



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2017**



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**MONITORING. PROTECTING. CONSERVING. TOGETHER.**

# INTRODUCTION



Photo credits: Peter Chadwick

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is renowned for bringing the southern white rhino back from the brink of extinction in the late 1800s and for reintroducing this rhino species into former habitats during *Operation Rhino* in the 1960s and 1970s, including the Kruger National Park. It is thanks to KZN's rhino conservation pioneers such as the late Dr Ian Player, Magqubu Ntombela and others that by 2010, southern white rhinos around the world numbered 22,000 - the greatest rhino conservation success story ever. The province is also home to a small, but healthy population of the critically endangered black rhino and through the WWF & Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Black Rhino Range Expansion Programme (BRREP) in partnership with private owners, is establishing new black rhino breeding populations.

Today, KZN holds the second-largest and most genetically diverse populations of white and black rhino in South Africa, found in 13 Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife-managed parks and over 20 private/community-owned game reserves. However, the escalating threats of rhino poaching that began in 2007, driven by ongoing demand from particularly Vietnam and China, means KZN's rhinos are under increasing threat.

In 2014, KZN lost 99 rhino to poaching out of a national total of 1215. In 2015 KZN's rhino poaching deaths increased to 116 out of a national total of 1175. In 2016 the poaching deaths in KZN increased to 162 out of the national total of 1054 and in 2017 KZN lost 222 Rhino. The poaching totals signal a need for constant and increasing rhino protection efforts for 2 key reasons:

- The proximity of KZN's rhinos to the porous Mozambique/ Swaziland borders and
- As the Kruger National Park intensifies security efforts and other regions are robbed of their rhinos, KZN's large rhino population becomes an increasing target for ruthless rhino poaching syndicates.



# Project RHINO

STOP WILDLIFE CRIME

## PROJECT RHINO

Project Rhino was formed in 2011 by 18 Founding Members to unite the province’s conservation community against rhino poaching threats to the province. The Founding Members include Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, private and community-owned game reserves and prominent conservation NGOs. It has been recognised by both the Mail & Guardian newspaper and the Game Rangers Association of Africa as a leader in the fight against rhino poaching.

Now in its 7th year, Project Rhino continues to bring together organizations with a common vision and goal, identifying synergies through an integrated, common approach and collectively, is a representative body that carries powerful leverage ability. It has pioneered an ethos of collaboration and tackles macro-level issues that affect all KZN rhino stakeholders, as well as initiating or partnering in anti-poaching strategies that benefit all rhino throughout the province. Project Rhino will continue to work towards its ultimate goal of stopping wildlife crime.



# Project RHINO

STOP WILDLIFE CRIME



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# STATISTICS

Number of Rhinos poached in KwaZulu-Natal since 2000



Number of Rhinos poached in South Africa since 2000



# RHINO SECURITY: ZAP-WING



- 2017 was the 6<sup>th</sup> year of fixed-wing operations for Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing (ZAPWing).
- ZAPWing continues to provide an essential reactive and proactive function as one of the tools in the Anti-poaching toolbox.
- The Project Rhino ZAPWing base also houses the EKZN Wildlife Helicopters and the Special South African Police Service Rhino Unit.

<b>Number of flights performed:</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Number of hours flown:</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>Distance covered:</b>	<b>18,000km</b>
<b>Number of Reserves flown for:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total area covered:</b>	<b>Approx. 500,000ha</b>

## NOTEWORTHY EVENTS IN 2017:

- Arrests of Poaching Suspects: One
- Snares detected: Over 40
- Rhino carcasses detected: 4 (2 Natural mortalities where horns were intact and recovered and 2 where horns were forcibly removed)
- Detection of injured rhino: One (Had a bullet wound, but was recovered and treated)
- Several reactions and operations took place in 2017
- Zapwing served well in monitoring suspicious activities.
- All reactions and operations were performed in conjunction with the South African Police Service as well as private and state conservation units.

## WORD FROM THE PILOT – ETIENNE GERBER

*“2017 has not been an easy year, with the onslaught on our reserves ever increasing, but the successes that we do achieve motivates us to continue with renewed energy. To all our supporters I would like to express our appreciation for your support throughout this past year, and look forward to partnering with you again in 2018.”*



# RHINO SECURITY: RANGER SUPPORT



Rangers and anti-poaching teams are often referred to as the last line of defence in the escalating rhino poaching conflict in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as other mounting wildlife crime issues. Reserve security costs are climbing – a factor unknown just 8 years ago - and KZN’s private and community-owned game reserves are now paying as much as R2 million (or more) per annum to employ more anti-poaching staff or hire private wildlife security companies, plus invest heavily in increased perimeter security and technology.

With limited resources available, it becomes important to make sure that they are channelled to strategic and priority needs. Project Rhino aims to get all member reserve rangers up to the highest level possible to counter the threat of wildlife crime. To help guide strategic investment into our member reserves, Project Rhino together with the Game Rangers Association of Africa undertook to utilise a tool developed by them called the Protected Area Ranger Capacity and Support Assessment.

In 2017 Project Rhino conducted PARCS assessments on three different member reserves.

## What is a Protected Area Ranger Capability and Support (PARCS) assessment?

PARCS is a proactive tool that reviews the current situation in terms of law enforcement issues and ranger capability as well as assessing any anticipated increases in environmental crime. It identifies priority actions that will help reduce wildlife and environmental crime through the enhancement and support of ranger capabilities. PARCS has been successfully applied to private, community and state owned protected areas across multiple African countries. These sites include a number of WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion (BREP) properties containing rhino populations of international importance as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A huge big thank you to Jon Melberg for his assistance with these assessments.

Technology is a key tool in reserve management and security. With the right technology it can act as a force multiplier. Cmore is such a system that is being used in South Africa. Project Rhino is assisting reserves to implement the tool through training and the provision of handheld devices. Thanks to the support of the CSIR, training on Cmore was conducted for the Midlands and Zululand reserves.



# RHINO SECURITY: RESERVE SUPPORT

## NEW PROJECT RHINO K9 UNIT



Photo credits: Chris Galliers

- With the help of Sudie Rakusin, Project Rhino managed to establish a K9 Anti-Poaching dog unit in November 2017, to assist reserves in stopping wildlife crime.
- This unit was immediately put to work effectively in Zululand, locating a number of carcasses of critically endangered white-backed vultures.
- Within its first 3 weeks, the Project Rhino K9 Unit was present at SAPS road blocks, reserve vehicle checks and night patrols.
- Dogs have proved to be an essential tool to fight wildlife crime by tracking down poachers, detecting wildlife products and recovering illegal weapons and ammunition.
- KZN lost 222 rhino in 2017, compared to 162 rhino in 2016.
- Poaching methods are always changing therefore counter-poaching interventions need to adapt.
- Project Rhino believes that the development and implementation of the K9 Unit will serve as an additional law enforcement tool.
- This vital unit will need approximately R1,200,000 in funding to run in 2018.
- Eric Dickson, a qualified dog handler, manages the Project Rhino K9 unit.
- Eric has over 26 years of experience in conservation law enforcement.
- Together with Mali, his three year old Malinois (Belgian Shepard), a certified detection dog, they are highly effective in searching suspects, crime scenes, buildings, vehicles and outdoor locations.
- Project Rhino in partnership with Dunadventures Africa and WESSA Lowveld also have another dog unit, operating exclusively in Hluhluwe/iMfolozi Park, consisting of 5 dogs.
- Project Rhino K9 Unit aims to provide a positive image for conservation law enforcement efforts in the region.

If you would like to contribute to the funding of this project, or would like to assist with veterinary supplies or dog food – please visit this link or contact us: <https://www.generosity.com/animal-pet-fundraising/project-rhino-k9-unit/x/17822919>

**WATCH this short clip to find out more about the K9 Unit:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7keUCZDsv4&feature=youtu.be>



# RHINO SECURITY: RESERVE SUPPORT



## DEHORNING PROGRAMME:

In 2017 Project Rhino set up the 'Dehorning Programme' in response to the need by member reserves (private, state and community owned reserves). A national and international call for funding to have approximately 200 rhino de-horned in KwaZulu-Natal was made to assist in covering the high cost of this rhino security measure. Current statistics suggests that dehorning is effective in reducing the risk to rhinos. Project Rhino does however see dehorning as a temporary intervention, especially for smaller populations, to prevent the killing of a rhino for its horn by poachers. The horn does grow back and as such it is an ongoing process.

- For five years since 2011, the rhinos poached on private reserves made up 24% of the total lost in the provinces.
- Since dehorning started, this number has dropped to an average of 4.5% over the past 2 years.
- The de-horning process is conducted by an experienced wildlife veterinarian and a team of specialists whereby the rhino is sedated and the horn is removed and shaped to take off as much horn material as possible in a quick and painless procedure.
- Project Rhino has supported the 34 horn removals on rhino from KZN reserves since June 2017, costing a total of R200 000.
- The organisation is now faced with overwhelming requests to conduct over 200 horn removals in KZN which will cost approximately R1.6 million.
- At an average of R7000-8000 per rhino, the costs quickly add up and have been further exacerbated by other budget demands and budget cuts to many Rhino Reserves.
- One of the ways to achieve this is to offer both local and international members of the public a chance to be directly involved in this critical conservation work.
- The payment towards this experience will contribute directly to a current and vital conservation intervention.
- Project Rhino wants to encourage everyone, from individuals to large corporate businesses, to get involved in this project and join in the fundraising efforts, noting the benefit of issuing tax deductible 18a certificates on every donation made.

**WATCH** this short clip to find out more about de-horning:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO4b4jYIFf0&feature=youtu.be>



# PROJECT RHINO NEWS

## PROJECT THORN/Project Rhino Horse Unit:

Project Thorn was started by Californian Artist Karrie Hovey. She was on a Rhino Art Tour in Mtubatuba in 2015, when she decided to revive the Equine Anti-Poaching Unit in Imfolozi. She raised funds on a crowd platform and donated them to the NGO 12 Hours. 12 Hours together with Project Rhino facilitated the revival of the unit in 2017. There have been some instrumental people involved, amongst them Ryan O'Connor and Des Archer of Ezemvelo, Kiwi Sailors' Mark Lumsden and Kim Bernard - who tirelessly worked on the stables for 4 days repairing them for the introduction. Lauren Louwrens of Kokstad has provided the horses, trained the groom (Shokhwakhe Gumede of the Somkhele mine area) and acts as a consultant in the Equine department of the unit. Delivery of the Horses took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2017 at Mbuzane Section.



## WAYNE BOLTON RIDES 2000KM FOR RHINO



On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017, Wayne Bolton and his family started an epic journey of riding 2000kms for Rhino. The ride started in his home town of Port Elizabeth and ended on the Mozambique border a month later. They visited game parks along the way while towing a life size rhino to create awareness. They also visited some schools and participated in the Rhino Art together with Dave Pattle.

Click on the following link to read more about Wayne's story: <http://phoenixsun.co.za/50932/wayne-bolton-receives-heros-welcome-sibaya/>

## GREEN FEST

Eden College hosted its annual Green fest on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2017. It was a great success promoting sustainable living and raising awareness for wildlife. A Rhino stage with activities ran all day promoting Project Rhino KZN.



A fashion show raised funds for Project Rhino, as did an Amazing race for Rhinos. 2018 calendars were on sale for Project Rhino that were hot off the press. This initiative boasts beautiful artworks of Rhinos done by students at Eden. Over R8000 was donated to Project Rhino from fundraising initiatives on the day. R6000 was handed over to Wayne Bolton who arrived on his Bicycle with Olli after his epic cycle around KZN raising rhino awareness. The students welcomed him with a flash mob and performed part of their Rhino Show "Going Going..." A wonderful day was had by all.



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT : RHINO ART

**2017 has seen a slight change in the vision of Rhino Art: To instil a passion and understanding for wildlife amongst the youth, inspiring them to build a brighter future for Conservation in Africa.**

The objectives of the Rhino Art Youth Engagement for 2017 was to gather 1000 000 hearts and mind messages, including drama, song and dance. The goal was to play 300 games of soccer for conservation across Southern Africa and also to build conservation and wildlife empathy amongst at least 2500 young leaders through direct wildlife and conservation experiences.



The above mentioned objectives is of great value to be able to influence and create good networks amongst the youth, to educate the youth on conservation as well as the seriousness of wildlife crime and these objectives would ultimately serve as Project Rhinos passport to talk to and engage with the youth throughout Southern Africa.

The reason why Project Rhino has such a strong focus on the youth is that we believe that if we do not pass the baton onto the youth, conservation will be doomed. Less than 2% of children living alongside reserves have seen rhino in the wild. Rhino Art is a movement to create awareness which drives emotions, which will hopefully lead to behavioural change. Heads (Awareness), hearts (Emotions), and Hands (Action) are what we focus on to inspire behavioural change.

Rhino Art regions and children reached in 2017:

REGION	CHILDREN REACHED	REGION	CHILDREN REACHED
1. Zululand HIIP	19 991	7. Zululand	8 252
2. Western Cape	6 400	8. Mpumbelanga	9 329
3. Eastern Cape	9 848	9. Gauteng	749
4. Zululand – Maputu	10 562	10. Midlands	6 142
5. Limpopo	5 500	11. Dolphin Coast	1020
6. Durban	1 515	12. North West Province	2 775
Africa, Kenya, Botswana and Tanzania, USA -200			

179 Schools and 82 284 youth were reached in 2017.

**SIYABATHANDA OBHEJANE**  
LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD

**SAVE OUR RHINOS BECAUSE...**

**RHINO HUNTING**

**WILDLIFE PET**



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT : SCHOOL CAMPS



**Figure 1:** Project Rhino's structure to try and create behavioral change and create a brighter future for conservation in Africa.

## KIDS CAMPS:

- 3 Camps were held during 2017.
- 2 at Somkhanda Game Reserve and one at WESSA.

A total of **92** Children attended these camps in total.

The importance of the camps are to recognize the better performers in the Rhino Art Campaign and give the 180 schools that we visited during 2017 a reward for participation. The amount of different schools that were fortunate enough to attend were 71 for the year.

It is one of the goals to let the youth from varied backgrounds interact in nature and immerse themselves in a possible life changing career guidance option. It is also important for the program to see live rhino in the wild and experience the sheer enormity of the animal we are all trying to save.

Sponsorship for the Youth Camps for 2017 came from WESSA, Disney Wildlife Fund and Wildlife Act.

The Camps are held under the auspices of Project Rhino, WildlifeAct, WESSA, Kingsley Holgate Foundation, Rhino Art, Somkhanda Game Reserve and WESSA Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve near Howick.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Project Rhino has always recognised the value that communities play and can play in reducing wildlife crimes such as rhino poaching. These are part of Project Rhino's short and medium term strategic interventions.

Community engagements have been varied but based on the simple point that it is very difficult for people to support or value something that they do not know. Project Rhino initiated a weekend where 20 leaders from the KwaJobe community were able to spend 2-nights in Mkuze Game Reserve. As a community that border the reserve, only half of the leaders had been into the reserve, but only to attend meetings. They had never spent enough time to understand how the park functions and what it has to offer. A full program was in place for all to learn and experience as much as possible over the 2-days.

A number of presentations were given by Project Rhino members around conservation issues, challenges (specifically in and around Mkuze Game Reserve) and opportunities that are presented by well-functioning conservation areas.

An outcome of the weekend was that such engagements were greatly appreciated by the community who learnt a great deal from the experience. The workshop looked to draw the communities closer to the game reserve to ensure its sustainability. More workshops such as this are needed to break down past barriers and garner a greater understanding and appreciation of the role that protected areas play.

Project Rhino would like to thank members of the team and all its partners for presenting and facilitating the workshop, these include Phinda, Wildlands, Wildlife Act and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. Additional thanks to Panthera and Louise Fletcher a Pangolin specialist.

Special thanks to those that made this weekend possible through their sponsorship:

**iMake** – sponsoring the accommodation and transport

**Mkuze SupaSpar** – for their very generous sponsorship of all the food for the workshop

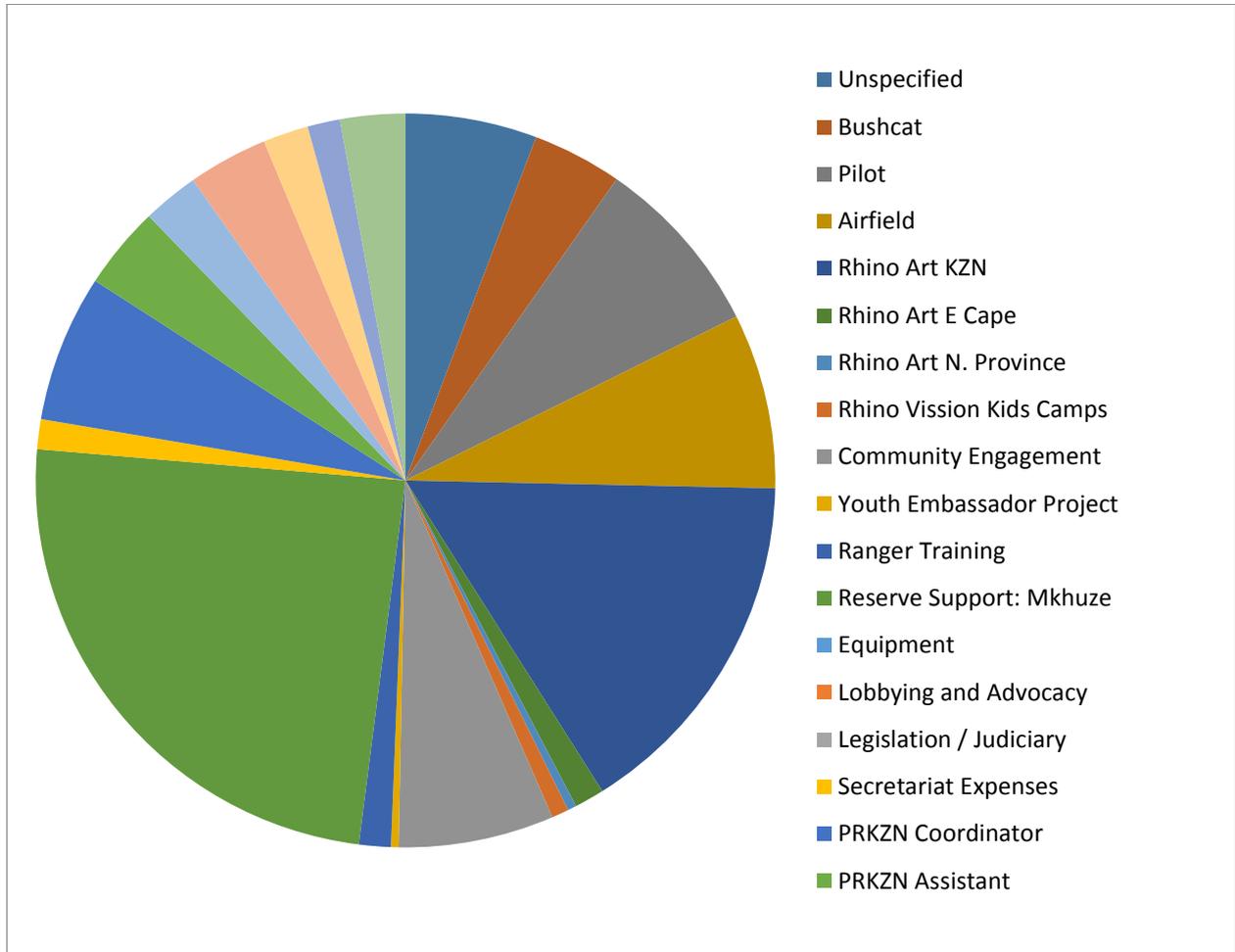
**Anew Hotel Hhuhluwe** – for discounts on the two game drive vehicles

**iSimangaliso** – providing free entrance into the Park



# DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING

Expenditure 2017:



<b>Funds Received for the year 2017</b>	<b>R4,952,171.61</b>
<b>Funds Expended for the year 2017</b>	<b>R4,578,763.40</b>

## FINAL NOTE

2017 was not a good year for rhinos. However, there were many positives to draw on; one being that there were a number of reserves that experienced zero rhino poaching and saw positive population growth in 2017 which is good news. Project Rhino got new member organisations and new member reserves. The tough year was exacerbated by one of the worst droughts in living memory which also put pressure on population growth. With all our most valued supporters, Project Rhino will continue to support reserves and get them all to the best management state possible and through our community engagement programmes, we will continue to create an increasingly resilient landscape to wildlife crime.



# DONORS

A huge big thank you to our **2017** donors that assisted us to keep our projects going and growing – without your help Project Rhino would most definitely not be able to win this fight against wildlife crime and rhino poaching.

Company/Organisation/Individual	Company/Organisation/Individual
Anew Hotel Hluhluwe	Lesedi Cultural Village
African Conservation Trust	MASCOR
ARX Services	Mkuze Spar
Barrows	Mr and Mrs Hancock
Bateleurs	Mr Price Sport
Betsey Brewer, Earth Ltd	Peace Parks Foundation
Cadence Cycling	Project Rhino Founding Members
Cadence Cycling	Qadasi & Maqhinga
Conservation Outcomes	SATIB
Dingo	SATIB Conservation Trust
Dunkelberger Family Foundation	Sasol
Dunranch Group	Save the Rhino International
Eden College Acting 4 Rhinos	Somkhanda
Emma Speed	Southern African Wildlife College
Freeland	St John's DSG
Game Rangers Association	Stihl
Helping Rhinos UK	Sudie Rakusin
Highway Bakkie Hire	Tandem Tyres
Hillcrest Primary School	Tourvest Destination
Hluhluwe Municipality	Tyres and More
Howick Scouts team	UK Government
Howick Small Animal Clinic	Umlilo Brands
I Make a Difference	US Government
iSimangaliso Wetland Park	WESSA
Jeff Morgan: Morgan Family Foundation	Wildlands
Jon Melberg	Wildlife ACT
Jonny Lowe Memorial Trustees	Wildlife Conservation Network USA
Ken Collins Trust	WWF Black Rhino Expansion Programme
Kingsley Holgate Foundation	Zodiac Pools
Land Rover	ZUMAT



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