

Large Scale Community-based Rhino Conservation in North-West Namibia
Annual Progress Report – 2024



SRT's efforts to protect Namibia's West Kunene rhino population experienced some new highs and a few lows in 2024. Overall, we once again met or exceeded all four targets for the year in rhino monitoring with another massive year in foot kilometers and, most notable, a dramatic jump in rhino sightings with our first year in history with over 5,000 rhino sightings! Our teams also clocked over 55,000 kilometers on foot with a combined efforts (per ranger) of over 110,000 kilometers – or roughly 3 trips around the world. The field teams also discovered a few missing rhinos including Droster (see above) who had not been seen for nearly 5 years. Sadly, due primarily to drought, the population only produced four new calves and we recorded a number of mortalities including two confirmed poaching cases – the first in over four years. Our two primary Rhino Pride Campaign initiatives, **Rhino Cup Youth Champions League** and **Reading with Rhinos** continued strong with some expansion funds for the Rhino Cup in 2025 and growing our Reading programme to surpass 1,100 students. We also launched a new Rhino Beadwork project with local artists to reach a new adult female audience to our rhino friends team.

First and foremost, overall, our efforts to monitor and protection the world's last truly free-ranging population of black rhino was once again very successful with exceptional patrol effort. These indicators are in our complete control and we are proud to continue improving upon these each and every year.

More specifically, we met or exceeded all four of our key rhino monitoring performance indicators. This included a dramatic increase in the number of rhino sightings to achieve only the second year in history to observe over 4,000 confirmed rhino sightings (see above).



RHINO MONITORING SUMMARY INFOGRAPHIC

2024-01-01 to 2025-01-01



Annual Performance Results



TEAM FIELD DAYS

5,786



RANGER FIELD DAYS

11,550



TEAM FOOT KILOMETERS

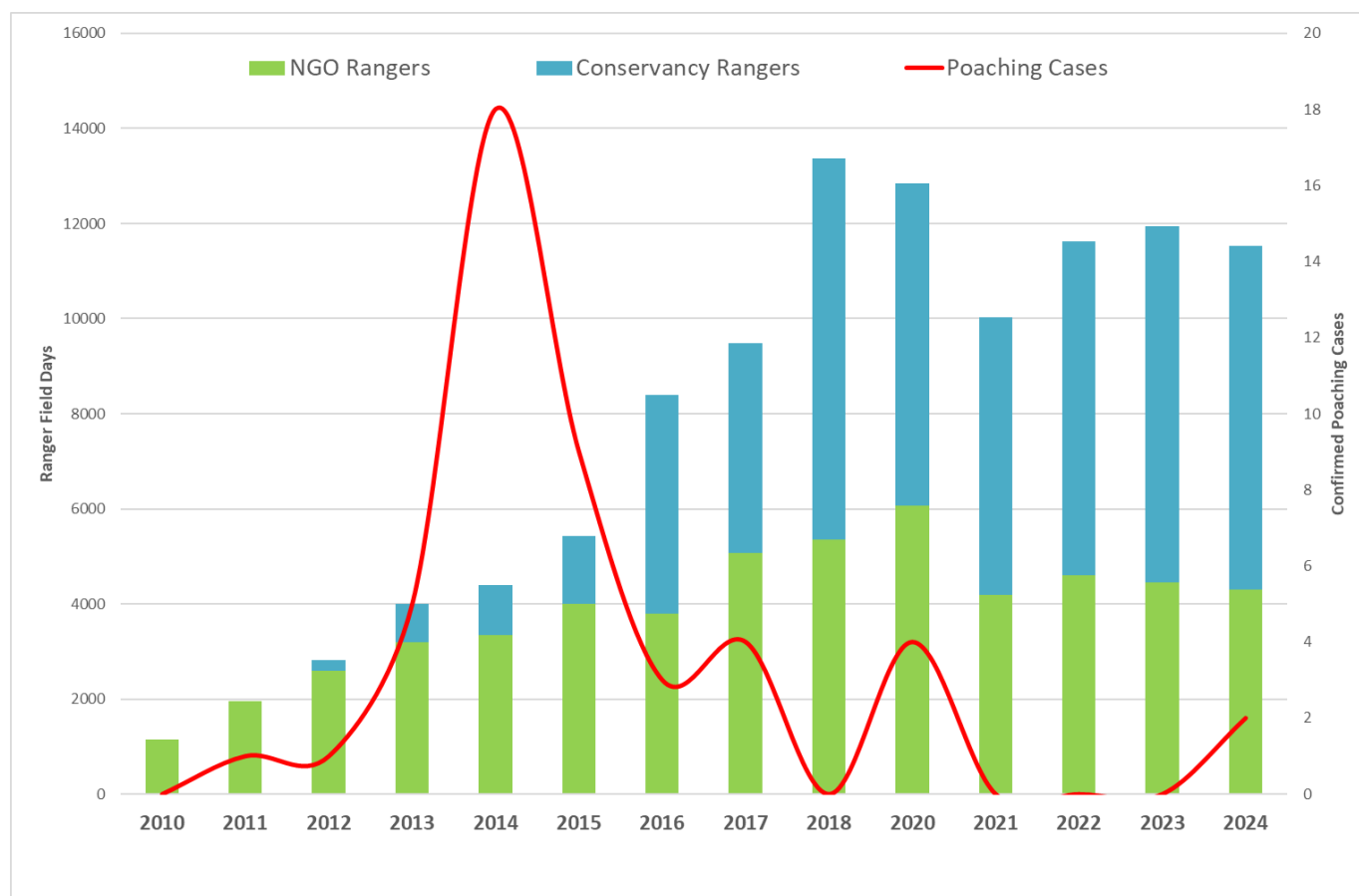
55,842



CONFIRMED RHINO SIGHTINGS

5,002

Furthermore, we continue to hold steady our conservancy-led contributions which again outpaced NGO contributions with over 60% field days provided by Conservancy Rangers.



Below are a few additional noteworthy highlights from rhino monitoring in 2024:

- A team ‘re-discovered’ a rhino named Droster who was missing for nearly 5 years and almost declared dead.
- We deployed a vehicle and driver full-time to lead patrols with **Conservancy Rhino Ranger team from Nyae Nyae Conservancy** in the north-eastern region of Namibia. We also launched a new SMART database specifically for this new free-ranging rhino population.
- We hosted a number of exchange visits including African Parks staff from Angola who may be receiving rhinos within the new few years and a high delegation from Bhutan who is interested to adopt Namibia’s conservation-oriented tourism model (they stayed at Desert Rhino Camp for 2 nights).
- We were invited to contribute a scientific manuscript to a special edition of the high-ranking journal *Conservation Science and Practice* focused on long-term impact evaluation. Our paper is entitled: *Pathways to more inclusive and effective black rhinoceros conservation: insights from*

NW Namibia were we showcase over a decade of lessons learned from designing and delivering the Conservancy Rhino Ranger Programme. The publication is due out in early 2025.

- We brought **donkeys** back to begin patrolling in some of the more remote areas of the range. The mules were sent to the north east landscape.
- Conservancy Rhino Rangers again increased their relative contributions towards the overall rhino monitoring effort in Kunene by producing a record nearly 70% of the total effort on the ground (see below)
- With the drought persisting, we repaired several water points and pumps to ensure that rhinos have permanent access to water.
- Signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Wilderness Safaris for Desert Rhino Camp.
- We sent three senior rangers to the Wildlife College in South Africa to receive training in leadership and ranger skills.
- We facilitated Namibia's first rhino population viability analysis with the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group (see below). This scientific workshop applied previous analysis of rhino demographic data to create projection models to evaluate various management strategies.

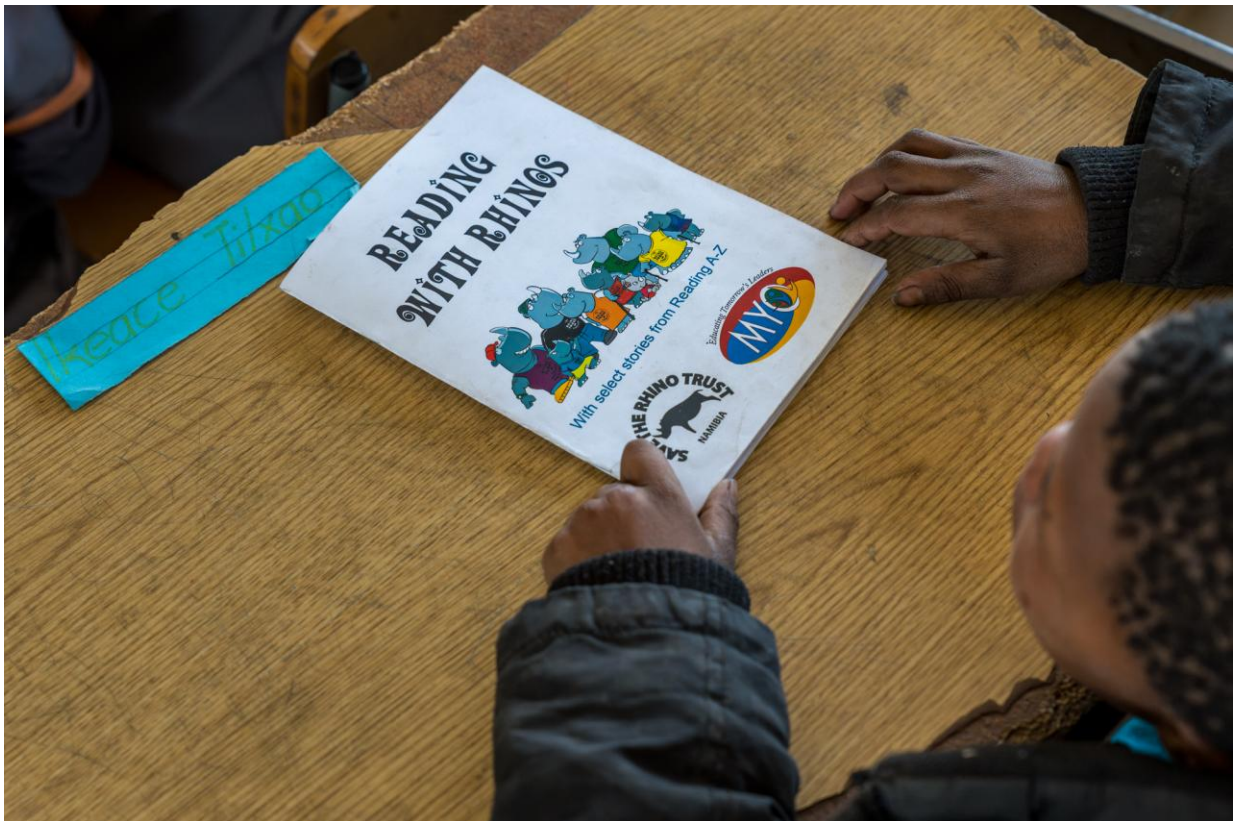




Rhino Pride CAMPAIGN

The Rhino Pride Campaign carried on strongly in 2024 with continued Reading with Rhinos and Rhino Cup leagues and some exciting new developments. Below are a few specific highlights:

- **Reading with Rhinos continues to grow!** We currently have 34 teachers across 8 schools trained reaching over 1,100 learners. This has more than tripled our reach from our initial year only 2 years ago. In 2024, we had to humbly decline requests to expand due to shortage in capacity and funds. We will be conducting our first impact evaluation in 2025 together with our education partner Mondessa Youth Opportunities.



- We ran a successful Season 3 of the **Rhino Cup Champions League including 4 new Men's and Girl's Teams**. This brought our total Men's and Girl's teams to 20 and 10, respectively, growing our player base from initially 400 to 750! **See attached Newsletter for full more details**



- We received a new grant from Rhino Recovery Fund to develop a new Rhino Cup league north of Etosha to help stop the persisting incursions into Etosha National Park. We are currently working closely with Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism to launch this league in 2025 together with local Traditional Authorities and community leaders.
- We received a small seed grant to design and pilot a new Rhino Beadwork Project with a local group of artists. The group will target mainly older women who have not been historically

engaged in rhino conservation. The first training took place in late 2024 with about 12 participants and we will be procuring our first large order in early 2025 to be sold at our partner Minnesota Zoo gift shop in the USA. The group has already secured a small tender to produce for a local tourism operator.



How We Got Started

In 2011, in the face of an escalating poaching threat, local community leaders and game guards saw the need to improve their capacity to protect the rhino on their lands and better fulfill their obligations as 'Rhino Custodians'. A small group of dedicated field conservationists together with support from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism formed an informal working group that sought to provide targeted support to these Communal Rhino Custodians. Our first initiative was to design and implement a programme to strengthen and expand the capacity for Communal Rhino Custodians to monitor the rhino on their lands. We called this the Rhino Ranger Incentive Programme. This program utilizes specialists from dedicated field-based organizations, namely Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation and Minnesota Zoo, to train a new generation of "rhino rangers" - highly talented groups of

local people, chosen by and accountable to their communities to conduct rhino monitoring. The program provides an enhanced training curriculum, state-of-the-art rhino monitoring and field patrol equipment, and performance-based cash bonuses that enable and incentivize rhino ranger teams to complete quality patrols. Once rhino ranger teams acquire the basic skills needed to effectively monitor the rhino on their land and pending necessary approvals, training in rhino tourism will help guide the development of community-led rhino tourism activities that would improve rhino security by generating the critical finances needed to sustain rhino monitoring and enhancing the value that people place on keeping rhino alive.

After about 5 successful years of growing the Conservancy Rhino Ranger Programme, we realized that if wanted to achieve lasting widespread impact, we needed to extend our engagement beyond the rangers and into the broader community. Thus in 2017, together with local partners, we launched the Rhino Pride Campaign to creatively harness and strengthen key emotional connections to rhinos including pride, gratitude and compassion through strategic outreach activities that local people value. At the heart of this approach is the belief that a future for Africa's wild rhino will only be secured when poaching is simply not tolerated by the local people, when rhino become more valuable alive than dead, and where innovative solutions – grown from the grassroots – are supported through authentic partnerships between government, NGOs and private sector.



A Rhino Ranger in action

We deeply thank our main donors & partners:
(who's gifts directly support the Conservancy Rhino Rangers / Rhino Pride Campaign)

**USAID, Tusk Trust, B2Gold, Houston Zoo,
Great Plains Zoo, Minnesota Zoo
Foundation, Dietrich American Foundation,
SwissAfrican Foundation, Wild & Free
Foundation, Conservation Travel
Foundation, Cymot, and NAMDEB**

Field Partners: Thirteen Communal Conservancies (Puros, Otjikondavirongo, Sesfontein, Anabeb, Omatendeka, Ehirovipuka, /Khoadi #Hoas, Torra, Doro !Nawas, Sorris Sorris, //Huab, Uibasen/Twefelfontein, Tsiseb), Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, Namibia Nature Foundation, Conservancy Safaris Namibia, Camelthorn Safaris, Journey's Namibia, Ultimate Safaris, Wilderness Safaris Namibia and the Minnesota Zoo