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 WILDLIFE





# On World Rhino Day, Borana Conservancy celebrates 2 years as a Rhino Sanctuary

In [Wildlife](#) September 22, 2015 [2 Comments](#)



[Joanna Eede](#)

Anti Rhino poaching Rangers on Borana Conservancy, Northern Kenya.

The black rhinoceros has roamed the earth for five million years, yet it is now facing the greatest threat in its history – from poaching. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the black rhino is ‘teetering on the brink of extinction’. There are just over 5,000 left in the wild in Africa; in Kenya alone, 21 were killed during 2014. Rhino horn is now worth more than gold on the black market.

Two years ago, Borana Conservancy, a 32,000 acre cattle ranch, conservancy and high-end tourist lodge in northern Kenya, became the world’s newest rhino sanctuary, when 21 rhino were moved to its rolling hills from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Lake Nakuru National Park.

Then, in 2014, the neighboring conservancies of Lewa and Borana became one large ecosystem, when the fence that divided them was brought down.

Joanna Eede's recent interview with Sam Taylor, Borana's Chief Conservation Officer, marks both World Rhino Day and the 2-year anniversary of Rhino living on Borana for the first time since the 1970s.

**\*How many black rhino were relocated to Borana in September 2013 and how many live on Borana now?**

*21 were translocated and there are 21 black rhino on Borana now, including a female who has moved on to Borana from Lewa. We have had four births and five deaths. Four of these deaths were natural, due to predation and intraspecies competition, and one was lost in a poaching incident.*

**\*What has changed on Borana in the past 2 years?**

*The fence that used to separate Borana and Lewa came down. This means that the conservancies of Borana and Lewa are now one ecosystem; an amazing achievement that has created 93,000 acres of rhino habitat, with the potential to become a Key 1 (100+ animals) black rhino population within the next two years.*

*This new ecosystem provides more space for rhino to breed, increases genetic diversity and stimulates breeding. The extra space brings positive changes in territorial behavior.*

**\*How many anti Rhino-poaching rangers are employed on Borana?**

*Borana's wildlife security consists of the armed anti-poaching unit and the scouts who monitor the wildlife. We have 24 armed anti poaching rangers, and 74 monitoring rangers (scouts), who are unarmed.*

**\*What training have the anti-poaching Rangers received?**

*The rangers receive regular training from 51 Degrees, a private conservation-based security company specialising in anti-poaching training. The training covers specialised anti-poaching tactics, medical courses and regular commanders cadres. The rangers are skilled in first-aid, bush craft, map reading, night tactics, aviation and evacuation training and operating with vehicles and dogs. They have refresher courses twice a year.*

*We also have unarmed scout teams on Borana who are trained in new monitoring software called SMART and Cybertracker.*

*The anti-poaching teams are armed with for the sole purpose of protecting rhino against poachers. The anti-poaching teams are Police reservists and as such are also involved in providing local law enforcement for the local community, with regard to cattle rustling etc. This helps with our relationships and goodwill from our neighbors. The scouts monitor wildlife – particularly rhino – for their location and state of health, as well as the conservancy's habitat and other fauna. This monitoring provides data that drives informed biological management of the ecosystem.*

**\* Do the anti-poaching rangers use dogs?**

*Some of the rangers are taught how to handle bloodhounds and Belgian Malinois 'attack' dogs.*

**\*Could you explain a typical day in the monitoring of rhino?**

*Rangers follow spoor until they find a rhino. The sighting is then called in to the supervisor, who will try to obtain a visual of the rhino in order to assess its health, breeding behaviour, feeding behaviour and, most importantly, its whereabouts. This information drives the day-to-day security strategy, in the absence of any good intelligence.*

**\*What do you glean from the data you gather on daily basis, and how does it help conservation?**

*It is important to know numbers of competitive species and habitat types so that we can protect areas that are over-grazed or browsed, and improve water reticulation, etc.*

*It is also important to note the age and sex structure of certain key species, which determines the sustainability of each population.*

*From a security perspective it is vital to know about any sign of humans in the area, so thorough patrols are key. Also the monitoring of predators and of elephants breaking fences helps protect our neighbors from any human/wildlife conflict.*

**\*Much of rhino poaching has been due to 'inside intelligence' - how do you keep rangers loyal at Borana?**

*Welfare is key. We provide the rangers with good salaries, kit, and training. We also provide educational support for their families, and face time with senior management, which means that any grievances can be sorted immediately. This relationship includes providing financial advice, which is important, as a ranger is most likely to resort to colluding with poaching syndicates if he has got himself into financial strife.*

*We are also building a new dedicated camp for them. The rangers are out all night and need good, quiet, private (due to the nature of their work) accommodation. We have a huge number of rangers who need comfort in their 'down time'. The welfare of rangers is key to their ability in performing their tasks and their dedication to the cause.*





RHINO ANTI-POACHING RANGERS PATROL ON BORANA CONSERVANCY IN FRONT OF MT KENYA

**\*Can you explain how tourism, wildlife conservation and community interests are connected at Borana?**

*They are all interconnected. Tourism provides the revenue to keep the animals alive and the animals help the economic development of the surrounding communities.*

**\*One of your long-term plans at Borana is to ensure that the Rhino start to breed. Has there been any success yet in the past 2 years?**

*Yes, we have had 4 births. Sadly one calf was killed by a rhino that was trying to mate with its mother.*

**\*The fight against rhino poaching has been described as a war. Do you feel you are winning it?**



*Yes we are winning, but it is tenuous. We are afforded excellent support by the Kenyan government, which is perhaps not the case in other countries. We need to support the rangers and conservancies financially and in kind (i.e. with equipment such as binoculars). The security needed to protect rhino is vast and extremely expensive; it costs over \$2000 a month to support a rhino, which is ultimately unsustainable. A number of conservancies have had to withdraw from the rhino program because of this, which has further escalated the pressure.*

**\*What are your future plans for black Rhino conservation on Borana?**

*We will keep on breeding and protecting them. It would also be a magnificent achievement to expand into community conservation areas to the north of Borana, and thus provide yet more habitat whilst at the same time engaging local communities in rhino conservation.*

**\*How can tourists to Borana help protect endangered black Rhino?**

*Visit Borana. Just by being here visitors are contributing, as every cent from tourists goes back into conservation.*

*So have a holiday in one of the world's last remaining beautiful safe havens for wildlife knowing that you are helping save it.*

*And of course any extra contributions are also hugely welcome!*

**\*How many Rhino do you hope will ultimately live in this single ecosystem that has been created?**

*Over 100 blacks and 100 whites.*



## 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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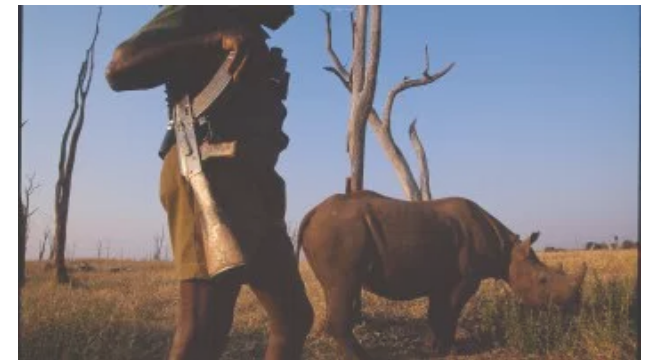
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