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Immediate

Boost for the critically endangered black rhino as calf born in Kenyan conservancy

Conservationists are celebrating today after the birth of a black rhino in one of its last remaining African strongholds.

The birth of the rhino at the Sera conservancy in Kenya is only the second at this conservancy in the last year and is a real boost for a species whose population numbers have plummeted 95% since 1970.

Sera is one of 39 conservancies within the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), which was set up in 2004 to develop resilient community conservancies that transform people's lives, keep the peace and use natural resources sustainably. Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is a founder member of NRT.

Rhinos in general are in grave jeopardy, due largely to decades of unremitting poaching pressure, and black rhinos are no exception. Between 1970 and 2003, the world's black rhinoceros population declined by 95%. In 1970, Kenya alone held around 18,000 individuals, comprising approximately 28% of the global population. By 1990 that number had plummeted to fewer than 400.

In the early 2000s the Kenyan government and its conservation partners, including FFI, concluded that the most effective means of protecting the remaining black rhinos would be to confine them to smaller areas that were fenced and intensively protected. Sera was "seeded" with a founder population of 10 eastern black rhinos in 2015, successfully translocated from other conservancies. Sera is also the only community-run rather than privately-managed conservancy in Africa home to black rhinos.

Between them, the NRT sanctuaries now harbour the last substantial wild population of the critically endangered black rhino, with numbers increasing steadily thanks to sustained anti-poaching measures. The largest number of black rhinos live in Ol Pejeta conservancy in Kenya, which as of mid-December 2019 has a population of 132.

Sera also provides protection for other threatened wildlife, including elephant, lesser kudu, striped hyena and giraffe.

“This fantastic news is another small step along the road to recovery for the black rhino,” said Nicolas Tubbs, FFI’s Senior Programme Manager for East Africa. “The species is still critically endangered and eternal vigilance is the name of the game to ensure that we continue to tackle the poaching threat, which remains high.”

Josephine Nzilani, Programme Manager-Terrestrial for Fauna & Flora International in Kenya said:

“Demand for rhino horn has not gone away and the loss of suitable habitat to agriculture and other uses remains a major problem. That said, we must celebrate genuine good news and the birth of a black rhino is always a real conservation success story, and is more evidence of how impactful community-run conservancies can be.”

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About Fauna & Flora International (FFI) (www.fauna-flora.org)

FFI protects threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and that enhance human well-being. Operating in more than 40 countries worldwide, FFI saves species from extinction and habitats from destruction, while improving the livelihoods of local people. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world’s longest established international wildlife conservation organisation and a registered charity.

About Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT)

Established in 2004, NRT’s mission is to develop resilient community conservancies which transform people’s lives, secure peace and conserve natural resources. The 39 member conservancies cover over 44,000 square kilometers of northern and coastal Kenya. NRT is empowering communities to develop locally-led governance structures, run peace and security programmes, take the lead in natural resource management, and manage sustainable businesses linked to conservation. The community conservancies are starting to have a significant impact on building peace, improving lives and managing the rangelands, and their success has helped shape new government regulations on establishing, registering and managing community conservancies in Kenya.