

TURNING FOCUS ON RHINO POACHING

In the last decade, almost 10,000 rhinos have been poached for their horn.

Recent years have brought a welcome and much-needed decline since the peak of the current poaching crisis, but we're in an extremely worrying situation. Rhino populations are at a tipping point. We cannot afford to lose any more animals: we must do everything possible to protect remaining populations and make sure that rangers have the skills, tools and motivation to keep going.



(C) Jason Savage

Last year, despite the recent decline, another 394 rhinos were poached in South Africa alone: more than one a day! While Covid-19 and the related travel restrictions were thought to have played a role in reducing the total number of rhinos poached compared to previous years, the threat has clearly not disappeared.

The illegal trade in rhino horn primarily supplies markets in China and Vietnam, where it continues to be purchased as a traditional medicine and, increasingly, for its' status as a high-value object.

The growth of rhino populations remains threatened by this unsustainable rate of poaching, so population growth is desperately required to lift these animals out of danger.

White rhinos are listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN Red List, and black rhinos as Critically Endangered, which means that the species faces a high risk of extinction in the wild. Only once rhino poaching is under control can more focus and funding shift to other, important priorities that will secure the long-term future of the species, such as habitat management and range expansion.



KEEPING RHINOS SAFE AND THRIVING

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park is located in the KwaZulu Natal region of South Africa, a country that is home to more rhinos than anywhere else on the African continent. The Park itself is home to important populations of both black and white rhinos. It is renowned for being the historical home of the Southern white rhino, following the successful 'Operation Rhino' efforts in the 1950s to bring them back from the brink of extinction. Today, it is thought that every Southern white rhino alive can trace its heritage back to this Park.

However, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi is also one of the areas hardest hit by the current rhino poaching crisis. Last year, a total of 93 rhinos were poached for their horn in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province, where the Park is located.

In response to the threat from poaching in recent years, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi has focused on improving rhino monitoring and anti-poaching efforts whilst rangers have increased the time they spend in the field to detect and deter poaching attempts. Activities have included improvements for anti-poaching units, ensuring they are properly equipped to do their job effectively and safely, making sure the Park's perimeter fence is in good repair and upgrading sections to a Smart Fence, as well as completing maintenance to accommodation and facilities to boost ranger morale.



(C) Save the Rhino International

Now, in partnership with Kiezebrink, we want to turn even more focus to proactive anti-poaching initiatives and maximise rangers' effectiveness at early detection of any illegal intruders into the Park before they have a chance to poach a rhino.



CAMERA, FOCUS, ACTION!

Our partnership will put a spotlight on poacher incursions in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and strengthen rangers' focus on protecting rhinos from the rising tide of poaching attacks.

Your donations would help procure new thermal security cameras that would be placed at strategic points across the Park to monitor the fence perimeter and to warn against any illegal incursions. These thermal cameras can ensure visibility from 1km up to 5km. Programmed to detect human heat, the cameras will be able to immediately send live coverage to the Park's Operations Command Centre, which is manned 24/7.



This early detection system will enable rangers to respond quickly and proactively to illegal incursions, increasing their chances of successfully apprehending criminals before they have a chance to poach a rhino. In addition, Kiezebrink's support would also enable a solar energy system to be installed to power each camera, and fencing would be erected to safeguard the new equipment against theft and damage from wildlife in the area.

As a result, the Park's rhinos will be better protected and rangers will be empowered to proactively target any illegal incursions and prevent poaching attempts.

