

Improving conservation capacity to protect black and white rhinos at Ol Jogi Conservancy, Kenya

Kenya is one of the Africa's 'Big Four' rhino range countries, home to important populations of black and white rhinos. In the 1970s, Kenya's rhinos suffered heavy losses to poaching, reducing their numbers drastically. Intense poaching and human population growth have left very little space for Kenya's rhinos to recover. Kenya's wildlife authorities' long-term aim to increase the country's black rhino population to 2,000 animals and are therefore working with conservancies like Ol Jogi to create and grow large-scale new habitats with round-the-clock protection.



Photo 1: Black rhinos at Ol Jogi Conservancy.
Credit: Jamie Gaymer.

Ol Jogi Conservancy was established in 1980 and is one of the oldest conservancies in the Laikipia region in Kenya. Starting with an initial founder population of only four black rhinos and six white rhinos, the numbers have grown substantially over the years, and the Conservancy has become a stronghold for the Eastern black rhino subspecies. The programme has proven to be one of the most successful rhino breeding programmes in Kenya, and has contributed many rhinos to the overall national population by helping to restock areas where rhino numbers were dwindling. Today, with a much bigger rhino population than before, Ol Jogi demonstrates what can be achieved through effective law enforcement, anti-poaching measures, monitoring and biological management, and huge passion to preserve one of the most iconic species on Earth.



Photo 2: A black rhino at Ol Jogi Conservancy.
Credit: Jamie Gaymer.

For more than 30 years, the Conservancy saw great success in anti-poaching. Ol Jogi did not lose a single rhino to poaching between 1980 until 2012. But as the recent poaching crisis escalated since the mid-2000s, the threat has heightened and Ol Jogi suffered a number of attacks from poaching gangs.

To combat the threat of poaching, Ol Jogi became the first Kenyan conservancy to deploy anti-poaching dog units back in 1989 and now has a distinguished tracker dog team. Rangers also receive annual training, which includes an education

beyond military tactics and have been taught first aid along other field-craft techniques that will not only lead to anti-poaching successes but will also greatly enhance their safety and welfare.

In July 2020, Stichting Wildlife very generously donated €7,500 to support the work of Ol Jogi Conservancy. The grant was to procure and implement SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool), which will assist rangers with collecting and analysing rhino behavioural data, increasing the quality and efficiency of monitoring and reporting. Additional funds from this grant will be put towards the installation of a third phase of a remote camera system.

This summary report provides an update on the work at OI Jogi Conservancy that Save the Rhino's partners and donors supported during the period between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2020. Please note, as your generous donation was received just after the end of the current reporting period, it will be used and reported on in the next project period.

Strengthening rhino protection and law enforcement

We are thrilled to confirm that OI Jogi has maintained a zero poaching record in the first half of 2020. It has now been five and a half years since the last poaching incident on the Conservancy in March 2015, a testament to the dedication of the rangers, Rhino Monitors and wider team at OI Jogi, who continue to perform their roles to the highest ability, despite regular pressure.

OI Jogi deploys its rangers across the Conservancy day and night to detect and deter any potential poachers. During the current reporting period, more than 30 ranger patrols were deployed across the Conservancy every night. In addition, nearly 58 hours of aerial surveillance were conducted to support rhino monitoring as well as OI Jogi's anti-poaching teams.

Despite the incredible successes of the team at OI Jogi, the threat of poaching remains high and rangers must stay vigilant. Due to the impact of Covid-19 on local communities, there is a chance more individuals could turn to poaching as a source of income. However, rangers are continuing to work hard in response to these added pressures.

Improving and enhancing monitoring and biological management of OI Jogi's rhinos



Photo 3: A number of rhino births have been reported in 2020. Credit: Jamie Gaymer.

In addition to the nightly anti-poaching patrols, OI Jogi is continuing its intensive daily monitoring of the Conservancy's rhino population. Rhino monitoring teams deploy each morning to scan the landscape for rhinos with binoculars. Once found, they can confirm the identity and well-being of each rhino. Thanks to these intensive efforts, a number of rhino births have been confirmed. In recognition of the growing rhino population, OI Jogi is considering a number of new measures to ensure the team can maintain their frequent rhino sighting targets. This may include:

increasing the number of Rhino Monitors to respond to the growing rhino population; and introducing a new technology, SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool), which – thanks to generosity of Stichting Wildlife – will assist rangers with collecting and analysing rhino behavioural data, increasing the quality and efficiency of monitoring and reporting.

Rhino-proof wildlife corridors and a remote CCTV camera system

Whilst OI Jogi's rhinos need to be kept in a safe, secure area to ensure their protection, migration is important for many species of wildlife, with wildlife corridors remaining open to link up areas of habitat. To protect the rhino population and at the same time allow migration of other species to continue, OI Jogi has put in place a series of rhino-proof fence posts enabling all species apart from rhino to use the corridors.

To monitor these key wildlife corridors, a first phase of a new camera system was installed on the Conservancy in 2019. The now operational cameras allow the team to monitor wildlife movement in and out of the Conservancy, providing insight into the migration of wildlife on these key corridors. However, more crucially, they increase the security of the rhino populations by enabling the team to closely monitor any cases of illegal incursions. Since implementation, the cameras have already documented countless wildlife crossings and flagged a number of issues with people using the corridors. With this extra insight, Ol Jogi's team can now not only keep a closer eye on the wildlife within its boundaries (and know that rhinos are safely protected inside), but also react quickly to any potential security breaches.

Additional cameras have now been installed as part of the second phase of the project, extending the camera system to more wildlife corridors across the Conservancy, offering even greater protection to Ol Jogi's rhinos. The cameras have been described as a huge asset to Ol Jogi's security infrastructure, by the Conservation Manager, Jamie Gaymer.



Photo 4 and 5: Wildlife corridors at Ol Jogi Conservancy allow other species to continue to migrate. The new camera systems enable the team to monitor this movement. Credit: Save the Rhino International.

Thank you, Stichting Wildlife!



Photo 6: Black rhino at Ol Jogi Conservancy. Credit: Jamie Gaymer.

On behalf of Jamie Gaymer, Conservation Manager at Ol Jogi Conservancy, and everyone at Save the Rhino International, we would like to say a massive thank you to Stichting Wildlife and BeekseBergen Safari Park for your dedicated support for the fantastic rhino conservation efforts employed by the team at Ol Jogi Conservancy in Kenya.

Funding from Stichting Wildlife will be used in the next project period to procure and implement SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool), which will assist rangers with

collecting and analysing rhino behavioural data, increasing the quality and efficiency of monitoring and reporting. Additional funds from this grant will be put towards the final phase of an installation of a remote camera system.

To find out more about Save the Rhino International (UK registered charity 1035072) and our programme partner Ol Jogi Conservancy, please visit www.savetherhino.org.

The impact of Covid-19 at Ol Jogi

The Covid-19 pandemic has had significant implications for Ol Jogi this year, and for rhino conservation in Kenya as a whole. With travel restrictions resulting in the instant shut down of tourism, the Conservancy's primary source of revenue, significant measures have had to be put in place to mitigate the negative implications of the financial crisis. This has meant cutting costs wherever possible whilst ensuring that the integrity of its security is not compromised.

In March 2020, Jamie Gaymer, Conservation Manager at Ol Jogi, met with management from the local conservancies of Lewa, Borana and Ol Pejeta, to discuss the implications of Covid-19. Despite cutting all possible costs, they realised the financial situation for the following 12 months would be dire. They reached out to Save the Rhino as a trusted partner, to ask for help in putting together an emergency proposal and budget, for a **'Core Critical Operations Costs' appeal** to assist the seven Members of the Association of Private and community Land Rhino Sanctuaries, Kenya (APLRS), focusing on core conservation activities, such as anti-poaching.

"Rhino conservation is expensive. It takes significant resources to protect rhinos – which have been prime targets for poaching syndicates for a dozen years – and the wild landscapes in which they live: security staff salaries; vehicle fuel and maintenance; canine units; intelligence gathering; fence and road maintenance; emergency vet interventions; security communications. Maintaining all of these activities is crucial for every conservancy if they are to protect the wildlife they host on behalf of the Kenyan government." Cathy Dean, CEO, Save the Rhino International

The third and final stage of the remote camera system, which will see additional cameras installed to further increase security, has also been impacted by Covid-19. Unfortunately, due to lockdown restrictions, the installation has been delayed. However, we hope that this phase will be able to resume soon.

Despite the challenges wrought by Covid-19, the appeal has certainly helped to cushion the burden and, thanks to the support received from our amazing donors like the Stichting Wildlife, Ol Jogi has been able to continue making progress even in this turbulent year!



Photo 7 and 8: Despite Covid-19, Ol Jogi has maintained the integrity of their anti-poaching measures thanks to the generosity of donors including Stichting Wildlife. Thank you! Credit: Save the Rhino International