



Species

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and Secretariat



Volume I

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Cover photo: *Leucospermum heterophyllum*, a Vulnerable species distributed in the Agulhas plain area, Western Cape, South Africa. This species is one of the many threatened plants monitored by the CREW program and is confined to Elim Ferricrete Fynbos, which is also a highly threatened ecosystem type.
Photo: Ismail Ebrahim

Inset photos: Australian Sea Lion (*Neophoca cinerea*) adult female with pup, North Page Island, South Australia
Photo: Simon Goldsworthy (page 4)
False Spider Cave Crab (*Cancrocaeca xenomorpha*), a freshwater crab from caves of the Maros karst (Indonesia)
Photo: Didier Rigal (page 4)
Lear's Macaws (*Anodorhynchus leari*)
Photo: Agnes Coen (page 4)
Macolor niger, Black and White Snapper, Lutjanidae, Palau
Photo: David B. Snyder (page 4)
Yellow-blotched Palm Pit Viper (*Bothriechis aurifer*), a pitviper found in Mesoamerica listed in the Red List as Vulnerable
Photo: Justin Elden (page 5)

Layout by: Aixa Díaz

2024-2025 Report

IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group



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Keit Mosweu
(until February 2025)
Private, Gaborone,
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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
46

Mission statement

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

Projected impact 2021–2025

The AfRSG wants to: (1) establish and enhance healthy and persistent rhino populations through advising and facilitating the efficient protection and dynamic biological management of African rhinos within their natural range; (2) foster multiple values of rhinos for all peoples' well-being through promoting sustainable conservation; (3) facilitate research, collate information and report on the status of African rhinos to the IUCN and other parties; (4) support targeted communication to a wide range of stakeholders; (5) ensure effective leadership through the capacity building and mentorship of the next generation of rhino conservationists; (6) promote sustainable finance and good governance for African rhino conservation, and (7) manage, monitor and evaluate the Group via effective, efficient, and transparent governance.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-006 Collection of rhino population data from all range states in 2022 and 2024.
Status: On track

T-013 Submission of joint IUCN/TRAFFIC report for CoP19 in 2022.
Status: Achieved

T-014 Review Range state proposals for IUCN TRAFFIC Analyses in preparation for CITES COP19 in 2022.
Status: Achieved

T-016 Provide comments within one month on CITES related matters when requested by IUCN in preparation for COP19 in June 2022.
Status: Achieved

T-019 Identify Red List Authority in the review and update Red List entries based on updated continental statistics.
Status: Achieved

T-023 Publish at least two articles in *Species* by 2024.
Status: Not initiated

T-026 AfRSG meeting proceedings and continental population estimate completed within two months of the 2022 meeting.
Status: Achieved

T-029 Review at least two scientific papers per year until 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-030 Publish at least two rhino-related papers from AfRSG membership per year.
Status: Achieved

PLAN

T-005 Attend at least one SADC RMG and EACRMG meeting when invited by 2024.
Status: Not initiated

T-009 Assist in the delivery of at least three national plans by the end of 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-011 Completion of the population prioritisation draft by 2021 and accepted by AfRSG in 2022.
Status: On track

T-012 Review the Continental Rhino Plan by the end of 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-020 Develop a potential Green List for the rhino population by 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-025 Held the 2022 AfRSG meeting with over 80% members attendance.
Status: Achieved

T-033 Fund the AfRSG secretariat to deliver on core activities through to the end of 2024.
Status: Achieved



Rhinos
Photo: SafariPark Beekse Bergen, The Netherlands

T-035 Appoint a new Scientific Officer (SO), Programme Officer (PO) and Vice Chairs (VCs) for the Specialist Group.
Status: Achieved

ACT

T-007 Provide expert witness advice or information to be used in aggravation of sentence evidence or opposing bail within a month of the request.
Status: On track

T-008 Compile information and arguments to advise on expert witness reports/statements/info handbook for magistrates and guide document for prosecutors by 2024.
Status: On track

T-010 Provide support towards the introduction or management of rhinos into at least six conservation areas by 2024.
Status: Achieved

NETWORK

T-002 Attend the IUCN next SSC Leaders meeting.
Status: Achieved

T-027 Update and operationalise the AfRSG website in 2022.
Status: Achieved

T-032 Develop a strategy for capacity building of young rhino conservationists in 2021 through the establishment of a working group.
Status: On track

T-034 Ensure the delivery of required activities by Task Forces and working groups.
Status: Achieved

T-037 Attend the EAZA TAG meeting.
Status: Achieved

T-038 Ensure over 70% attendance rate in miscellaneous meeting requests, such as AfRSG (attend meetings), RhoDIS International W/S follow-up/CITES Security Meeting, technical meetings, BRREP, RESG/INTERPOL ECWG, in the reporting period.
Status: Achieved

T-040 AfRSG member appointed by September 2021.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-015 Attend the CITES meetings and provide a technical role at the next CITES COP19.
Status: Achieved

T-022 Complete Chair report – at most one per year – as requested by *Pachyderm* editor by 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-028 Provide all media requests up to date, factually based comments as required.
Status: Achieved

T-031 Maintain a functional WhatsApp group communication platform.
Status: Achieved

Activities and results 2024-2025

ASSESS

T-013 Submission of joint IUCN/TRAFFIC report for CoP19 in 2022. (KSR 5)

Joint IUCN/TRAFFIC report produced: 0
Result description: The first draft of the CoP20 report is nearly completed. Partial funding was secured from IUCN.

T-019 Identify Red List Authority in the review and update Red List entries based on updated continental statistics. (KSR 7)

Red List Authority identified, and updates made based upon latest population data: Achieved.

Result description: Dr Sam Ferreira is the current Red List focal point in the AfRSG. Red list assessment is scheduled for 2025.

T-006 Collection of rhino population data from all range states in 2022 and 2024. (KSR 5)

National and continental rhino population data collected: Ongoing.

Result description: The AfRSG has now moved to collating rhino data annually. A

Task Force completed a data access and use policy for the AfRSG. This provides the purpose, scope, and policy statement that defines data access and conditions of data use. Data for the end of 2023 were collated during early 2024 and the continental population estimates included in the Chair report published in *Pachyderm*, 65, pp.20-34. Data collation for 2024 was completed and fed into the draft Rhino Status Report for CoP20 that will be finalised in April 2025.

T-026 AfRSG meeting proceedings and continental population estimate completed within two months of the 2022 meeting. (KSR 5)

Continental rhino population data collated: Achieved.

Result description: Proceedings were only extracted from online recordings in late 2024 and were presented to the membership prior to the Members meeting at the end of February 2025.

T-029 Review at least two scientific papers per year until 2024. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific reviews: 8

Result description: During 2024, the SO reviewed eight scientific papers on rhinos.

PLAN

Planning

T-005 Attend at least one SADC RMG and EACRMG meeting when invited by 2024. (KSR 8)

Number of regional planning meetings attended: 0

Result description: There were no SADC RMG or EAC RMG held in 2024. The Chair and the Scientific Officer participated in national reflections in Kenya and Zimbabwe. This covered several regional considerations and provided opportunities to encourage strategies for managing rhino populations through a metapopulation framework. This approach focuses on effectively integrating fragmented habitats,

where rhino populations are fragmented, in an ecologically appropriate manner. This ecological focus on rhino dynamics should lead to appropriate genetic diversity. The framework highlights the importance of integrating small and large populations, adapting to environmental changes, and fostering collaboration between local communities and conservation entities. Managing rhino populations as interconnected units enhances genetic resilience and help achieve country-specific objectives for rhinos while balancing conservation with socio-economic benefits for communities.

T-009 Assist in the delivery of at least three national plans by the end of 2024. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: Since the start of 2022, the AfRSG contributed comments and inputs to five published national plans. Since late 2023, the new Chair and Scientific Officer were extensively involved in the revision of the South African black and white rhino plan, albeit in different roles than formally representing the AfRSG. The South African Rhino management plan was waiting for approval for implementation at the end of 2024.

T-012 Review the Continental Rhino Plan by the end of 2024. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 2

Result description: The “African Rhino Conservation 2025–2035: A contemporary strategic framework” was completed in 2024 and published online on 18 February 2025 and a hard copy was published in March 2025. The Framework can be accessed through this [link](#).

T-020 Develop a potential Green List for the rhino population by 2024. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: The Scientific Officer and some AfRSG members, together with the IUCN Green Status Team conducted a Green List status assessment for Black Rhino. The assessment was published in the *African Journal of Wildlife Research*: Ferreira, SM, et al. (2025). ‘[Conservation Impacts and the Future of the Black Rhinoceros \(*Diceros bicornis*\)](#)’. *African Journal of Wildlife Research*, 54(1).

T-025 Held the 2022 AfRSG meeting with over 80% members attendance. (KSR 8)

Number of triennial meetings held: 0

Result description: The Secretariat summarised and produced a 14th Members

Meeting Proceedings. The 2025 Members Meeting (15th) was successfully held at Bonamanzi Private Game Reserve in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa from the February 23 to the March 2 2025.

T-033 Fund the AfRSG secretariat to deliver on core activities through to the end of 2024. (KSR 8)

AfRSG Secretariat are sufficiently funded: Achieved.

Result description: In 2024, AfRSG received funding to the amount of \$104,505.80 from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Save the Rhino International Inc (SRI Inc), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Kenya, and Wildlife Conservation Network’s Rhino Recovery Fund. Expenditure for 2024 was \$77,850.84. Nevertheless, the AfRSG was delivered a significant funding cut when the US President stopped all funding from the USFWS. Steps have been initiated to re-establish financial liquidity of the AfRSG, but it is too early to report on progress.

T-035 Appoint a new Scientific Officer (SO), Programme Officer (PO) and Vice Chairs (VCs) for the Specialist Group. (KSR 8)

New SO, PO and VCs appointed: Achieved.

Result description: The Scientific Officer and Programme Officer remained unchanged until the end of February 2025 when the Programme Officer took up a new position - effectively terminating her formal role in the AfRSG except for her agreement to assist on a retainer basis in certain administrative roles.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-010 Provide support towards the introduction or management of rhinos into at least six conservation areas by 2024. (KSR 10)

Number of conservation translocations conducted: 1

Result description: During 2024, the AfRSG membership provided comments and guidance on proposed introductions of White Rhinos into the Ngorogoro Crater in Tanzania; the Rhino Rewild Framework of African Parks; feasibility of Black Rhino introductions into Nsumbu National Park in Zambia; and restocking of Black Rhinos in the Zambesi Valley in Zimbabwe. Members also provided guidance on the management of White Rhino in Ivory Coast. With respect to efforts to integrate zoo rhinos into continental populations as part of a contribution to rhino conservation, the AfRSG secretariat has been discussing the continuum of captive-bred to free-ranging rhinos in large areas. Rhinos in zoos can play a role within

a metapopulation management framework by contributing to genetic diversity and supporting wild populations. Zoo-based rhinos, especially from species like the Eastern Black Rhino, represent vital genetic reservoirs. With appropriate management, these animals can be rewilded through translocation into free-ranging, wild populations. Zoos can mimic natural metapopulation dynamics by facilitating dispersion between isolated groups of wild rhinos, thus reducing the risk of genetic degradation. This integration strengthens overall population resilience and enhances ecological outcomes, contributing to species recovery efforts.

T-007 Provide expert witness advice or information to be used in aggravation of sentence evidence or opposing bail within a month of the request. (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: There was only one request on the prices of rhino horns. Mike t’ Sas Rolfes, a member and focal point for Sustainable Use, provided the information as requested.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-032 Develop a strategy for capacity building of young rhino conservationists in 2021 through the establishment of a working group. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 1

Result description: During 2024, the SO started co-supervising an MSc student working on relatedness consequences on Black Rhino population performance in Kenya.

T-034 Ensure the delivery of required activities by Task Forces and working groups. (KSR 2)

Task Force and Working Groups deliver on activities based upon need of AfRSG: Achieved.

Result description: Towards the end of 2024, the AfRSG has four Task Forces (TFs) and eight Working Groups (WGs). Two taskforces completed their work (TF2 Data Access and Use; TF4 Co-Chair Process); three are nearing completion (TF1 Rewilding, TF3 African Rhino Conservation Framework, TF6 Range State Representatives and AfRSG activities); one is inactive (TF5 Community participation). The number of WGs has been reduced to eight. Two are very active (WG6 Biological

Southern White Rhino
(*Ceratotherium simum simum*)
Photo: Naomi Doak



Management, WG9 Communication); four are ticking over (WG1 African Rhino Data Management, WG2 Population Rating System, WG10 Capacity, WG4 Governance), while two are stagnant (WG8 Value of Rhinos and Adequate Financing, WG5 Protection, Law Enforcement, Investigations and Intelligence). Further refinement is in progress following the completion of the 15th Members meeting in February 2025. A three-day workshop was held to develop guidelines for the genetic management of Black Rhino populations across the continent - this includes existing populations as well as potential future founder populations.

T-040 AfRSG member appointed by September 2021. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 3

Result description: Six members were retired, and three members were added to the Group. Membership is now at 46 members.

T-002 Attend the IUCN next SSC Leaders meeting. (KSR 2)

Attend the IUCN next SSC Leaders meeting: Achieved.

Result description: Dave Balfour, the new AfRSG Chair as of mid-December 2023, attended the SSC Leaders Meeting in Abu Dhabi on October 24-29, 2024. He found it very useful from the perspectives of networking with colleagues and developing sense of process and the players within the IUCN structures.

T-038 Ensure over 70% attendance in miscellaneous meeting requests, such as AsRSG (attend meetings), RhodIS International W/S follow-up/CITES Security Meeting, technical meetings, BRREP, RESG/INTEPOL ECWG, in the reporting period. (KSR 3)

E-mail correspondence meetings attended, and presentations given and EAZA TAG correspondence: 2%

Result description: For 2024, the Chair (Dave Balfour) and Scientific Officer

attended all meetings that we were invited to – namely with a Tanzanian delegation seeking guidance on rhino introductions. We also engaged actively with the Tanzanian rhino coordinator regarding their desire to be better represented at the upcoming members' meeting of the AfRSG. The Chair (DB) secured a meeting with the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment from South Africa in order to explain the potential contribution of the AfRSG in a country which stewards close to 80% of the world's rhinos.

COMMUNICATE Communication

T-022 Complete Chair report (at most one per year) as requested by Pachyderm editor by 2024. (KSR 12)

Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 1

Result description: The 2024 Chair's report was published in *Pachyderm*: Balfour, D, Makoma, K, and Ferreira, SM. (2025). 'African Rhino Specialist Group Chair report/Rapport du Groupe de Spécialistes du Rhinocéros d'Afrique'. *Pachyderm*, 65, pp.20-34.

T-028 Provide all media requests up to date, factually based comments as required. (KSR 12)

Media engagements: 7

Result description: Media engagements were largely restricted to responses by the Chair or Scientific Officer to enquiries linked to the translocation of White Rhinos from The Farm, managed by African Parks who purchased the Platinum Rhino initiative. African Parks initiated the Rhino Rewild initiative. The AfRSG Communications Working Group released a rhino statement through the IUCN office for World Rhino Day, while the Scientific Officer assisted the IRF with information for their release of their rhino status report.

T-031 Maintain a functional Whatsapp group communication platform. (KSR 12) Operational and functional Whatsapp group: Achieved.

Result description: The AfRSG WhatsApp group, a members-only group, is lively and remains a useful platform for members to exchange information of both an administrative and technical nature. Both the secretariat and the members can post on the platform and this opportunity is frequently utilised to circulate rhino-related news and science and other articles of interest. It is also used to inform members of upcoming events or grant application opportunities. It is difficult to quantify the details, but the WhatsApp group is used by members who have poor connectivity to communicate.

Acknowledgements

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Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 31

Geographic regions: 30 Asia, 1 Europe

Actions during 2024-2025:

Assess: 5 (KSR 5, 7)

Plan: 7 (KSR 8)

Act: 2 (KSR 10)

Network: 5 (KSR 2, 3)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

