



## FOREVER WILD RHINO PROTECTION INITIATIVE

*“Every debate is important because it keeps the issue alive, and right now that is critical if rhino’s are to survive”* Dr Ian Player, Co-founder of Wilderness Foundation

### Every 8 hours, another rhino is killed in South Africa... and the number is growing

The rhino poaching crisis (as well as other wildlife crime) is of national and international significance and affects all levels of society. Wildlife crime is the fourth most profitable illicit trade in the world, estimated at up to \$213 billion annually. Wilderness Foundation Africa recognizes this and is working in partnership with various organisations to address this issue.

Until 1970 rhino populations worldwide were relatively stable with minimal poaching incidents. Subsequently with the oil price soaring and per capita income in the Yemen increasing seven-fold, elaborately carved rhino-horn dagger handles became a prized symbol of status and wealth. Within a single decade, half the world's rhino population had disappeared, and all of the rhino species were either threatened with extinction or endangered.

Since then, thanks to various conservation efforts and improved security measures, the black rhino and white rhino populations have increased. But these gains are in danger of being reversed by a resurgence of poaching. Now also peddled as a cancer cure, the demand for the horn is rising, along with the price. Contrary to widespread beliefs, the rhinoceros horn has no proven medicinal or aphrodisiac qualities. The horns consist of agglutinated hair or keratin, the same type of protein that makes up human hair and fingernails.

In 2007, South Africa only lost 13 rhino to poaching. This number increased to 83 in 2008, 122 in 2009 and more than doubled in 2010 to 333. In 2011 we lost 448 rhino and in 2012 we thought we reached the turning point at 668. But 2013 increased to 1 004 and 2014 to 1 215 rhino killed for their horns.

There are thousands of dedicated, passionate rangers standing in between the rhinos and the poachers – but they need our help.

The Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative is one of the Wilderness Foundation Africa's programmes that was launched in May 2011 in response to the rhino poaching crisis. The initiative is concerned with maintaining populations of free ranging rhino within state and privately managed conservation areas. It also aims to focus the attention of politicians and decision-makers and encourage them to apply pressure both nationally and abroad to address the issue of illegal trade in rhino horn and other wildlife products.





## STRATEGY TO COMBAT RHINO POACHING

The Wilderness Foundation Africa's Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative has approached the rhino poaching and wildlife crime crisis from four angles that include:

- Support anti-poaching actions on the ground in private and state protected areas
- Curb demand for rhino horn in user countries
- Increase security and law enforcement activities through the Wildlife Operations Group, a multi-agency partnership coordinated by the Wilderness Foundation
- Increase public awareness





## ACTIVITIES

**Vehicles:** Vehicles are deployed for anti-poaching purposes to rhino hotspots around the country.

**Equipment, Police Support and Informers:** Equipment (including night vision and surveillance equipment, off road motorbikes, DNA kits, utility trunks, sleeping bags, tents, satellite phones, etc.) are purchased and donated to reserves protecting rhino. Funds are spent on informers and equipment to police departments and security agencies assisting in the arrest of suspects and preventing possible poaching incidents.

**Dog support:** Supporting anti-poaching dog units in rhino hotspot in South Africa.

**Research:** A research project in Kruger National Park on protocols and procedures for treating rhino survivors.

**DNA Tissue Collection:** Darting, collar (tracking devices) and DNA tissue collection of Rhino as part of the national RhODIS\* program.

\*RhODIS® (Rhino DNA Index System) is a project that was initiated by the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory of the University of Pretoria in order to help with the plight of the rhinos. The Veterinary Genetics Laboratory is collecting DNA samples of rhinos across the country to create a database using the unique DNA profile of individual rhinos. The goal is for all rhinos to be on the system. This will deter poachers and assist in forensic prosecutions.

**Training, Workshops and Awareness Campaigns:** Training, workshops, documentary educational films, awareness campaigns;

**Air Support:** This includes a micro light aircraft, helicopter time, a Bat Hawk aircraft deployed to rhino hotspots in the Eastern Cape of South Africa and an additional Bat Hawk deployed to Niassa National Park Mozambique.





**Wildlife Operations Group:** Establishment of Wildlife Operations Group whose overarching objective is the reduction in the incidence of and the successful prosecution of wildlife related crime. This is achieved through a multi-disciplinary approach which includes: research and development; training; support investigation and operational activities in order to meet the objective.

**Rescue:** Rescuing and treatment of rhino shot by poachers but still alive.

**Demand Reduction:** Establishing a credible demand reduction program in Vietnam. One of the key activities is the Wild Rhino competition which resulted in 22 Vietnamese youth attending a Wilderness Trail in the iMfolozi and a one day educational workshop on rhino poaching; launch of a Demand Reduction campaign in Vietnam.

**Rhino related Partnerships:** Partnership agreements with organisations such as Treadright Foundation, Shamwari Group, VWSA, Mantis Collection, Wild Aid, Investec Rhino Lifeline, TUSK, Peace Parks Foundation, Graham Beck Wines, MediVet, The Cape Wheel, Happy Snappy, Pearl Valley Golf Estate, NAC Makana, Wheel of Brisbane, Magic Memories and individual donors.

