim Chissano Foundation rhino conservation initiative launch; Panel of experts at South Africa's side event

at IUCN World Parks Congress; ZSL conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade. Assisted RESG/Interpol Environmental Crime Working Group Chair. (3) Working to revise and update continental and regional (SA, Lesotho and Swaziland) Red Lists for African Rhino.

(4) Met the Kenyan Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on the progress and how to address the rhino crisis.

To enhance rhino conservation through the development of rhino conservation plans, strategies and policies

- (1) Rhino plans: South African White Rhino Biodiversity Management to be submitted in early 2015; Botswana rhino strategy approved; Contributed to SANParks strategic rhino plan revision; Advised on the need for a mid-term review of the Kenyan Rhino Strategic plan 2016–2012.
- (2) Planning for workshop in 2015 to revise Zambia's national rhino plan.
- (3) Future plans: Advice provided on how to monitor the delivery of the South African Black Rhino Biodiversity Management plan.
- (4) Represented on multi-institutional South African Scientific Authority.
- (5) Contributed to IUCN comments on

Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*), Critically Endangered. © Michael Knight



Mammals

draft EU Parliamentary Wildlife Crime Resolution and London Conference Draft Declaration.

To recommend best practice and capacity building of range states and their rhino programmes

(1) Provided advice to and on: WWF-Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP); Northern White Rhino Project; WWF's African Rhino Program; WWF-SA project on disrupting organized crime through tracking the money; SAB-Boucher supporting RhoDIS rhino DNA analysis; check of South African Black Rhino hunting permit applications; working on UFW project to develop Rhino Impact Bond innovative funding mechanism concept; Black Rhino translocations from South Africa to Botswana; Rhino population analysis methods (Lowveld Trust, Zimbabwe); Dehorning and critically commented on horn devaluation techniques; GOH rhino conservation in Kaziranga NP, India for report to Guwahati High Court; and (2) participated in the second international rhino security and law enforcement meeting. Provided advice on cooperation between the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Rhino Fund Uganda on collection of samples for RhoDIS rhino DNA analyses.

To facilitate the spread of information on rhino-related issues amongst range states and civil society through enhanced communication and awareness activities

(1) Chair's reports (*Pachyderm* 55:6–19) and refereed submissions to the journal. (2) Engaged actively in rhino sustainable use discussions (e.g. Dallas Safari Club Namibian black rhino hunt auction). (3) Numerous media interviews with 20+ foreign news networks. (4) Engaged with American, British and Australian parliamentary delegations to South Africa. (5) Close cooperation with Asian Rhino Specialist Group Chair (AsRSG) (6) Articles and papers and presentations: SRI's *The Horn* magazine; keynote presentation at the Contemporary Conservation Practice Symposium, South Africa; Australian Rhino Project (Sydney University Business School); Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Namibian Conservancy Programme and Illegal Wildlife Trade meetings. (7) Attended and participated at the 1st United Nations Environment Assembly

(UNEA) on the illegal wildlife trade in Nairobi. Attended by over 1,065 participants, 163 member states and 113 ministers.

To assist donors in making informed and strategic decisions on project applications by others

Consultation with WWF-ARP and WWF-SA rhino program, Peace Park Foundation, Radio Jacaranda Fund; My Planet; WWF-BRREP; Save African Rhinos Foundation (Australia); Stoprhinopoaching.com; Save Rhino International; Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT); GEF, ZSL, Social Finance, Royal Foundation and Australian Save African Rhino.

To assist in minimizing illegal rhino-related activities by enabling decision-makers (judiciary) to make informed decisions

Assisted in development of document for prosecutors, and conservation law enforcement staff and expert witnesses giving evidence in aggravation of sentence or opposing bail in rhino cases. Working to develop a magistrate's information booklet.

To cultivate and maintain positive donor support base

Moving three-year business plan for the AfrSG with updated KPAs, and budget updated annually.

Future goals/activities

CITES Rhino Working Group; complete updates of African rhino Red Listings; explore innovative sustainable funding mechanisms (e.g. Rhino Investment Bonds); enhance international cooperation and sharing of information and promote innovative ways to reduce the illegal trade in horn; plan and participate in a SADC Rhino Management Group meeting in 2015 and 2016 AfrSG meeting; revitalise an East African Rhino Management Group; increase the international status of rhino related crimes, promote the need for strong and consistent penalties for rhino crimes.

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Species

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2014 Annual Report of the Species Survival Commission and the Global Species Programme

- 2014 Spotlight on High-level Interventions
- IUCN Red List at 50
- Specialist Group Reports

