



Forever Wild - Rhino Protection Initiative



The Wilderness Foundation launched the Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative as part of the Forever Wild Conservation Programme in May, 2011. The initiative aims to gather support from the public and various stakeholders to help fight against rhino poaching in South Africa and save the rhino from extinction in the wild.

The Wilderness Foundation believes that without the intervention of government and the public, the rhino may be extinct within the next ten years.

The Foundation is involved in supporting conservation agencies and organized private game reserves in their efforts to protect their rhino populations through on-the-ground anti-poaching activities and investigations. It is also active in lobbying local and international governments for support in anti-poaching campaigns.

The highly effective Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative was given a boost in June 2011 through the sponsorship of six Volkswagen Amarok vehicles from **Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles**. The vehicles were allocated to various reserves and anti-poaching units across the country, each managed by the Wilderness Foundation's Forever Wild Conservation Programme team. The vehicles were replaced by VW in June 2013, with the contract renewed for a further 12 months.

From June 2011 to June 2013, the teams supported by the Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative were involved in the arrest of over 80 suspected poachers, the confiscation of over 20 firearms, and the recovery of seven rhino horn, as well as hundreds of extended patrols in parks around the country, several rhino notching exercises, the translocation of a number of rhino for safety reasons, and many public awareness events.

Fund Raising & Support

The Wilderness Foundation has also raised more than **R8,000,000** towards the Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative in the last 24 months (this includes donations of over R500,000 from **Spec Savers**, R1.7 million from the **Shamwari Group**, R800 000 from **Sea World and Busch Garden Conservation Fund**, and **Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles'** Amaroks to the value of R2.4 million.

Funds have been allocated to the following ongoing initiatives and projects:

- **Vehicle Support**

1. North West Parks and Tourism Agency reserves – an area where rhino poaching incidents are some of the highest in the country. The Wilderness Foundation is providing four vehicles to support their anti-poaching units and canine units.
Total allocation: R3.3 million



2. Through an agreement with **Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles**, the Wilderness Foundation's Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative has made six Amarok vehicles available to reserves and agencies across the country for anti-poaching patrols and activities. **Total in-kind value: R2.4 million**
- **Aerial support** in the Eastern Cape
 1. **Helicopter:** Funds have been allocated towards operating costs for a dedicated helicopter that patrols the main Eastern Cape reserves that own rhino. The helicopter is also available at short notice to respond to reported poaching threats in the area. **Total allocation: R83 000**
 2. **Microlight:** Funds have been allocated towards operating costs for a dedicated microlight that does regular patrols on reserves in the Eastern Cape, and can be activated during and after poaching threats. **Total allocation: R114 000. Microlight in-kind donation value: R100 000**
 - **Equipment** and funds (including forensic equipment) donated to the Hawks and special police investigating units. **Total allocation: R63 000**
 - **Four-wheelers and other equipment** donated to reserves in the Western and Eastern Cape that own rhino, as well as Stanley and Livingstone Private Game Reserve (Zimbabwe). These vehicles allow rangers to patrol larger areas as part of their poaching prevention strategies. **Total allocation: R310 000**
 - **Educational material and fact sheets** have been developed on the history of rhino in South Africa, and include valuable anti-poaching facts. These materials are used in both education and awareness initiatives. The resources are available in reserve museums and on the Forever Wild Conservation Programme website. **Total allocation: R30 000**
 - **A rhino hot-line** has been set up offering an anonymous facility to receive calls and tip-offs related to rhino poaching. These tips are then forwarded to relevant authorities. This has proved successful in preventing a number of rhino poaching incidents. Flyers are distributed country wide. **Total allocation: R50 000**
 - **Rhino Survivor Fund** has been set up and is administered by the Wilderness Foundation. The fund was set up together with wildlife vet Dr William Fowlds (supported by **Investec**) to respond to, and assist in cases where rhinos have been poached for their horn but are still alive and can be rescued, rehabilitated and eventually thrive again in wild habitats. **Total allocation: R400 000**
 - **Training** funds have been allocated for anti-poaching Level 1 training for reserves in the Eastern Cape, anti-poaching intelligence training, and wildlife trade training for airport staff. **Total allocation: R35 000**
 - **Intelligence gathering and specialist support** has been provided to the Hawks and special police investigating units. **Total allocation: R50 000**



- **Sniffer dogs** for anti-poaching units have been trained, with two dogs currently sponsored by the Wilderness Foundation to service the Eastern and Western Cape. **Total allocation: R200 000. An additional in-kind donation of R200 000 was secured to source and train the dogs.**
- **DNA and tracking device project** has been initiated to collect the DNA of 80 rhino in the Eastern Cape. A total of 22 rhino have also been fitted with tracking devices. **Total allocation: R370 000**
- **A research project** in the Kruger National Park, which includes tracking, monitoring and studying rhino survivors after poaching incidents. Data will be used to assist vets in assessing and treating rhino that have survived poaching incidents. **Total allocation: R258 000**

