



Rhino Rangers honoured for critical contribution to the protection of the world's largest free ranging black rhino population

18 November 2021. Twyfelfontein. 41 Rhino Rangers in the Kunene and Erongo regions of north-western Namibia were honoured at the 2nd Annual Kunene Rhino Awards on 18 November 2021 for their tireless work to protect the Namibia's free ranging black rhino. The Rhino Rangers are community members within communal conservancies that track and monitor black rhinos through the harsh desert landscape daily, and have continued to do so throughout the pandemic year, ensuring the survival of this population.

Over 60 Rhino Rangers, supported by Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) and the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), work tirelessly to protect the largest free-roaming population of black rhinos (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) left in the world. Communal conservancies in the Kunene and Erongo regions are recognised as rhino custodians allowing access to benefits for communities and expanding rangeland for rhinos. Boots on the ground means rangers in the field, tracking and monitoring daily and the **Kunene Rhino Awards** celebrates this commitment.

In November 2021, Rhino Rangers representing 13 rangeland conservancies attended the event which took place at Uibasen/Twyfelfontein conservancy. The annual event is the second of its kind and is set to become a permanent feature on the Kunene conservation calendar. An official word of welcome was given by Simson Uri-Khob, the CEO of Save the Rhino Trust, the organisation that spear-heads rhino conservation in the region. Mr Uri-Khob thanked the rangers for the ongoing efforts to protect this unique population of rhino and said 'I would like to encourage you all to keep up the dedication and commitment, which is being acknowledged in this awards ceremony today. You have all worked very hard this year and this has led to no rhino poaching over the past 12 months – a great achievement that is due to all of your hard work.'

The Charge de Affaires to Namibia from the United States of America, Jessica Long, added 'The US has supported species conservation and in particular rhino conservation in Namibia for many years and it is a great honour to be present here today, as we recognise the work of the community Rhino Rangers in protecting this species.' Save the Rhino Trust has enjoyed long-term support from the US government in various forms.

The categories for prizes included the best rhino ID photograph taken during patrol (voted for by all community rangers), the most foot kilometres walked by a ranger, most active field days and the most rhino sightings during the year 2020. In addition, Rhino Rangers who have been with the programme for longer than 5 years received Hero Jackets.

The winners were:

- 1) Best rhino ID photo taken during patrol: Jackson Amakutuwa and Jessica Kharuxas
- 2) Most foot kilometres walked during the year: Michael Adams (2167 km)
- 3) Most active field ranger days: Chips Tjambiru (212 days)
- 4) Most rhino sightings during the year: Marthinus Sanib (432 sightings)

Save the Rhino Trust would like to thank USAID, For Rangers and CYMOT for providing funding and prizes to support the 2020 Kunene Rhino Awards.



Notes to editors:

Pictures available here:

<https://wetransfer.com/downloads/573840e8423f0562bcd587929fbced2720211123123059/48d9f1b1d9908bd5796c104385afb8c920211123123121/233dee>

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More information about this project:

The Black rhino is a “critically endangered” species according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ and Namibia’s north-western Kunene Region contains the largest free-ranging population anywhere on the planet. At a national level, Namibia hosts close to one-third of the global population. The rhinos in the Kunene region survive in open access communal land and communal conservancies are recognised as rhino custodians allowing access to benefits for communities and expanding rangeland for rhinos.

This conservation success is underpinned by enabling legislation around wildlife and a unique collaborative approach. Communal conservancies, Traditional Authorities, government ministries, tourism operators and non-government organisations all work together to reduce poaching.

Using SMART technology Save the Rhino Trust can accurately measure individual ranger performance during patrols. Over 12 months, this effort is added and compared to other rangers. The best performing rangers are awarded during the ceremony but the emphasis is on team-work, the overall achievement of the group of rangers and all role players in rhino conservation.

Save the Rhino Trust’s presentation on monitoring effort for the year showed that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, rangers continued to work hard. In fact, the absence of rhino trekking tourism activities in 2020 means that the teams worked extra hard to protect rhinos that are usually seen regularly by tourism groups.

About Save the Rhino Trust

Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) is one of the oldest black rhino conservation groups on the planet. Today it is estimated that there are fewer than 5,630 black rhinos left in the wild, and, with poaching sweeping across the continent, the critically endangered black rhinos' last stand may be in north-western Namibia. It is here that SRT works tirelessly to protect the last, free-roaming population of black rhinos left in the world.

Covering an area of 25,000 km², SRT's trackers come from local communities and possess a deep



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knowledge of rhinos and their surroundings. Their skills are tested during long patrols, on foot on rough terrain in an area with no national park status no fences and no controls over who enters and exits. SRT is the only non-government organisation with a Memorandum of understanding with Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism to protect rhinos in their natural range.

www.savetherhinotrust.org