

Dealing with an emergency

The Laikipia District straddles the equator and is an extremely important rhino habitat, home to around 45% of Kenya's black rhinos and 72% of its Southern white rhinos. These rhinos are state-owned but held in private and community sanctuaries, which are members of the Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries (APLRS). APLRS activities include translocations (to maintain rhino populations at productive densities), plus innovative programmes such as its Intelligence and Informers network, and an Emergency Fund, for use by all conservancies with rhinos in Kenya.

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The emergency fund is used to support a wide area comprising private and community rhino sanctuaries – a great, shared resource

Intelligence and Informers network

Eight of the APLRS areas are located in insecure and banditry prone areas where poaching for rhino horn has skyrocketed since 2009. Poaching has been exacerbated by infiltration of ammunition from neighbouring Somalia, along with intensified global demand for rhino horn in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Each day, anti-poaching rangers risk their lives to protect the rhinos, with a real threat of encountering armed poachers.

The APLRS Intelligence and Informers Scheme uses new ideas to counter the current poaching threat. It aims to enhance the security and monitoring of rhinos in Kenya's private rhino sanctuaries through cash incentives, to increase the motivation and morale of security personnel.

Sanctuaries who are members of APLRS agree to give a standard compensation to security personnel who apprehend poachers or recover firearms. Funds are also available to rangers who supply credible information leading to the arrest of poachers or the recovery of rhino horn. These rewards are offered in recognition of the considerable threat to the ranger's personal safety, whilst also reinforcing information and intelligence-gathering mechanisms. It is hoped that by advertising the rewards available, further information will be generated, leading to the prosecution and conviction of rhino poachers.

Emergency Fund

As there are so few rhinos in the wild, each individual preserved has a valuable conservation impact. It is obvious that wild rhinos get hurt – male rhinos often fight, and they occasionally break through fences and wander out of conservancy areas. This is where the APLRS's Emergency Fund fits in: a central fund enabling member conservancies to respond to poaching threats or emergencies.

The Emergency Fund can be used for a wide range of activities, from providing veterinary care for injured rhinos to translocating an aggressive bull or recapturing an animal that has broken through a fence. During an emergency, money is needed for many things, including truck/aircraft use, capture and vet staff, drugs, darts, veterinary care and special feed. The Emergency Fund can be used to cover 50% of the costs, while the other 50% is paid by the conservancy involved.

On average, seven animals a year require emergency assistance; however this may increase as Laikipia's rhino population grows. In the past year, funds have helped save the lives of several rhinos. For example, in November 2010 in the Lewa conservancy, action was taken to treat a young male black rhino calf after his mother was poached the previous month. In February 2011, funds were used by Ol Pejeta Conservancy (OPC), to treat and save the life of Dada, a black rhino, shot by poachers. Support was also given to OPC conservancy in March 2011, when adult males received treatment following fights.

Save the Rhino welcomes initiatives such as the APLRS, which benefits all members and involves coordination between conservancies, private landowners and the government. The APLRS schemes will benefit the Laikipia rhino population and enhance Kenya's capacity to achieve the targeted black rhino growth rate of 6% per year in established sanctuaries, and to achieve Kenya's Vision 2030 of having 2,000 black rhinos in the wild.

Grants

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