

IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group

2019 Report



Michael Knight



Benson Okita

Chair

Michael Knight ⁽¹⁾

Deputy Chair

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Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ KAZA TFCA Leader, WWF in Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

⁽²⁾ Save the Elephants Organisation, Kenya

⁽³⁾ IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

Number of members

51

Social networks

Website:

<https://rhinos.org/research-publications/iucn-african-rhino-specialist-group/>



Mission statement

The AfRSG guides and facilitates the conservation of viable African rhino populations across their natural range.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) wants: (1) secure, viable and valued rhino populations in their natural habitat; (2) rapidly growing and genetically diverse rhino populations facilitated through adaptive biological management; (3) a reduction in the threat to rhinos from poaching, driven primarily by the high illegal demand for rhino horn; and (4) an incentivised communal and private sector investing in rhino conservation through continued range expansion and numbers.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: update Red List assessments for Black Rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*) and White Rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*).

Plan

Planning: (1) review the South Africa Biodiversity Management Plan for Black Rhinos; (2) contribute to delivery of national plans; (3) assist with implementation of the Rhino Range State Plan; (4) provide official support for the Rhino Management Plan for Chad.

Policy: (1) compile joint IUCN/TRAFFIC report for the 18th CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP18); (2) review Range State proposals for IUCN/TRAFFIC analyses; (3) attendance and technical role at CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP); (4) attendance and technical role at CITES Standing Committee (SC) and Working Group (WG) meetings.

Act

Conservation actions: engage in the Rhino Impact Investment Project (RIIP).

Technical advice: (1) participate in the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP); (2) participate on the Rhino DNA Indexing System (RhODIS) Advisory Board; (3) review hunting applications; (4) engage with ex situ conservation (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), etc.); (5) provide expert advice to range states and conservation authorities; (6) provide expert advice to MyPlanet Rhino Fund; (7) improve efficiency of the AfRSG.

Network

Capacity building: (1) East African Rhino Management Group capacity building; (2) conduct biological management workshop.

Documents review: scientific peer review of rhino papers.

Membership: diversify the AfRSG.

Proposal development and funding: (1) submit donor applications; (2) complete funding reports.

Synergy: (1) participate in Rhino and Elephant Security Group/INTERPOL Environmental Crime Working Group (ECWG) meetings; (2) establish a new management partner for AfRSG.



Black rhino, *Diceros bicornis*, Critically Endangered
Photo: Michael Knight

Technical advice: attendance at workshops/ government meetings as invited or presentations given.

Communicate

Communication: (1) Southern African Development Community Rhino Management Group and Chairing; (2) publish the *Pachyderm* Chair Report; (3) respond to media requests; (4) improve communication of rhino issues to members, state and private sectors.

Scientific meetings: hold biennial AfRSG meetings.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Red List

i. We had two meetings and numerous email engagements with Red List Authorities regarding the completion of Red List assessments for African Black Rhino and White Rhino. The assessments will be released in March 2020. We have proposed novel methods of using the Red List criteria in assessing the status of long lived species such as rhinos. (KSR #1)

Plan

Planning

i. We pressurised the Zimbabwe Government to finalise their plan; it is expected to be finalised in 2020. (KSR #27)

ii. An assessment was sent to range states for their assessment of the degree to which they are compliant with the Rhino Range States Plan. We will need to send a follow up in 2020 and endeavour to make sure it is signed off and incorporated in state plans. (KSR #27)

Policy

i. A report from the IUCN SSC African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC was submitted to the CITES Secretariat pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP17). See <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/18/doc/E-CoP18-083-01.pdf>. In addition, an updated population status document was produced but was held back at the last minute. (KSR #26)

ii. Three rhino related proposals to CITES CoP18 were reviewed, from South Africa, Eswantini and Namibia. (KSR #26)

iii. One CITES CoP meeting was attended. (KSR #26)

iv. We attended CITES CoP18 and the Rhino Working Group, involving our Scientific Officer and one AfRSG member. (KSR #26)

Act

Conservation actions

i. There were three board meetings of the Rhino Impact Investment Project (RIIP). We had numerous engagements with the Project manager on issues. (KSR #11)

Technical advice

i. The Black Rhino Range Expansion Project meeting was postponed until March 2020. (KSR #18)

ii. We prepared a submission to the UK government on banning the importation of hunting trophies, to be sent in early 2020. (KSR #27)

iii. We engaged with TAGs of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and EAZA for ex situ conservation, as well as another on the Northern White Rhino committee. (KSR #27)

iv. We provided advice to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (on rhino introduction, CITES), Namibia, Zimbabwe (on rhino plan), South African National Parks (SANParks, on concerns regarding the Kruger National Park rhino population), South Africa and Kenya (on rhino capture and wildlife translocation protocols). (KSR #27)

v. Expert advice to Myplanet Fund finished due to resignation from the committee as moved to Namibia. (KSR #27)

vi. Three task forces were established: one in engaging with SANParks, one to meet with John Hume (the largest private owner of rhinos), and one to review Kenyan rhino capture policies. (KSR #27)

Network

Documents review

i. Four papers were reviewed for scientific journals.

Membership

i. We have thirty-nine new members; 15 of our 51 members are either Africa state representatives or persons of colour, and 76% of members are resident in Africa.

Proposal development and funding

i. Successful donor application submissions to US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Oak Foundation, International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Save the Rhino International (SRI), Safari Club International (SCI) and African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), for funding for the AfRSG 2019 meeting. We successfully raised support for the AfRSG Secretariat from USFWS, IRF, SRI and AWF. (KSR #9)

ii. We completed two funding reports, with an additional three in process. (KSR #9)

Synergy

i. One meeting involving the Rhino and Elephant Security Group (RESG) was attended by the AfRSG Scientific Officer. (KSR #28)

Technical advice

i. We participated in four meetings: one with SANParks, one with MET (Namibia), one with USFWS, and one with RESG. (KSR #27)

Communicate

Communication

i. *Pachyderm* Chairs report published: Knight, M. (2019). African Rhino Specialist Group report/Rapport du Groupe de Spécialistes du Rhinocéros d'Afrique. *Pachyderm* 60:14–39. The Chairs report for 2020 is to be completed by April 2020. (KSR #28)

ii. Participation in the media: the Secretariat (Chair and Scientific Officer) provided contributions to numerous researchers/media outlets (including Smithsonian, Namibia's Radio Kosmos, BBC Inside Science, BBC World Service, The Art Newspaper, CBS News, IUCN communications, Tony Carnie, Edinburgh Napier University, Project Earth Films, Bonne de Bod), AFP and Tony Grogan's documentary series. (KSR #28)

iii. We had a minimum of 87 communications with AfRSG members on rhino issues. (KSR #28)

Scientific meetings

i. A successful 13th IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group meeting was held in Gross Barmen, Namibia, and attended by 73 delegates, 46 (of 51) AfRSG members and 28 invited guests/observers from a total of 12 different countries in Africa, together with delegates from America, Asia (India, China) and Europe. See *Pachyderm* 60:14–39. (KSR #28)

Michael Knight, Ben Okita and Richard Emslie 2016
 Photo: ARSG archives



Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 5/5

Assess	1	
Plan	6	
Act	7	
Network	6	
Communicate	4	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 9, 11, 18, 26, 27, 28

KSR: Key Species Result



African Rhino Specialist Group SO and Chair
 with blind Black Rhino in Kenya
 Photo: ARSG archives



Species

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and the Global Species and
Key Biodiversity Area Programme

