

## **Large Scale Community-based Rhino Conservation in North-West Namibia** **Annual Progress Report - 2025**



After nearly 12 years of well below average rainfall across Namibia's northwest, 2025 brought much needed above average rainfall to an almost barren landscape - see above. We exceeded three of four targets for the year in rhino monitoring with another massive year in foot kilometers and just missed our rhino sighting target after our record-breaking year of over 5,000 sighting in 2024.

Despite a challenging start to the year, with the unexpected US government cut of just over 10% of our planned income, 2025 incorporated several significant achievements to SRT. External staff training opportunities, improvements to our monitoring work, and contributions to the national black rhino custodian programme were highlights.

Our two primary Rhino Pride Campaign initiatives, **Rhino Cup Youth Champions League** and **Reading with Rhinos** continued strong with a full six month league for our 11 Girls teams and our Reading programme held strong with over 1,000 students.

In terms of monitoring, once again, our teams clocked over 55,000 kilometers on foot with a combined efforts (per ranger) of over 115,000 kilometers - or roughly 3 trips around the world. Sadly, we recorded two confirmed poaching cases - a breeding cow and her sub-adult calf. First and foremost, overall, our efforts to monitor and protect the world's last truly free-ranging population of black rhino were once again very successful with exceptional patrol effort. These indicators are in our complete control and we are proud to continue improving upon every year.

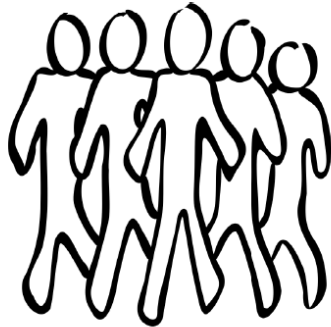


# RHINO MONITORING SUMMARY INFOGRAPHIC

2025-01-01 to 2026-01-01



## Annual Performance Results



TEAM FIELD DAYS

**5380**



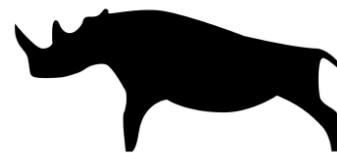
RANGER FIELD DAYS

**10,762**



TEAM FOOT KILOMETERS

**55,132**



CONFIRMED RHINO SIGHTINGS

**4,331**

Figure 1 SMART Infographic showing verified annual performance

More specifically, we met or exceeded three of our four key rhino monitoring performance indicators. This included maintaining the massive foot kilometer effort.

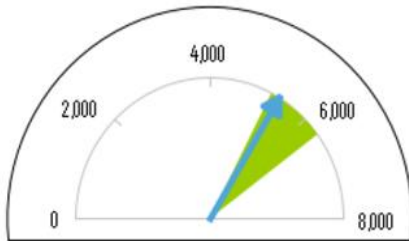


# PROGRESS TOWARDS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE TARGETS

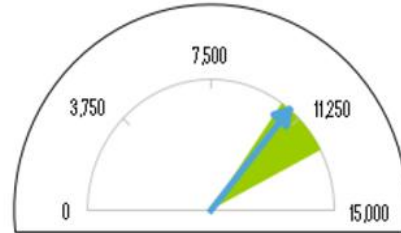


ANNUAL PERFORMANCE RELATIVE TO ANNUAL TARGETS (+/- 10% OF 2024 - GREEN REGION)

## Team Field Days

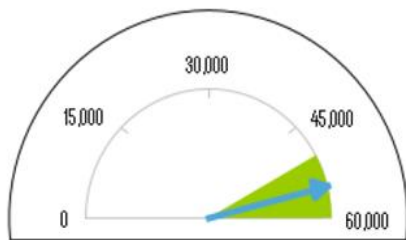


## Ranger Field Days

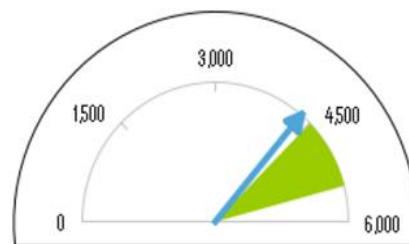


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## Team Foot Kilometers



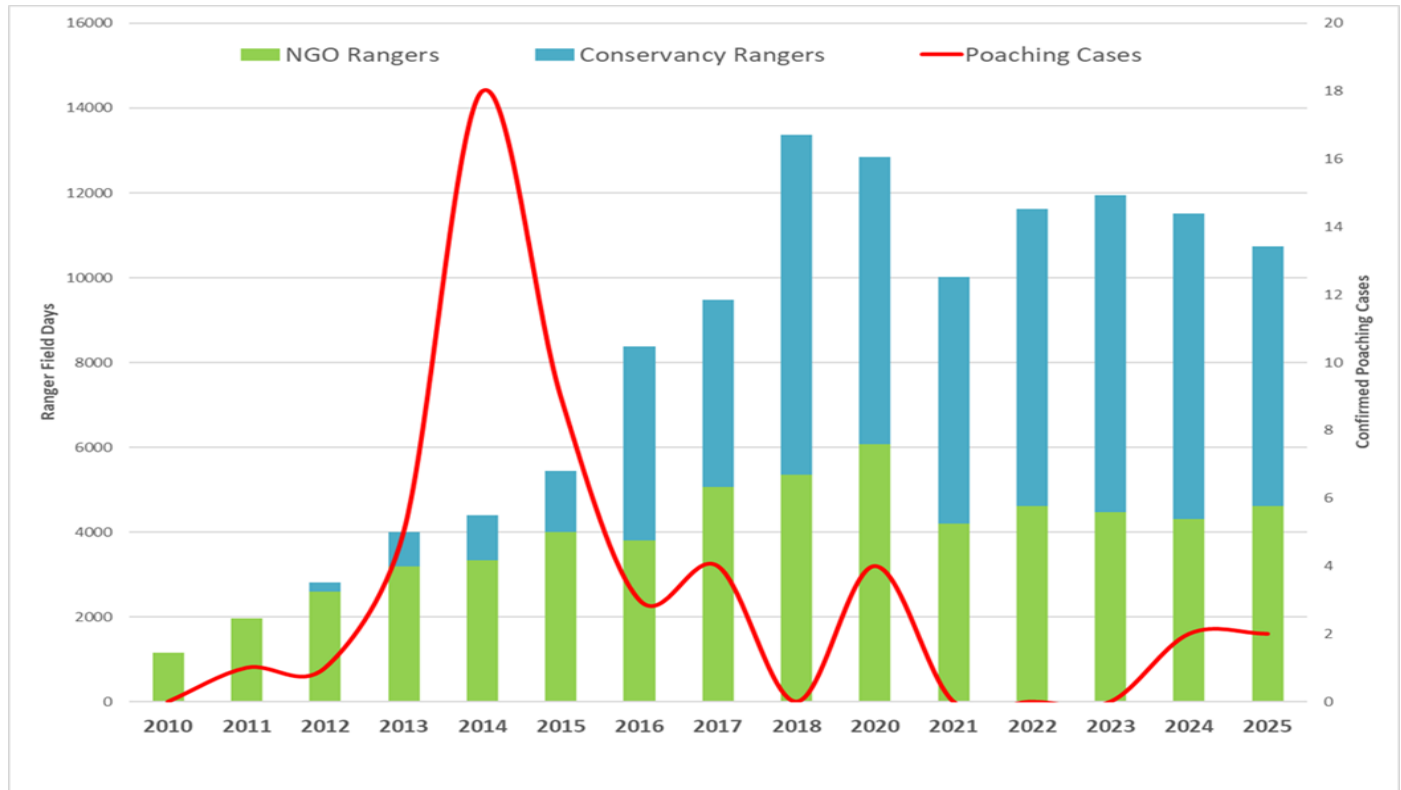
## Cumulative Rhino Sightings



**Figure 2 Annual KPIs Green zone on each dial represents target. Target is within 10% of 2024 performance**

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

The graphic below shows long term NGO and Conservancy Ranger contributions relative to poaching.



**Below are a few additional noteworthy highlights from rhino monitoring in 2025:**

- We increased the percentage of total rhinos seen on average each month in 2025 with 66% of the total population observed every 2 months and 75% of the population observed after 6 months.
- All key population performance measures more than doubled in 2025 strongly suggesting that the goods rains have already created a measurable and substantially positive impact on the rhino populations growth
- We have added aerial patrols to our mix of rhino monitoring tools, with our COO obtaining his private pilot license in June 2025
- We have been instrumental in helping the Environment Ministry set up the National Black Rhino Custodianship Programme. Collectively, custodian properties house more than 600 black rhinos and the establishment of an association to coordinate fundraising and activities is an important strategic step for the national programme

- We added a new virtual doctor to our Ranger Welfare programme to enable our rangers to get regular medical advice and check ups without having to travel far.
- We published two new scientific manuscripts and have submitted another for publication.
- We sent 8 staff members on external training to the Southern African Wildlife College in the Kruger Park, South Africa. Training was split into Field Ranger Skills- four promising junior rangers attended this comprehensive 10 week course, and the Braveheart Leadership Training course, for more senior field officers who have been selected for future leadership positions at SRT

### **SRT Expansion to North East Namibia:**

- SRT worked with the Namibian Ministry of Environment in Nyae Nyae area to facilitate the introduction of black rhinos into Khaudum National Park, situated on the Botswana border
- In the Nyae Nyae communal conservancy, adjacent to the Park, we also monitor a small population of black and white rhinos inside a fenced area located in the Nyae Nyae conservancy
- After 36 months, we have increased the size of our north east monitoring team to 8 individuals, using two dedicated vehicles and 4 mules for patrolling
- The potential for black rhino rangeland expansion into the national park and surrounding areas is significant, despite poaching threat





# Rhino Pride CAMPAIGN

**The Rhino Pride Campaign continued to engage and empower local people in rhino conservation in 2025. Below are a few specific highlights:**

- **Reading with Rhinos remains stable but in high demand for expansion.** We were able to continue supporting 34 teachers across 8 schools 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 4 of the **Rhino Cup Champions League** however due to funding cuts we could only support the Girls League (11 teams, 220 players) at this time. Yet we were

able to run a full season including 6 months, and a full playoff schedule with numerous awards and prizes for top talent and victorious teams. Our Rhino Mascot provided pro-rhino messaging at each event as per usual - including new 'Rhino School' sessions for the kids.



- We also were able to launch a new **impact evaluation study** specifically for Rhino Cup. Collaborating with a social scientist from South Africa (see below), we designed a new survey instrument and completed over 60 surveys. A scientific publication is planned for 2026.



## **We are pleased with the first-year results for our local Rhino Bead Art project.**

- Firstly, we helped facilitate two local orders from tour companies with lodges including one (Grootberg lodge) which has requested monthly procurements to be used as greeting gifts for all their visitors (the lodge is often fully booked).
- We facilitated the largest order to date with an overseas company in the USA who manages procurements for a number of US-based zoos and aquariums. We are testing the project with Minnesota Zoo with prospects to broaden the concept to include several additional zoos over the next 1-3 years.
- The project has inspired others to establish similar initiatives, even using the same trainer (see below) which has led to penguin, flamingo bead art with Namibia Nature Foundation and potentially more in 2026.



## How the Rhino Ranger Programme 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.



A Rhino Ranger in action

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.

**We deeply thank our main donors & partners:**

**B2Gold Namibia, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Great Plains Zoo, Houston Zoo, International Rhino Foundation, Minnesota Zoo Foundation, Save African Rhino Foundation, SwissAfrican Foundation, Save the Rhino International, Tusk Trust**

**Field Partners: Thirteen Communal Conservancies (Puros, Otjikondavirongo, Sesfontein, Anabeb, Omatendeka, Ehirovipuka, /Khoadi #Hoas, Torra, Doro !Nawas, Sorrh Sorrh, //Huab, Uibasen/Twefelfontein, Tsiseb), Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, Namibia Nature Foundation, Minnesota Zoo**

