

Rhinos Return to Rwanda After Ten-Year Absence



African Parks - Rhinos Return to Rwanda

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Kigali, Rwanda: Eastern black rhinos are coming back to Rwanda after the last individual was documented in the country 10 years ago – a historic move for the nation and the species. African Parks, a conservation non-profit that manages national parks and protected areas on behalf of governments across the continent, in collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board and with funding provided by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, is [translocating](#) a founder population of up to 20 Eastern black rhinos to Akagera National Park in Rwanda from South Africa. This extraordinary homecoming will take place over the first two weeks of May. The People's Postcode Lottery and the Dutch Government are also providing additional support to the project.

Back in the 1970s, more than 50 black rhinos thrived in Akagera National Park, but their numbers declined under the pressure of wide-scale poaching until the last confirmed sighting of the species in 2007. The park, which is a protected savannah habitat in

Rwanda, has undergone a remarkable transformation since African Parks assumed management in 2010 in partnership with the Rwanda Development Board.

“Rhinos are one of the great symbols of Africa yet they are severely threatened and are on the decline in many places across the continent due to the extremely lucrative and illegal rhino horn trade,” said African Parks CEO Peter Fearnhead. “The rhino’s return to this country however is a testament to Rwanda’s extraordinary commitment to conservation and is another milestone in the restoration of Akagera’s natural diversity.”

Since 2010, African Parks has overhauled law enforcement in the park, reducing poaching to an all-time low in six years and today the park is flourishing. Seven lions were successfully reintroduced in 2015, whose population has since more than doubled. Security measures have been implemented specifically to ensure the safety and well-being of the rhinos once in the park. This includes an expertly-trained rhino tracking and protection team, a canine anti-poaching unit, and the deployment of a helicopter for critical air surveillance to enhance protection of the park – all made possible with funding provided by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. “The return of the rhinos to Rwanda's Akagera National Park opens a new chapter in our conservation journey and we are grateful to all our partners that contributed to this achievement. We are fully prepared to welcome them and ensure their safety for the benefit of our tourism industry and the community at large. We couldn't be more excited for their return,” said Clare Akamanzi CEO- Rwanda Development Board.

“Several years ago, as we were struggling to have success combating rhino poaching in other parts of Africa, I made a commitment to President Kagame that we would support the reintroduction of rhinos in Rwanda because we knew this country would protect them,” said Howard G. Buffett, Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. “Today marks another milestone in Rwanda’s emerging leadership on the continent in conservation, eco-tourism and most importantly, good governance.”

With fewer than 5,000 black rhino remaining across their range in the wild, of which approximately 1,000 are the Eastern black rhino subspecies, this reintroduction is an urgent, progressive, and valuable opportunity for their conservation, and serves as a story of hope for the species.

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