



ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Image credit: Gerhard van der Westhuizen



MONITORING.PROTECTING.CONSERVING.TOGETHER.

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Chris Galliers
Etienne Gerber
Gerhard van der Westhuizen
Peter Chadwick &
Project Rhino Team Members



Introduction

Project Rhino flourished yet another year! 2019 started off tough and with a very low bank balance, but with unbelievable support from all our members, partners, conservation enthusiasts and supporters, we raised the needed funds to keep every single project going this year and created awareness far and wide and our projects have grown from strength to strength!

Our Zululand Aerial Patrol Wing has flown a total of 415.3 hours this year, being our eyes in the sky for all our Zululand Member reserves. Our K9 unit has worked jointly with SAPS, our reserves, the communities and the farmers in the Zululand landscape on numerous wildlife crime investigations and we have had such amazing successes. We reignited the Skydive for Rhino fundraiser and created a tangible exciting atmosphere in Zululand with 96 brave souls throwing themselves out of a perfectly safe aeroplane. We hosted our very first Music Festival—it was fantastic and we are excited to grow this event into an annual event, creating massive awareness and hopefully raising heaps of funds.

We have partners that require special recognition and thanks, as without their help we would definitely not have had such a successful year: **Mr Price Sport** for their ongoing support, this year they sponsored two rhino reserves APU units with uniforms, Outdoor ambassador, Mike Tredway, raised funds to Skydive for Rhino, they sponsored 200 sleeping bags for our World Youth Wildlife Summit, assisted with dehorning of 6 rhino in one of our reserves and did a cheque handover to us to the value of an incredible R398 140.30.

Thank you to Neil and Shenley Cairns from **Naviganti Financial Planning CC** in Gillitts, for printing all our marketing material for 2019, and for supporting our Comrades 2019 drive. A massive thank you to **IPSS** who has been our loyal medical service provider for every single event we have hosted this year completely free of charge. **Larry Bentley** from the Zululand Observer, who without hesitation ensures

that our news gets out in the media, who drives hundreds of kilometres to take that perfect picture or write that perfect story, for the world to know how hard we are working to save our wildlife.

There really are too many loyal supporters to name individually, but please know that every word of motivation, every social media share, every new idea to fundraise to keep making a difference is so much appreciated—without the help of every single one of our supporters we would not have made it this far.

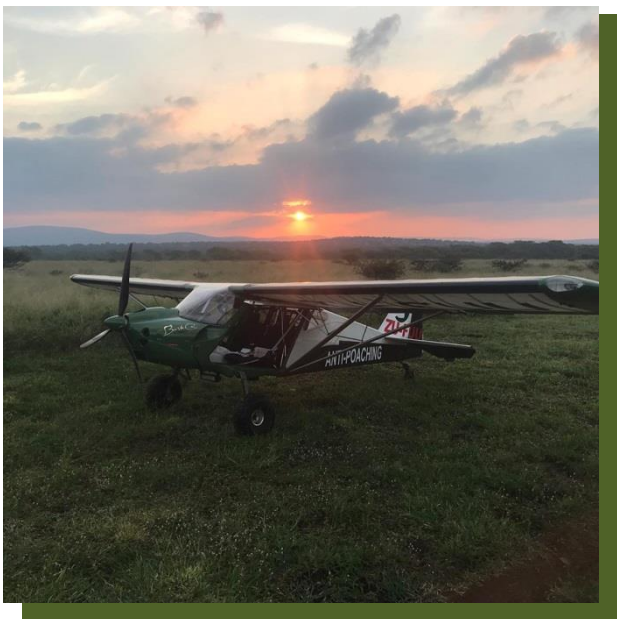
Another special thank you is to Chris Galliers who took the forefront in coordinating Project Rhino for the last three years. On behalf of the Project Rhino and African Conservation Trust team we would like to extend a huge congratulations to Chris for being elected as the President of the International Rangers Federation, what an incredible accolade for all his hard work that he has put into conservation and protecting our wildlife. We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Chris for his absolute dedication to Project Rhino and his passion for conservation and making a difference. Chris has played an incredible role in establishing solid foundations for all the Project Rhino projects and for ongoing relationship building to ensure that all parties have the correct information and equipment to improve to the next level. Chris will most definitely be missed in the Project Rhino team, but we appreciate all the time and energy that he has afforded us in the last three years. We wish him well in his future endeavours and look forward to working closely together in future.

Francois du Toit, CEO of Project Rhino founding member, African Conservation Trust, has taken over the Project Rhino Coordinator role and Carlien Esterhuizen will still be Project Rhino Assistant and the first line of communication to all our reserves and partners.

We look forward to a successful and positive 2020.

Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing (ZAP-Wing)

The ZAP-Wing went through some changes during 2019, with Ian Waghorn emigrating to the USA, Patrick who filled Ian's position moving back to Indonesia and finally Jason Quick joining Project Rhino under ZAP-Wing, on a permanent basis on the 22nd of August 2019. Jason joins us as a commercial pilot, with a total of 380 hours under his belt and has flown a total of 120 hours since he joined the team. He loves every moment of his new job.



From the Pilot's mouth...

"It has been an incredible journey so far with all the wonderful places I have seen and people I've met, all working hard to save and protect the rhinos."

The 24th of August was the day I started my reaction training course at Somkhanda. We simulated poachers being in the reserve with the anti-poaching units (APU) and dog units on the ground, they told me of their location with ground to air radios, I circled overhead the APU team and flew in the direction the poacher was last seen and continued the search in a 5km radius. I spotted the poacher, circled overhead with the siren on and communicated with the dog and APU units to notify them of the poacher's position. I was very satisfied with the training procedure and have subsequently organized with numerous reserves to do continuous reaction training courses to keep myself,

the various APU teams and the dog units competent in the case of a real reaction.

One of my first flights was with Amanda who works as a guide for Manyoni, we were doing a fence patrol for the day and ended up spotting one male lion, a cheetah running along the fence line and a herd of elephant enjoying their time by the watering hole.

In August and September the game reserves burnt large portions of their reserve to prepare for the summer months. I was used to monitor the burning done on Phinda, KZN Private and Manyoni to make sure the wildlife was not in any danger and the correct areas were burnt.

On the 12th of September, Manyoni's wild dogs had escaped and were running into the communities and I was called out to assist in tracking them on the western side in the mountainous area, which became quite challenging with the rotor waves coming off the mountain tops.

I have only been called out for three reactions since I joined ZAP-Wing as the poaching has been quiet among the reserves. The first incident occurred at (a private game reserve), but unfortunately I was grounded due to the weather. The second incident occurred at (another reserve) in September where poachers entered during the night. I was called out in the early hours of the morning to assist the APU teams in searching the eastern boundary where the tracks were found. We discovered tracks exiting the reserve into the Mkuze town. No animals were harmed. During the third incident, two Rhinos were shot at, but not killed. I was called out to assist in spotting them, which was very successful and later they were darted by the game capture team and taken care of.

I have met a lot of people who are involved on the game reserves that all have one goal in mind and that is to protect the wildlife. ZAP-Wing is utilized in many fields from tracking animals to surveying the reserves and fence lines, keeping the poachers out, helping in the overall animal count and assisting where I can, where I'm needed..."

Project Rhino K9-Unit

The Project Rhino K9-Unit has been kept incredibly busy, responding to a number of emergency incidents over the last twelve months.

One of the team's biggest successes this year, was in assisting Alpha Security (a private security company) to seize R800,000 of counterfeit items. We also worked with Alpha Security in the investigation of a vehicle potentially connected to a shooting (the K9-Unit was able to identify gunshot residue) and offered immediate response to rhino owners where (suspected) poachers were identified on various properties. As well as the successful tracking of suspects, e.g. where fences have been cut, the unit assisted in the retrieval of bush meat from poachers that were caught or interrupted and the removal of hundreds and hundreds of snares off reserves and so the list continues...

When they are not in the field, the K9-Unit can be found assisting the South African Police Services (SAPS) in their criminal cases, or training with other APUs in the area. The dogs also conduct training exercises with our aerial patrol wing (ZAP-Wing) to ensure that they are fully ready to respond when an incident occurs.

In 2019 we upgraded our kennels and additional shade cloth was installed over the dog runs to

provide much needed relief from the fierce temperatures.

Some bittersweet news was that Phoenix, our Belgian Malinois tracking dog, sadly showed signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, after being witness to at least nine incidents involving gunfire. She is now enjoying being a “regular” dog in early retirement. Her replacement, Bailey, is already showing great potential, and young Spook (just eight months old) is also proving herself more than capable in both tracking and detection. We have also welcomed Vodka, a fluffy German Shepherd - both his parents are active working dogs with a great track record, and we expect he will soon be a huge asset to the team. Vodka will be developing his skills as a dual purpose dog trained in tracking and detection.

Thank you to all our partners, friends and donors for your ongoing support. A special thank you to Sudie Rakusin, Duncan Paul, Jeremy Anderson and Wessa Lowveld, who have been major donors and lifelines for our K9 team, One Plan Insurance, who sponsors our insurance cover for both dogs and handlers. One Plan includes regular updates on our K9-Unit on their website and even joined us at a fancy dress and fundraiser organised by Riverleigh International Equestrian Centre in Gauteng.

Thank you for making a difference.



Reserve Support: Horse Units

We believe that these horse units are making a huge difference in the war against wildlife crime, as they allow mounted rangers to cover far more area than on foot and get much closer to wildlife for monitoring purposes. It has however been a particularly taxing year for the Horse Units operating in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), dealing with challenges of fire, drought and armed conflict with suspected poachers. Prolonged drought conditions were experienced in many of our game reserves, particularly the Spioenkop region of the KZN Midlands. Fires in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP), in northern KZN, also resulted in the burning of all available grazing for the horses. This led to an urgent appeal to the public for donations of hay, red grass and other sustenance to help keep the horses from starving. We sadly lost one horse over the period due to illness, but luckily the rains started falling again and grazing is once again available.

In June, our long-time supporter, Kim Isaacs, hosted an exciting “Ride4Rhino” fundraising event in Ballito, which was run as a Paper Chase, with teams of four horses and riders. There was also a market, craft stalls and entertainment on the day to try and raise as much funds for the cause as possible. It was an incredible event, with riders having a fantastic time, dressing up and riding along a picturesque

route to the beach. Kim and her team managed to raise a whopping R40 000 for rhino conservation and the Project Rhino horse units.

We would like, in particular, to thank Global Conservation Force (GCF) based in the USA and Roxane Losey, who have provided phenomenal support to a number of partner reserves. We would also like to thank LA Zoo for the donation of deworming medication, Unicorn Tack for offering us a wonderful discount on riding equipment, and LulaRoe for their donation of clothing as well as activity books for school children in conjunction with Rhino Art. Epol has been a fantastic supporter and has been sponsoring food for the horse unit at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi. Thank you, we would not be able to sustain these invaluable units without you!

Project Rhino remains committed to giving these brave rangers all the tools they need to keep our wildlife safe. Our fundraising focus is on buying bags of feed, rolls of hay and red grass as well as supporting a groom with a small monthly salary. If you would like to support the Horse Units, then please consider donating making use of the following link:

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/support-mounted-rangers-fighting-rhino-poaching/>



Reserve Support: Ranger Training

Project Rhino assisted in arranging and hosting a SANBI Training Course, for both our Midlands and Zululand nodes, on the 6th and 7th of November 2019. The course was conducted to educate field staff on field sampling protocols for wildlife biomaterial banking and chain of custody. The overall objective of this training workshop was to build the capacity of wildlife biodiversity and conservation officials in current biomaterial sample collection protocols for wildlife species of national importance. This is because specific sampling protocols, including chain of custody for forensic purposes, should be followed to ensure that a high-quality standard of biomaterials and metadata is available for use in research and as evidence in cases of poaching and/or illegal harvesting.

Project Rhino also hosted an Advanced Marksmen and Tactics training course in September, the course was available for both Zululand and Midlands Member Reserves, but only Zululand members could make use of the opportunity. The training was conducted by Clive van Rooyen from the South African Wildlife College. Twelve field rangers successfully completed the course and improved on their tactics, skills and performance. Information acquired during this training was deemed sensitive and was earmarked for rangers in a senior position with a minimum of 5 years' experience and competent with a firearm.



Community Engagement: Food Security

The KwaJobe traditional authority in northern KwaZulu-Natal forms part of the Umkhanyakude District Municipality – a region that has been hampered by political, infrastructural and historical neglect, and is reported to be one of the poorest and most underdeveloped areas in southern Africa. There is a great disparity between the level of service and infrastructure provision between settlement nodes, such as the towns of Mkuze and Jozini, and the surrounding rural areas. In the rural KwaJobe community, less than 5% of households have access to piped water in their homes and less than 8% have access to electricity for cooking and lighting.

Project Rhino recognises that building good relationships with rural communities neighbouring game reserves is critical to ending rhino poaching, and our members are working to alleviate food insecurity and other basic needs through a number of different initiatives.

Together with African Conservation Trust, Project Rhino has maintained a presence in the KwaJobe region for almost two years and has established 13 food gardens at crèches across the region. These include the communities of Cezwane, Ezinyokeni, Ophansi, Ezineshe, Nhlangano and Komkhulu. All of the gardens are still active and eight of the 13 are thriving – providing the young children (aged 1 to 6) with valuable nutrition in their important development years.

Water remains the biggest challenge to keeping the gardens growing; as there is no municipal water piped to the crèches. Agricultural mentors have to bring in water in a tanker when rain is short, which is a challenge in itself along the rural dirt roads. Funding to purchase new seedlings is also an issue for some of the crèches – in addition to teaching crèches to save seeds, we encourage them to plan ahead and sell any surplus to the community to pay for these seedlings.

Youth Engagement: Rhino Art

Initiated in partnership with Project Rhino and the Kingsley Holgate Foundation in 2013, the *Rhino Art - 'Let our children's voices be heard'* project uses the universal medium of ART (art, recreation and theatre) to increase conservation awareness amongst the youth and cultivate a next generation of wildlife 'ambassadors' that has a vested interest in the protection of rhino and other endangered species. The campaign has now reached over 600,000 young people and spread the message to 24 countries and five continents. The activities at the schools are designed to be informative and rewarding, while adding to the 'groundswell' of public support for Rhino Protection.

The Rhino Art programme places a key focus on youth communities living alongside game reserves, who are critical to their ongoing protection and are often silent witnesses to wildlife crime. By recording the Rhino Art conservation messages, we gain an understanding of what is in the hearts and minds of the children.



As little as 2% of youth in South Africa have seen a live, wild rhino. This is of concern as the youth are wonderful spokespeople and keen conservationists with a large reach into communities; but if they don't know what a real rhino looks like, or have never been inside a game reserve, they will struggle to understand the vital value rhinos play in Africa's culture, tourism, biodiversity and heritage sectors.

2019 was a great year for Rhino Art KZN, reaching almost 50,000 learners from 152 schools!

We had some fabulous fundraising events alongside the Kingsley Holgate Foundation in Ballito, and Tanglewood Foundation, Christchurch Rotary and Linkin University in New Zealand. Rhino Art facilitator Richard Mabanaga also proved he wasn't scared of a challenge by Skydiving for Rhino in his traditional Zulu dress and shouting, "We love our rhino!" on the way down.

The Rhino Art team helped to facilitate the National Geographic Photo Camp and played a key role in the planning and hosting of the 2019 World Youth Wildlife Summit as one of the core organisers. Since the Summit, the team has assisted some of these youth delegates to become Rhino Art ambassadors in their home communities. A number of delegates have been implementing Rhino Art and environmental awareness campaigns at schools, church groups and community centres. Ntiyso Jele, a delegate from Tikhontele Secondary School outside the Kruger National Park, has given presentations to a total of 900 pupils at three primary schools alone!

We are looking forward to spreading the Rhino Art message far and wide in 2020 – not just in KZN, but to Limpopo, Mpumalanga and all areas critical to the conservation of our wildlife.

Rhino Art is an initiative of the Kingsley Holgate Foundation and wouldn't be possible without our key sponsors and supporters: Barrows and Paper Space, who provide us with the A3 papers as well as times tables for young learners, Eden College, who donate re-purposed pencil cases as prizes for participants, ADIDAS, who sponsor sporting kits, Project Rhino ambassadors *Qadasi* and *Maquinga*, who perform at our soccer tournaments, as well as a number of school, corporate and private donors.



World Wildlife Summit 2019

The World Youth Wildlife Summit brought together more than 165 youth, 20 adult chaperones (educators and community leaders), 35 conservation role models and 5 keynote speakers from the 21st – 24th September, to engage, empower, educate and equip the youth to become Ambassadors for Conservation and influencers to reduce wildlife crime.

The intensive four-day program, organised by Project Rhino, African Conservation Trust and the Kingsley Holgate Foundation was held at the Southern African Wildlife College. The delegates were challenged during many hours of discussion and debate regarding the responsible use of wildlife resources, strategies for demand reduction, the link between poverty and poaching, habitat loss, and the role of education and awareness.



The conservation role models and keynote speakers gave freely of their time to impart knowledge, answer questions and even provide career guidance, further motivating the youth to explore opportunities within the biodiversity economy. It is becoming increasingly clear that without effective communication, most conservation efforts will not work. Rangers, vets, animal care professionals and wildlife managers are all critical for conservation on the ground. But they need the support of people, in Africa and on other continents. As a result, a parallel session for the chaperones, 'Effective Communication for Conservation' was included in the program.

Post-Summit 2019

The youth delegates submitted personal pledges regarding the actions they will take in the weeks, months and year following the event. The Summit team will be in regular communication with the youth, providing them with guidance and the tools to put these into action. Their ideas include giving presentations and educating family and friends through social media, hosting local mini-Summits, using marketing, photography and videography to spread awareness as well as fundraising for wildlife conservation.

The youth will be engaged via numerous social media platforms as well as via WhatsApp groups. These platforms are important tools in creating a sense of community, connecting them to the conservation network, sharing news, leadership tools and events.

The Rhino Art conservation education program will play a significant role as another tool through which the delegates can expand their education and awareness efforts and nurture younger youth. An online platform to track pledges and activity is being developed with the delegates' ease of access in mind, and will be launched before the next Summit



Leading Fundraising Initiatives

Acting for Rhinos

Acting for Rhinos is an exciting project initiated by Eden College Durban and members of the Durban Theatre Community, to unite the Arts with Conservation. It empowers creative South African and international school children and theatre practitioners to assist Project Rhino's efforts to protect and conserve KwaZulu-Natal's important white and black rhino populations.

In 2019, Eden College and their partners raised an incredible R44 843.60 through their theatrical productions and Eco-Festival. Acting for Rhinos, headed up by Jean van Elden, has raised more than R200 000 for Project Rhino Initiatives since 2014.



Skydive for Rhinos

In 2019, 96 brave individuals set aside their fear of heights and tandem-skydived from 10,000 feet to show their love for KZN's wildlife. Participants came from all walks of life, including Princess Nandi from the Royal Zulu family and Tamsin Naylor – our youngest jumper at just 13 years old. Thanks to their efforts, Skydive for Rhino was able to raise more than R300,000 for urgent anti-poaching initiatives like the Project Rhino K9-Unit and Zululand Aerial Patrol Wing.

On behalf of Project Rhino, we would like to thank each and every individual, company and/or business that supported us with the Skydive for Rhinos Fundraising Campaign 2019 in one way or another. To our Skydivers – you were absolutely unbelievable – the funds were still trickling in even after you guys had taken the huge leap for our rhinos and for that we cannot thank you enough! I am sure that everyone would agree that the atmosphere in Zululand was absolutely electric and the buzz building up to, during and even after the event was absolutely tangible!

It was incredible to experience how everyone pulled together to contribute to something that we are all so passionate about! A huge big thank you to the Durban Skydive Centre Team for making Skydive Zululand possible! Not only is this team a thoroughly professional outfit where safety was always their number one concern, but they always had a great sense of humour and really understand and support the cause!

A huge congratulations to Aby Spanton from uMphafa Game Reserve in the Midlands for individually raising the most funds for this year's Skydive for rhinos: Aby raised R21 065.44!

In 2020, Skydive for Rhinos will be partnering with the Hluhluwe *Horings & Dorings* Festival from 06 to 12 May.

Rhino Music Festival

Thanks to musician and Project Rhino Ambassador, Dan Chiorboli of Awesome Africa, Project Rhino presented its inaugural Rhino Music Fest in October 2019. Hosted at the historic “Castle” in Shongweni, the full-day festival showcased ten local music acts in a diversity of genres and cultural styles. There was also a variety of craft stalls and food and drink vendors, and even a stilt walker to add to the festive atmosphere. The festival was warmly supported by the local public and the artists themselves, some of whom wrote their own songs about conservation to perform on the day. Since the event, Project Rhino has been approached by a number of bands and musicians wanting to get involved in the next festival and we are hoping to make it an annual event on our conservation calendar.

A huge thank you to everyone involved for making the event possible, including our fabulous volunteers, vendors and Belinda Saville & the Kingston Sound team for all their help and support. Thank you also to IPSS medical services for being on standby, and of course to all the artists for donating their time and skills: Adagio, Calamity Jam, John Ellis, Tiffany Sheppard Band, Keeran Eshwarlall & Kalakar, Dan Chiorboli & Vusi Mkhize, The Kholwa Project, East Coast Basement Blues Band, Guy Buttery & Nibs van der Spuy, Qadasi & Maqhinga and Rastas at Work.



Ubhejane Xtreme MTB Challenge

The uBhejane Xtreme Mountain Bike Challenge from Hillcrest to Hilltop Camp, Hluhluwe in the height of KwaZulu-Natal's summer and with a 16 hour cut-off time is arguably the toughest one-day MTB rides in South Africa. The 2019 Challenge hosted the largest field in the event's history, thanks to the various distances and time options. At the time of the start of the ride, more than R600,000 had been raised with declarations still coming in.

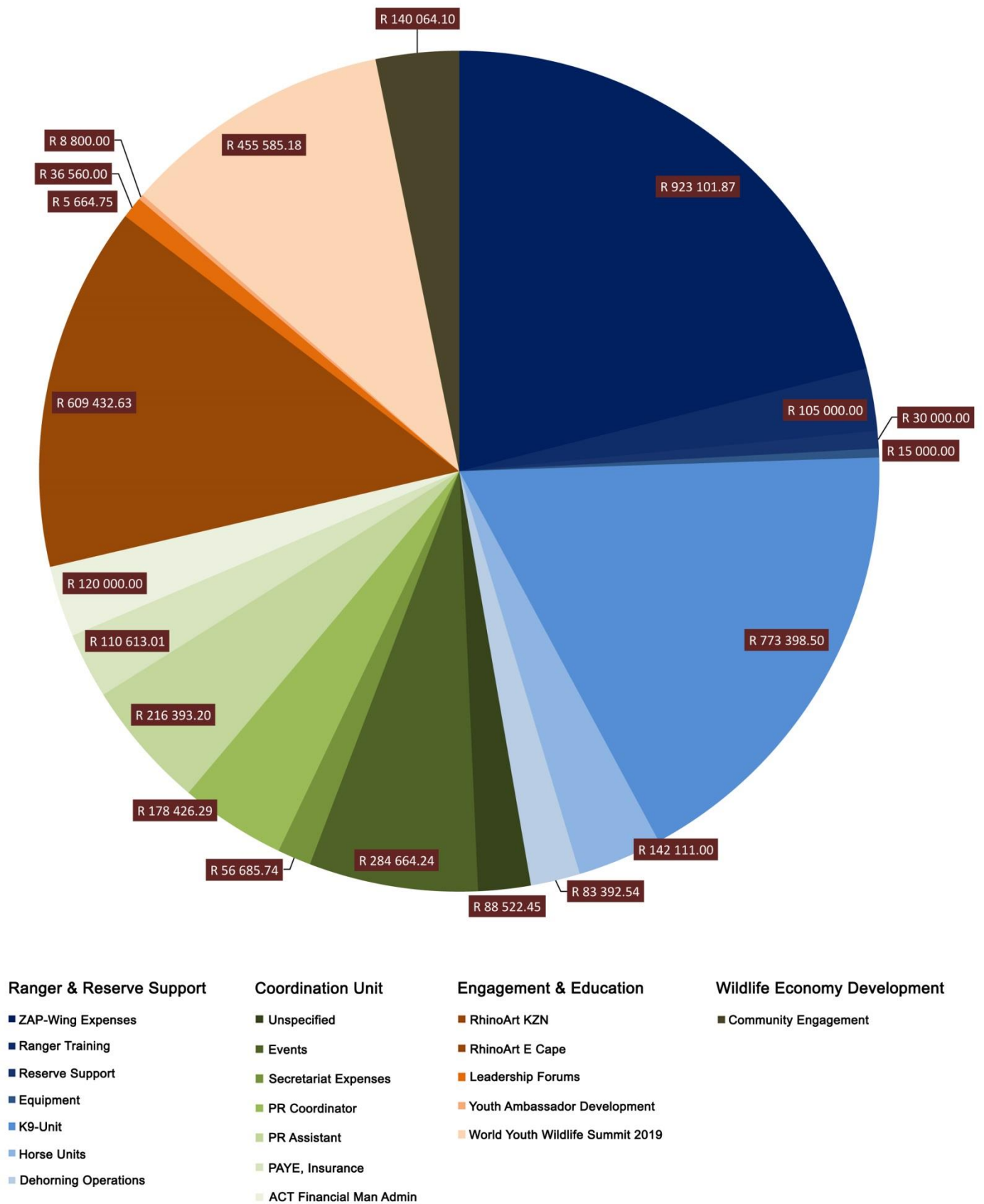
Included in the field of participants was the voice of cycling, Phil Liggett, former Sharks and Springbok centre, Jeremy Thompson, Mount Everest climber Sibusiso Vilane, Olympic swimmer Terrence Parkin and Cape Epic rider Mike Nixon.

A huge big thank you must go to the organizing team, Cliff Wills and Andrew Cope for their unbelievable effort and energy that they have put into organizing this event. Thank you to every single rider for making the effort to raise the desperately needed funds to support Project Rhino and Helping Rhinos to fight the battle against wildlife crime and then thank you to every single sponsor for your amazing sponsorship and dedication to make this event work, this includes Lassen, Northside Electrical, Compendium, Nissan Durban, Epol and IPSS Medical team.

This year we had the most wonderful volunteers, Mark and Marloes from the Netherlands, that did not just dedicate their time to assisting us with the event, but they also raised funds for Project Rhino from the Netherlands and after the event created a spectacular video summarising some of the amazing moments during the course of the event.

It was amazing to work with an incredible team of people again and we are looking forward to the 2020 uBhejaneX!

Financial Expenditure 2019





"What motivates us daily is the dream of both White and Black rhino species thriving in KwaZulu-Natal and far beyond - forever free, forever secure from poaching, well managed and protected.

Today we strive to protect the world's last remaining African Rhino species, so that tomorrow they will still continue to play their vital role in our continent's irreplaceable and beautiful ecosystems. We honor their uniqueness as one of the primary protector species of Africa's great wilderness areas. We know you feel the same and thank you for your support."