

IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group



2018 Report



Michael Knight



Benson Okita

Chair

Michael Knight ⁽¹⁾

Deputy Chair

Benson Okita ⁽²⁾

Red List Authority Coordinator

Richard Emslie ⁽³⁾

Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ KAZA TFCA Leader, WWF in Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia

⁽²⁾ Save the Elephants Organisation, Kenya

⁽³⁾ IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

Number of members

51

Social networks

Website:

<https://rhinos.org/research-publications/iucn-african-rhino-specialist-group/>



Mission statement

To promote the development and long-term maintenance of viable populations of the various sub-species of African rhinos in the wild.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) wants: (1) secure, viable and valued rhino populations in their natural habitat; (2) rapidly growing and genetically diverse rhino populations facilitated through adaptive biological management; (3) a reduction in the threat to rhinos from poaching, driven primarily by the high illegal demand for rhino horn; and (4) an incentivised communal and private sector investing in rhino conservation through continued range expansion and numbers.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: Red List assessments for Black Rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*) and White Rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*).

Plan

Planning: (1) review of the South Africa Biodiversity Management Plan for Black Rhinos; (2) contribute to delivery of national plans; (3) assist with implementation of the Rhino Range State Plan; (4) provide official support for the Rhino Management Plan for Chad.

Policy: (1) compile joint IUCN/TRAFFIC report for the 18th CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP18); (2) review Range State proposals for IUCN/TRAFFIC analyses; (3) attendance and technical role at CITES Conference of the Parties (COP); (4) attendance and technical role at CITES Standing Committee (SC) and Working Group (WG) meetings.

Act

Conservation actions: engage in the Rhino Impact Investment Project (RIIP).

Technical advice: (1) participate in the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP); (2) participate on the Rhino DNA Indexing System (RhODIS) Advisory Board; (3) review hunting applications; (4) engage with *ex situ* conservation (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Taxon Advisory Groups (TAG), etc.); (5) provide expert advice to range states and conservation authorities; (6) provide expert advice to MyPlanet Rhino Fund.

Network

Capacity building: (1) East African Rhino Management Group capacity building; (2) Biological Management Workshop.

Documents review: scientific peer review of rhino papers.

Membership: diversify the AfRSG.

Proposal development and funding: (1) submit donor applications; (2) complete funding reports.

Synergy: (1) participate in Rhino and Elephant Security Group/INTERPOL Environmental Crime Working Group (ECWG) meetings; (2) establish a new management partner for AfRSG.

Technical advice: attendance at workshops/government meetings as invited or presentations given.

Rhino arrive Chad
Photo: DEA



Rhino bomas Chad
Photo: DEA



Crate building team
Photo: Michael Knight



Zakouma rhino crate
Photo: Michael Knight

Communicate

Communication: (1) Southern African Development Community Rhino Management Group and Chairing; (2) publish the Pachyderm Chair Report; (3) respond to media requests; (4) improved communication of rhino issues to members, state and private sectors.

Scientific meetings: hold biennial AfrSG meetings.

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Red List

i. We are reviewing Red List assessments for Black and White Rhinos, using new methodology and incorporating ideas from the East African Community Rhino Management Group (EAC RMG) genetics workshop. (KSR #1)

Plan

Planning

i. Review of South Africa Biodiversity Management Plan for Black Rhinos started. (KSR #16)

ii. Chair commented on the proposed Black Rhino re-introduction to Gonarezou National Park. AfrSG contributed to and/or developed a number of national plans, including the Zimbabwe Rhino Plan (awaiting signature), Uganda Plan, Chad Rhino Plan (awaited final signed off version), and 6th Kenya Rhino Action Plan. In addition, the Scientific Officer presented AfrSG's approach to strategic planning of national plans for rhinos. (KSR #27)

iii. The Rhino Range State Plan was signed by most of the rhino range states. A method by which to investigate the degree of delivery of rhino range states on the current plan is in development, with feedback expected in 2019. (KSR #27)

iv. Ongoing support provided for the Rhino Management Plan for Chad through numerous committee meetings. Animals were delivered in May 2018. (KSR #21)

Policy

i. We are drafting the report to the CITES Secretariat for COP18. Our Scientific Officer worked with IUCN on contract covering the Scientific Officer's contribution to reporting as well as TRAFFIC's costs and the cost of obtaining additional updated information on South Africa rhino numbers required for the report. (KSR #26)

ii. Attendance and technical role at CITES COPs planned. (KSR #26)

iii. Our Scientific Officer was the lead on rhinos for the IUCN delegation at CITES SC69. (KSR #26)



AfRSG SO and Chair with blind BR in Kenya
 Photo: AfRSG archives

Act

Conservation actions

i. Attended the Third meeting on the Rhino Impact Investment Project (RIIP) Board, providing comments on several documents. (KSR #11)

Technical advice

- i.** Attended the Management Committee Meeting of the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) in November 2018. (KSR #18)
- ii.** We are in constant engagement with Dr Harper from RhODIS. No Advisory Committee meeting was held. (KSR #27)
- iii.** Two hunting applications reviewed. (KSR # 27)
- iv.** Correspondence is ongoing to engage with *ex situ* (EAZA, TAG, etc.) conservation. (KSR #27)
- v.** Provided expert advice to Chad authorities, BRREP, MyPlanet, RIIP. (KSR #27)
- vi.** Provided comments on proposals submitted to MyPlanet Rhino Fund, as required. (KSR #27)
- vii.** Steering Committee on the Northern White Rhino. (KSR #27)

Network

Capacity building

- i.** Third meeting in Akagera National Park, Rwanda, from 27 February to 2 March 2018. (KSR #18)
- ii.** Attended and participated in the International Rhino Science Meeting at Dinokeng, South Africa, in February 2018. (KSR #18)

Documents review

i. Five scientific papers reviewed. The Chair and Scientific Officer provided detailed and extremely critical comment for an IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy/SSC Sustainable Use and Livelihoods (IUCN CEESP/SSC SULi) response to a submission on animal welfare issues to IUCN Council by academic lawyers representing IUCN's World Commission on Environmental Law Ethics Specialist Group.

Membership

i. Membership increased to 51 with 36 males (32 African resident) and 12 females (6 African resident). A skill audit is being undertaken.

Proposal development and funding

i. Applications were submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Safari Club International (SCI), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), World Wildlife Fund South Africa (WWF SA),

International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Oak Foundation and Save the Rhino International (SRI) for funds for the AfRSG biennial meeting. (KSR #9)

ii. US Fish and Wildlife Service report for 2017-18 completed. (KSR #9)

Synergy

- i.** Participated in the Rhino and Elephant Security Group/INTERPOL Environmental Crime Working Group (ECWG) Meeting, held in November 2018, in Tanzania. (KSR #28)
- ii.** Establishment of a new management partner for AfRSG is no longer required, because the Endangered Wildlife Trust has reduced the administration fee to 0%.

Technical advice

i. Technical advice provided to: IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group, IUCN delegation at CITES SC69, EAC RMG meeting, RIIP Board meetings, BRREP Management Committee meeting, Biological Management Science meeting, Committee member of Woolworths MyPlanet, steering committee for the Northern White Rhino project, South Africa's Scientific Authority, South African Rhino Research Priorities Workshop (part of Rhino Lab), extensive engagement in South Africa/Chad/African Parks committee on the delivery of rhinos to Chad, WWF Namibia INL project. (KSR #27)



Chad S Africa agreement
Photo: DEA



AfRSG members
Photo: AfRSG archives

Communicate

Communication

- i.** Michael Knight resigned as the Chair of the Southern African Development Community Rhino Management Group in May 2018. (KSR #28)
- ii.** Pachyderm Chair report was published in *Pachyderm* No. 59 July 2017–June 2018. The Chair, Vice-Chair and Scientific Officer continue to sit on the *Pachyderm* Editorial Board and *Pachyderm* report. (KSR #28)
- iii.** Provided data and/or gave interviews for numerous researchers and media outlets (Smithsonian, Namibia’s Radio Kosmos, BBC Inside Science, BBC World Service, The Art Newspaper, CBS News, IUCN communications, Tony Carnie, Edinburgh Napier University, Project Earth Films, Bonne de Bod), AFP and Tony Grogan’s docu-series on subjects including poaching levels, general rhino conservation, synthetic horn, Northern White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) and domestic horn sales in South Africa. (KSR #28)
- iv.** Established WhatsApp group for regular communication. Regular sharing of news items/publications. (KSR #28)

Scientific meetings

- i.** Planning is ongoing for the 13th AfRSG meeting, scheduled for 2019. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following donors that have allowed the AfRSG to deliver on its mandates: the continued support and cooperation of range states is appreciated; the AfRSG is also grateful to Save the Rhino International (SRI), International Rhino Foundation (IRF), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund (USFWS RTC) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) for support provided to the AfRSG Secretariat. We also thank SANParks and WWF in Namibia for their support of the Chair, as well as WWF Netherlands via WWF ARP and WWF South Africa for funding the EAC RMG meeting.

Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 5/5

Assess	1	█
Plan	7	█████████
Act	8	██████████
Network	9	███████████
Communicate	5	███████

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 9, 11, 16, 18, 21, 26, 27, 28

KSR: Key Species Result