

CHANGING PLANET



World Ranger Day

In [Changing Planet](#) July 31, 2017 [0 Comments](#)



[Joanna Eede](#)

Black rhino – *Diceros bicornis* – were once widespread throughout Africa and Asia. The disastrous combination of a thriving illegal wildlife trade and a lack of secure and suitable habitat have ensured that only 5,500 individual animals are now left in Africa. Kenya is thought to be one of the continent's last

strongholds; its own population of critically endangered Black rhino, however, dropped from an estimated 20,000 in 1970, to 696 today.

Despite the extraordinary conservation efforts taking place at wildlife conservancies such as Lewa-Borana in northern Kenya, the threat to Black rhino is still huge and the 24/7 task of keeping them alive a complex one. Integral to this effort are anti-poaching rangers: the trusted eyes and ears of Black rhino conservation. *'The rangers are passionate about what they do,'* says Wanjiku Kinuthia, Lewa-Borana's Communications' Officer. *'It defines their personality and becomes an extension of who they are.'*

Every anti-poaching ranger goes through months of training in patrol and night tactics, navigation skills, first-aid, aviation and evacuation training. Some rangers are taught to handle bloodhounds and Belgian Malinois attack dogs, while all have Kenya Police Reservist status, which awards them the powers to arrest, prosecute and bear arms. On patrol they carry bottles of water, a spare radio battery, tourniquet, chemical light stick, fruit and biscuits and – because 100% of Black rhino are killed after dark – night vision goggles.

Close collaboration exists between Lewa-Borana rangers and the local pastoral communities, who recognise that conservation can benefit wildlife while directly improving their livelihoods. As such, the community acts as key partners in the protection of wildlife. *'The bond between us is strong; we all work as one big team. The community is our first line of defence,'* says Edward Ndiritu, Head of the Lewa-Borana Anti-Poaching Unit.

All security operations from Lewa-Borana and Northern Rangelands Trust conservancies such as Sera are conducted from the Joint Operations Centre at Lewa HQ, which has recently adopted a new system called the Domain Awareness System (DAS), created by U.S. philanthropist Paul G. Allen's company, Vulcan. *'The launch of our new Joint Operations Centre has revolutionised our ability to know exactly what's happening across the vast Lewa-Borana and Northern Rangelands Trust landscape,'* says Mike Watson, CEO of Lewa-Borana.

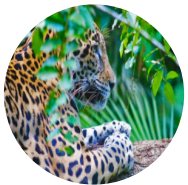
The rangers' work is exemplary: there are now 84 Black rhino living on the 93,000 acre (145 sq miles) Lewa-Borana landscape; none has been lost to poaching since 2013.

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MEET THE AUTHOR

Joanna Eede was an editorial consultant to Survival International with a particular interest in the relationship between man and nature and tribal peoples. She has created and edited three environmental books, including Portrait of England (Think Publishing, 2006) and We are One: A Celebration of Tribal Peoples (Quadrille, 2009). Joanna writes for newspapers and magazines on subjects such as the repatriation of wild Przewalski horses to Mongolia, the whales of the Alboran sea, the chimpanzees of the Mahale rainforest, uncontacted tribes of the Amazon rainforest and the Hadza hunter gatherer people of Tanzania. Future ideas include a book about Tibet's nomads.



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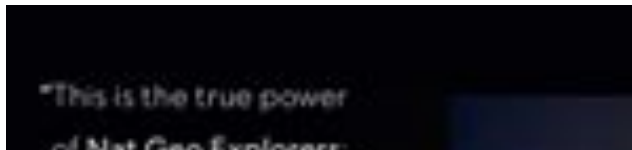
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