



©DARYL & SHARNA BALFOUR

*Black and white rhinos alike are thriving on the Conservancy. As of April 2009, our total population stood at 111: 65 black rhinos and 46 white rhinos. Lewa continues to be one of the most successful rhino sanctuaries in the world because of our sophisticated security system.*



©MICHELLE GUILLERMIN

## LEWA RHINO UPDATE

by John Pameri | Wildlife & Security Manager

**2**008 was a good year for Lewa's rhinos. Not only did we reach an important milestone of 100 rhinos on the Conservancy, but we continued to serve as a critical rhino breeding sanctuary for Kenya. A total of 15 rhinos were born during the year: eight white and seven black. This raised the total population to 61 blacks and 44 whites representing 11% and 13.5% of the country's total rhinos respectively.

Even better, as of April 2009, our population now stands at 111 (65 black rhinos and 46 white rhinos) with **an additional 6 calves born during the beginning of the year.** These growth rates are way above the national meta-population target of 6% for black rhinos. For those of you who have been there from the beginning, you might remember that when Lewa started, 24 years ago, we only had 13 rhinos on the Conservancy. In 2008 alone, our recruitment rate exceeded our original numbers!

Lewa is one of the most successful rhino sanctuaries in the world because we keep our rhinos safe. Our fence continues to be upgraded, our ranger

teams are made of exceptional individuals who have shown exceptional commitment to the welfare of these endangered species. In addition, rhinos on Lewa have been allowed to stabilize over the years. Living undisturbed, the population has flourished faster than anyone could imagine.

But we are wary of the future. Poaching in Kenya is on the rise, and this year alone,

three known rhinos have been poached in the near vicinity. We are fully aware that it is not a case of IF but a case of WHEN further attempts to poach rhino on Lewa are made. We must continue to strengthen our security teams, maintain a high level of motivation and do everything possible to ensure that our core objective of rhino conservation continues into the future. A good example of our commitment to this cause is the fact that over eighty percent of our rhinos are individually identified on a daily basis.

In addition, we are running out of space and are actively looking for areas where excess rhinos can disperse, or be translocated to, once Lewa's ecological carrying capacity is attained. We are very aware that a huge amount of time, funds, effort and tremendous support from many friends that have believed in the Lewa model has enabled us to reach our original dream of having too many rhinos. With this in mind, we are very carefully examining the options of where we can move rhino to where they will be safe and where Lewa still has a say in their welfare and security. This is all in conjunction with the Kenya Wildlife Service. One option is to increase the ecological area of Lewa, by dropping its western boundary fence and incorporate the newly established Borana Conservancy into a greater Conservancy for rhinos. Borana welcomes this conservation approach and plans are well under way for this to become reality. Secondly, in line with KWS's 2007-2011 Conservation and Management Strategy for the Black Rhino in Kenya, Lewa and the NRT are at an advanced stage in incorporating a part of the Sera Conservancy as the first community-owned black rhino conservancy in East Africa.

If it wasn't for the support of many passionate individuals, large and small conservation organizations, foundations and Kenya Government support, the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy would not be in the exciting position it is now.



*The latest black rhino born on Lewa. The calf was born on the 16th of April, 2009 to our oldest rhino called Stumpy. Stumpy was one of the 10 founder rhinos introduced on Lewa in 1984. She is believed to be 41 years old!*