

ANOTHER YEAR.... Another London Marathon?

This one turned out to be particularly special...

Allie Mills | Michael Hearn Intern 2018-19

The streets were lined. There was palpable excitement in the air. There was lycra in every direction. It could only be the London Marathon. And what an event it turned out to be.

The build-up had been a big one. The London Marathon is the largest single-day fundraising event in the world and 2019 marked the year in which event has officially raised a whopping £1,000,000,000 for charity. Of the thousand charities participating in the event, we were honoured to be chosen as one of the charities most associated with the London Marathon, and to feature in the race's 'Thanks A Billion' campaign.

This involved rounding up some of our most committed costume runners for filming insightful interviews, along with what can only be described as some rhino-style synchronised swimming-esque scenes. Highly amusing for those of us involved, somewhat bemusing for unsuspecting passers-by... Understandable I suppose: it's not every day you witness a choreographed crash of rhinos throwing some fairly unnatural shapes on your dog-walking route.

In addition to a snazzy rhino promo video, our committed rhino runners had their hooves full with an exciting mix of radio interviews, newspaper features and even a cheeky TV appearance! Our costume looked surprisingly practical on screen, but then again it appeared next to a man wearing a two-person tent.

Our on-screen star, Harry Vowles, officially became the most famous Rhino Runner of 2019, from interviews with Runners World and Guinness World Records to being invited onto ITV's Good Morning Britain. By the final week Harry could barely move (let alone train!) for media requests.

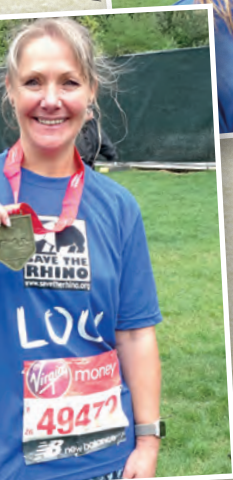


Dr Emily Goodman 1981-2010

This year's London Marathon was also a special reminder of one of our supporters, Emily Goodman, who ran for rhinos 10 years ago in 2009. Emily passed away from pancreatic cancer much too young, a year after her marathon debut.

Her passion for rhinos and conservation ran deep, after visiting rhinos in Nepal's Chitwan National Park and loving them ever since. Emily's last wishes were for her friends and family to do all they could for rhinos, and we would like to thank all of her loved ones for their continued support for rhinos in Emily's memory.





Upper left:
Alison Kennedy
Benson recovering
post race!

Lower left:
World record holder,
rhino boy Chris!

Above from
left to right:
Ross, Louise, Liz
and Renaldo, each
with their well-
deserved medals.



Above to bottom right:
Louise and Hugo, from team
Gonarezhou (Zimbabwe),
Chris and his certificate,
Gerrit, Promise and Patrick
(from team North Luangwa,
Zambia).



Fame had been basked in; funds had been raised; training had been completed. The only thing left was to actually complete the race...

On 28th April, our brave rhino runners descended on Greenwich Park. A heady mix of excitement and nervousness, ready to tackle the 26.2 mile beast. For some, world record titles in their sights. As runners limbered, laced and lubricated up, costume runners sized up their suits. Some for the first time, others so acquainted with their suit that it was more like greeting an old friend.

Time for a quick team snap before ready, set, go! Our blue t-shirted runners were off, leaving the hardy costume runners in their wake. After countless miles of training, hours of drumming up support, numerous phone calls and copious cups of tea together, the rhinos were finally ready. For them, the moment they had been waiting for; for me, as the team's manager, a somewhat emotional sight and a feeling that my rhino ducklings were finally fledging, leaving the nest of eight months of support.

But no time to dwell, while our support team whipped up sandwiches in a buttery storm to rival any Saturday Kitchen omelette challenge, Eliud Kipchoge won the race in a breezy 2:02:37. Hot on his heels, and giving us just enough time to transform our small corner of St James Park into a welcoming vision of Africa, our runners started coming home. And what speed they crashed in!

Outstandingly, two of the team set new world records for the fastest 3D animal, Liz Winton for the fastest woman, and Chris Green, who now officially holds the Guinness World Record title at an incredible 4:32:26. Tired. Somewhat sweaty. But all over the moon.

Eliud Kipchoge may have won the race, but the real heroes are those who pushed on, the first-timers who doubted they could finish, and the rhino-running veterans who battled the wall for yet another time in the name of rhino conservation. Each one was

welcomed back to the Save the Rhino picnic with open arms, each one will hold the memory of this day for the rest of their lives. Thanks, London, for another fantastic year, but more importantly to such a special team, who incredibly raised a combined total of more than £150,000.

There were tears. There were new world records. There were smiles in every direction. It could only ever be the London Marathon.

