



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2018**

**GEORGE ADAMSON WILDLIFE PRESERVATION TRUST  
For the board directors of the Suzuki Rhino Club**

**Working plan for the  
Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary for 2019**

5th February 2019

Dear Board of Directors of Suzuki Rhino Club,

We are very grateful to you all at the Suzuki Rhino Club for your incredible partnership and support of the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary over all of these years, all of which has helped us create an international beacon for the rehabilitation of the wild environment and the wildlife that remains.

We have recently made a decision to hand over the projects to TANAPA, which in many ways was inevitable after our extraordinary stewardship over the past 30 years. With TANAPA's increasing stature and capacity both nationally and locally in Mkomazi, they are now ready and capable to assume full responsibility over the whole area of the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, bring it more in line with their methods, management processes and bureaucracy. Equally they also want to replicate our projects as a template for sanctuaries in other National Parks.

The Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary will continue to form part of Tanzania's strategy for recovery of its black rhino population, whether that may be as a Key 2 population of 50+ animals or as a source population to feed other rhino locations within northern Tanzania.

Therefore as we head into 2019, we are now stepping up for the preparation period for the transition and ultimately the handover of the projects to TANAPA.

Please therefore find attached our target operating budget for 2019 and we are grateful for the opportunity to present this to the board for consideration:-

*Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary General Operating Costs*

As always, from the overall 'ideal world' target budget we have once again extrapolated a suggested amount in support of the Rhino Sanctuary for the SSRC column, based on your generous donations of last year 2018. And of course we make no assumptions on this very generous amount but as we are already in to 2019, we felt it would be sensible to budget based on these figures.





## Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary

Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary (MRS) is 55km<sup>2</sup>, enclosed within a 40 km-long perimeter fence and situated inside Mkomazi National Park. The subspecies found in the MRS, the Eastern black rhino, *Diceros bicornis michaeli*, has been classified by the IUCN as Critically Endangered, meaning they “face an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild”. Continental rhino population figures as at December 31st, 2018, are not yet available from the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group (AfrSG), but the Tanzanian National Rhino Coordinator of TANAPA presented figures at the last African Rhino Specialist Group meeting showing 163-176 Eastern black rhinos in Tanzania, of which 31 (at that time) were in Mkomazi, making it the third-largest of Tanzania’s five *D. b. michaeli* populations. The MRS is therefore an integral part of Tanzania’s efforts to breed and recover numbers of black rhino. A well- established sanctuary, such as the MRS, is important in securing the future of not just Tanzania’s black rhino, but also for its contribution to the survival of the Eastern black rhino.

After a huge conservation effort, numbers have crept away from the brink of extinction but are still at perilous levels and it’s a matter of great importance to TANAPA that they bring these numbers up again. We do feel that fenced sanctuaries are the best method at this time in some areas.

TANAPA are underway with the construction of their own rhino sanctuary in the norhte of Mkomazi National Park which is for both conservation and tourism purposes. This leaves the MRS as a breeding sanctuary with security uncompromised.

Most importantly, to date there have been no poaching attempts on the MRS. We are one of the only rhino facilities in Africa that has had zero poaching attempts.

Bearing in mind that the MRS has not – yet – been the subject of a major attempt by poaching gangs, we are well aware that this status is always fragile and it is vital that Mkomazi’s continuing high levels of security be maintained in order to prevent poaching attempts. With the upgraded fencing system of the entire MRS (a 40km upgrade), the equipment and plant machinery, skilled personnel actively working in and outside the MRS,

the aircraft flying, the Smart Parks sensor network system and rhino horn transmitters we do hope that the MRS remains secure as it has done to date.

Over the year ahead we will move forwards with the preparations for the handover and transition to TANAPA. This will require extensive negotiations and committee meetings for an orderly handover. We will also continue to oversee the many disciplines of the daily operations of the MRS. We will work with TANAPA during this transition period to keep all systems in good shape to ensure the rhinos are secure and breeding. With 31 animals, the Mkomazi population is an integral part of Tanzania's efforts to breed and recover numbers of black rhino.

## **Personnel**

The MRS is run on presence and activity. All personnel (security team, rhino tracker team, fence maintenance teams x 2, workshop mechanics and skilled artisans) will continue their working duties according to the normal systems and protocols. We do hope that TANAPA will take over the employment of these personnel as their abilities and commitment are probably the single most important factor in the successful continuity of the projects. We will focus on this aspect during the negotiations.

TANAPA continue to support the salaries of the security team, including their six TANAPA rangers in the MRS. This is working well and is a good example of cooperation between the two organisations.

The second fencing team continues to work well and they are now in the Stage 3 of the fence upgrade. The original fence team continues with their normal duties of fence repair and replacement. The rhino trackers are working well and gain a visual sighting of every single rhino every day or two.

Over the next year, we will aim to complete the fence upgrade and we have started work on the worst section of the fence rebuild.

A new rhino tracker outpost is planned in an area where the rhinos go to give birth and this will be a major project over the next year.

## **Fuel and Engine Oils**

Fuel and engine oils are a heavy-duty commitment but the machines are out almost continuously with the increased number of personnel and rhino.

## **Equipment / Maintenance / Spares**

You cannot effectively protect, maintain and patrol these huge areas without maintaining and constructing roads and tracks, and covering the movement of wildlife. The physical presence of people working out in the field on infrastructure, maintenance, the aircraft flying daily, ongoing activity and a close link up with the Government wildlife authorities and communities will hopefully result in better protection all round.

Thank you SSRC for the continued support towards the workshop, the maintenance, spares

and equipment. We always say this but this is the heartbeat of this operation. The heavy plant machinery has to be deployed continuously to maintain and improve the MRS's infrastructure and security. The Bulldozer D4D needs a full repair; the 12G Grader needs repair. The mechanic for the Grader has to now come from Kenya to undertake these repairs as we cannot find a skilled enough mechanic in Tanzania for this work.

All this work will continue over the next year during the step-up to the handover, with the heavy plant machinery maintained, repaired and deployed. This also includes ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure and with the Scania collecting water, the tractors and trailers supplying water, collecting browse and moving equipment; the bulldozer continuing with the 50m cleared line around the peripheral MRS fence line; roads will be cleared and constructed going up the mountain to the new tracker outpost; and the Grader will be cleaning the MRS fence line. The welding continues for the MRS fence cantilevers.

## **Security. Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary Fence. Infrastructure and Maintenance.**

The daily general repair work will continue with the fence maintenance team. They are constantly fixing the old fence and doing the cantilever repairs and keeping it holding strong. They carry out the general replacement of fence posts and also the on the spot repairs and keep the fence operating in the bigger sections. TANAPA support these endeavours. Meanwhile the overall fence upgrade will continue and we estimate that the overall fence upgrade will take another one to two years.

The mobile teams check the entire fence twice a day on foot. This ensures that they do not miss any problem or potential problem. Repairs are undertaken on the spot and there is always a stock of fence posts and wire in the stores for major repairs. Fence repair teams also slash the grass to keep the line clear and check for any animal or human footprints. Every time the fence repair team go out, their presence and patrols provides additional security and observation.

The peripheral MRS fence line will continue to be cleared back with the bulldozer, adding another 50 metres for both observation and to act as a firebreak.

Internal MRS tracks will continue to be maintained over the year. The trackers use these internal tracks on a daily basis and their maintenance is therefore a priority as it helps towards the safety of the trackers who are always on foot.

The majority of the firebreaks will have to be recut after the rains.

## **Solar Power, Electrical Power**

The voltage on the fence continues to be just below 10,000 volts which is a massive improvement and we are installing this system for each security outpost.

## Water

Thank you to SSRC for contributing towards the overall costs of the new Scania water tanker. The replacement second-hand Scania was sourced, refabricated, refitted and painted; it was driven to Mkomazi and has been operational ever since, delivering excellent service. Being twice the size of old one, it uses quite a bit more fuel, but trips to the TANAPA HQ to collect water have been reduced by two-thirds. This has had a positive impact on many levels, one being that it frees up the drivers, enabling them to undertake more field work with the other machines. The Scania will be operational all year round, collecting water from the TANAPA HQ at Zange (where the well holds up very well) keeping the storage tanks at Kisima Camp full at all times for onward carriage by the tractor and water bowser down to the MRS for personnel and rhinos. These water delivery systems will be left intact for continuity of this daily undertaking.

The old Scania is still able to be used as a back-up if water levels get low or in the event of an emergency but also it is now increasingly being used with the tanker body off for lighter duties.

The TANAPA solar water well at Kifakua has not functioned to date. The water was analysed and is very brackish. TANAPA are also looking at a pipeline from a water source in the Pare Mountains and piping it to the MRS in the future.

## Communications

The communication system is working well and over the next year, new radios will always be needed and spare batteries are an ongoing necessity. TANAPA will take over this radio system at the handover.

Roads will continue to be cleared up the hills for the Smart Parks sensor network system and this system too will be handed over to TANAPA.

## Existing security outposts, uniforms, consumable supplies

During the step up to transition, we will continue to maintain the existing security outposts and continue to tailor uniforms for all MRS personnel. Boots are purchased from Arusha and we will aim to buy two pairs of new boots per person.

With the inclusion of Kilo Tango security outpost now inside the MRS (before it was on the outside), and with the fence being able to be controlled (switching on and off) from the main entrance gate security post, we can now man the outposts with just two men in each place.

## New rhino tracker / security outpost

A new rhino tracker / security outpost is also to be constructed this year in an area where the rhinos go to give birth and where they hide their calves in the early weeks. This is in the middle of the MRS and high up on the main mountain and gives a wide vista for the trackers who will be based there and therefore increases security. The access road will be cleared by hand and then the plant machines will go in after to clear the road. Then the site will be levelled and the

outpost put in place, along with a simple kitchen and ablutions block. Solar power systems and radio communications will be installed. A new water pan will be constructed for the rhinos in this area.

## **Veterinary**

We will continue to keep the tsetse flags maintained, every two months or after every rain. TANAPA support these endeavours.

We have been cautiously making moves to manage the future breeding of the zoo-bred and 'wild' populations and it will have to be done carefully and slowly. Each one is so precious and, as you well know, it has taken so much effort and funding to get them to Mkomazi and to keep them safe. And we are very grateful to SSRC for this. The management, safety and protection of the individual rhinos that came from zoo situations and how they react to each other in the MRS has been paramount in the past and will have to continue being paramount in to the future. One discussion taking place is for a reassessment of the MRS's ecological carrying capacity to take place, in terms of browse and water availability, and social structure of the rhino population, as well as past breeding performance and future breeding plans, given the importance of rhino genetics in current thinking. This reassessment will then inform ongoing discussions with TANAPA about the long-term management of the MRS.

## **Aircraft**

The aircraft will continue to be used for back up to the security for the MRS, all the general surveillance, the northern section of the Park, carrying of equipment and personnel and rapid response to situations in the field.

Aircraft maintenance takes place in Nairobi and there will be the mandatory maintenance schedules such as the Certificate of Airworthiness. This will involve a lot of travelling and logistics as the paperwork has to be initiated in Dar es Salaam and taken up to Nairobi, and then the aircraft has to be flown up to Kenya and then inspected by the Tanzanian Civil Aviation Authority when the maintenance and certificate is complete.





## Vocational Training Centre

It was very good indeed that some of the board of directors of the SSRC were able to visit the Gonja Mheza Rhino Vocational Training Centre (VTC) during the past year.

The VTC is in good shape. We are pleased that the school has become part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Same. They are certainly a professional and organised institution within Tanzania and responsible for a considerable amount of education throughout the country. The VTC is run it as a multi-denominational school and children of all faiths are welcome. The advent of the secondary school section as well has added to both the number of students (fee paying) and the atmosphere of learning in the school in general. We hope that within a couple of years, with some serious and targeted focus, this establishment will become both popular and in demand, but also a serious technical training centre as more and more parents are looking to get their children in to work. It is a growing and improving school and it is gaining in reputation. With the two year course, it takes time for student numbers to build up. The students coming in to the secondary section cross over to the VTC section and this is good progress.

SSRC's donation of bulk food for the students, teacher salaries, bursaries for the poorest students and for the purchase of agricultural land at Lake Kalimawe to help the VTC become more self-sustaining has been fantastic. Father Matthias has also discussed building cow sheds and buying cows so that the students can have a regular milk supply. We are still keen on supporting dormitories for the girls.

We do feel still that the RC Diocese of Same and Father Matthias are doing a good job with the VTC with continued improvements, and that they have a vision for its future to provide a very good education in a rural setting.

The year 2019 will therefore be a year of stepping up to handover to TANAPA and transition. This is a complex process that will have to be executed very carefully, whilst maintaining all the operating systems that have so far been the major factor in the success of the endangered species programmes for the black rhino and African wild dog. Mkomazi National





Park itself is now flourishing with huge increases in wildlife populations including elephant, buffalo, oryx, lesser kudu, gerenuk, zebra, impala, eland, lion, leopard and cheetah. TANAPA are doing a good job of management and protection.

We are grateful and privileged that SSRC have stood the course of time to get the project this far. Thank you all so very much.

Tony Fitzjohn  
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