



{FIELDNOTES}

THE POWER IN PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSERVING RHINO

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In 2009, the Minnesota Zoo joined forces with Namibian partners Save the Rhino Trust, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and local communities to help secure the world's last truly wild population of black rhino. While rhino poaching continues to increase across most of Africa, with roughly three rhino per day lost to poachers in South Africa, Namibia continues to hold the line with only three rhino poaching events this past year. We credit much of this success to the long history and continued focus on building partnerships between government agencies, conservation groups, tourism companies and, most importantly, local communities to help safeguard rhino.

Our latest initiative, the Rhino Ranger Incentive Program, has once again demonstrated the power in partnerships for protecting rhino. With crucial funds being raised through two Minnesota fundraisers sponsored by the Minnesota Zoo Foundation since 2012, October 2013 marked the program's first full year of operation. Eighteen new 'rhino rangers' were hand-picked by nine communities to join training patrols with highly-skilled staff from multiple organizations working in the region including Save the Rhino Trust, Integrated Nature Conservation and Rural Development, Kunene Conservancy Safaris, Wilderness Safaris and the Minnesota Zoo. Specialist rhino monitoring equipment such as new uniforms with custom logos, field gear, GPS, binoculars, ultra-zoom digital cameras, and monthly rhino bonus payments were also provided. Overall, these new rhino rangers produced 420 rhino sightings during the program's first year, across more than seven million acres. By adding these rangers, we have effectively doubled our skilled man-power on the ground and now monitor 85 percent of the rhino range across the remote northwest Kunene region.

We also are proud that our partnerships and rhino conservation work in Namibia are being recognized for their success. This past September, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums awarded the Minnesota Zoo, with Namibian partners Save the Rhino Trust and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, a "Significant Achievement in International Conservation" award.

