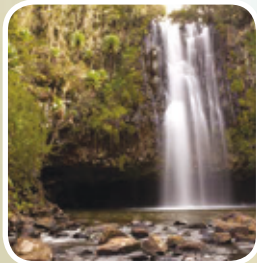


Humans in Harmony with Habitat and Wildlife



A public/private partnership initiative to conserve Kenya's water towers,
threatened wildlife and areas of important biodiversity

Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust

A trusted and impactful partner in forest and wildlife conservation



Mission and Key priority areas

Rhino Ark is a charitable trust established in Kenya in 1988 with the vision to *restore and maintain harmony between humans, habitats and wildlife in Kenya.*

To this end, Rhino Ark aims to *continue to be the trusted partner in advocating, developing and implementing high-impact forest, water catchments and endangered wildlife conservation initiatives that tangibly support adjacent local communities.*

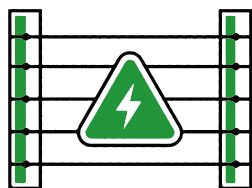
Rhino Ark's conservation programme is developed around **six priority thematic areas**:

- 1) **Trusted partner**
Rhino Ark is the partner of choice in the long-term conservation of forests and their wildlife in Kenya.
- 2) **Advocacy**
Rhino Ark is a thought leader and senior advisor on forest and wildlife conservation in Kenya.
- 3) **Innovation**
Rhino Ark is a leader in the development and implementation of high-impact dynamic conservation solutions.
- 4) **Forest and water catchment conservation**
Rhino Ark develops and implements long-term management tools that protect and restore forest ecosystems and their water catchment values.
- 5) **Endangered wildlife conservation**
Rhino Ark develops and implements conservation interventions that protect and recover endangered forest species, including black rhino, mountain bongo and forest elephant.
- 6) **Tangible community support**
Rhino Ark develops and implements long-term solutions to human-wildlife conflicts, spearheads conservation education and champions conservation-based livelihoods within forest-adjacent communities.

Key achievements of Rhino Ark

710 kilometres

of electric fences built and maintained to



172 fence attendants

maintaining Rhino Ark electric fences full time



21 vehicles

supporting Rhino Ark conservation work



85,000 households

protected from human-wildlife conflicts



178 schools

providing conservation education



570,000 hectares

of protected areas and water catchments better conserved



15 threatened species

(mammals and birds) better protected



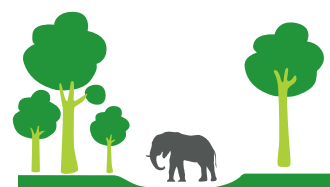
6 forest rehabilitation projects

on going



2 corridors

for wildlife established



Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust

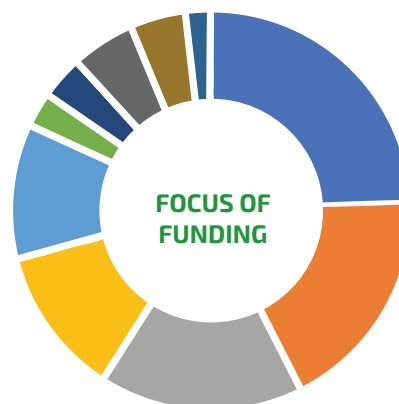
A trusted and impactful partner in forest and wildlife conservation



The funding of Rhino Ark: USD 3 to 4 million annually

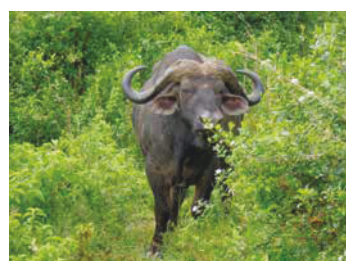
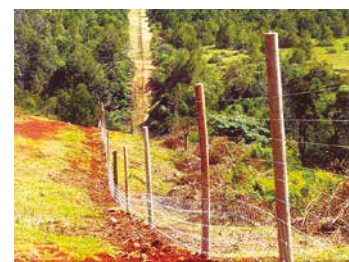
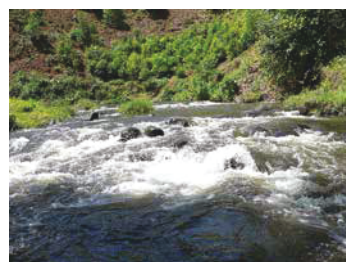
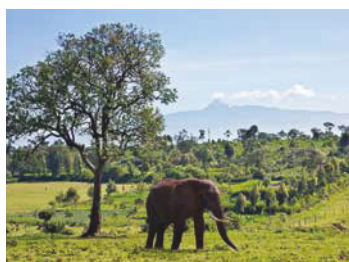
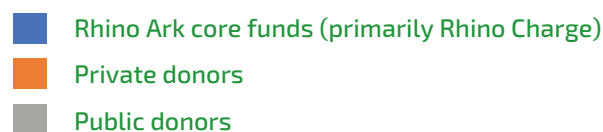
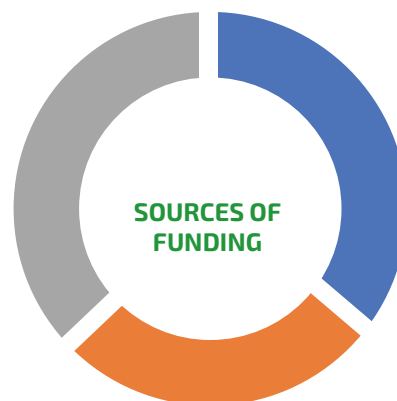
Focus of funding

Mount Kenya	20-25%
Kakamega	15-20%
South Western Mau	10-15%
Aberdare Range	10-15%
Mount Eburu (Mau)	10-15%
Mountain bongo conservation	5%
Rhino Conservation and other projects	3%
Project Support	
Rhino Charge	5%
Administration	5%
Public Relations	2%



Sources of funding

Rhino Ark core funds (primarily Rhino Charge)	25-35%
Private donors	20-30%
Public donors	30-40%



Rhino Ark:

And the global sustainable development agenda



The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet and intended to be achieved by 2030. Rhino Ark, through its conservation and community programmes, is a key organization fostering the achievement of these goals in Kenya and a model for the rest of the world.

Rhino Ark is at the forefront in supporting some of these goals. Conceived more than thirty years ago, Rhino Ark has implemented high-impact forest and wildlife conservation programmes to protect and restore mountain forests and their wildlife in Kenya, through supporting adjacent local communities. At the centre of Rhino Ark interventions is the construction of electrified conservation fences. To date, fences have been built around the perimeters of the Aberdare Mountains in central Kenya (400km) and Mount Eburu in the Rift Valley (44km). Rhino Ark has also completed 50% of a 450km long conservation fence around Mount Kenya which is a renowned UNESCO World Heritage site.

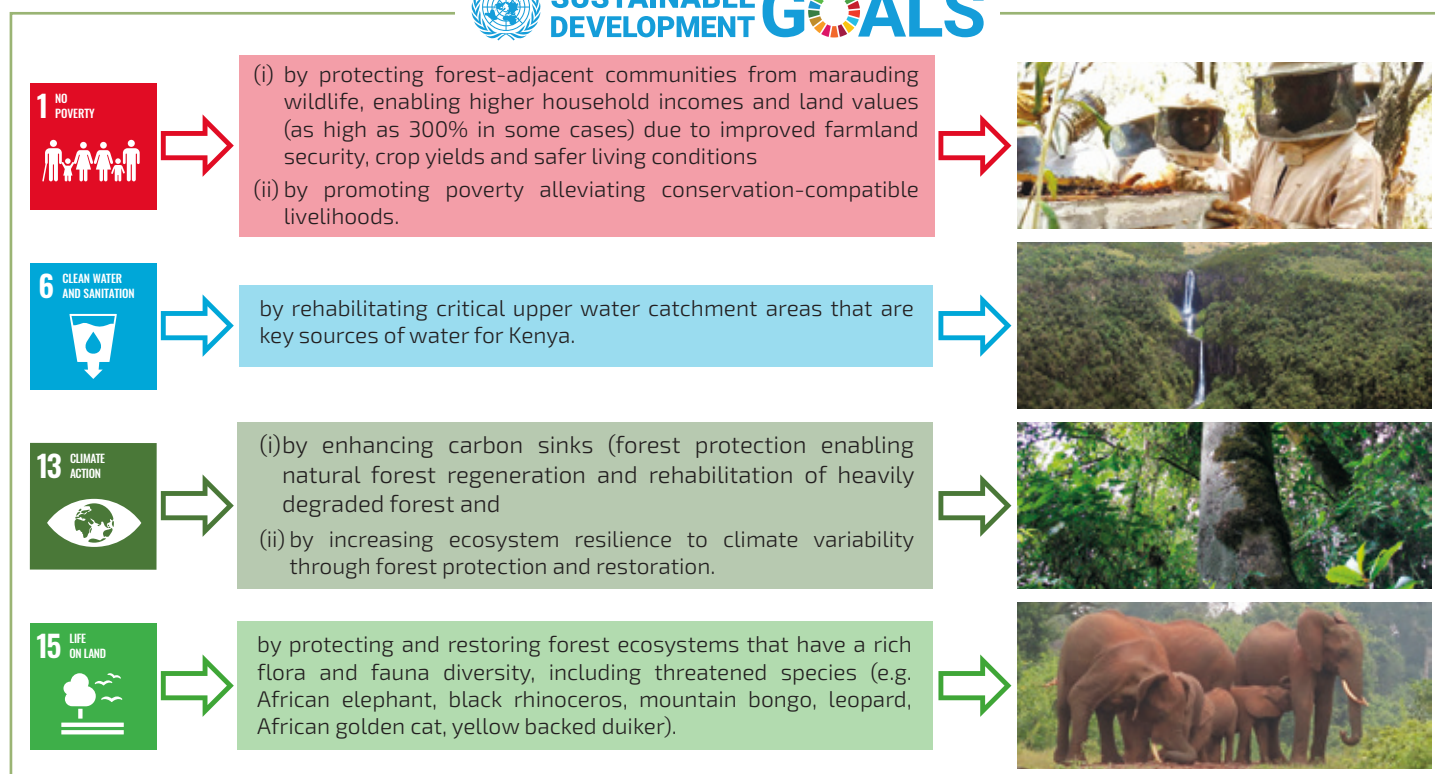
Through its fencing and conservation programmes, Rhino Ark protects over 570,000 hectares of pristine forest. It also safeguards the livelihoods of over 85,000 forest adjacent households from threats posed by elephant and other wildlife raids on farms. The fence also ensures that children walking to school are safe from dangerous wildlife, and provides direct benefits to communities through employment to maintain the fence.

There is much more to the Rhino Ark story. These great forests and protected areas are an invaluable resource for the entire country, with Kenya's greatest rivers the Tana and Athi, rising in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya to become the country's 'water towers' on which Kenya's essential economic sectors, in particular agriculture, tourism and energy, depend.

Rhino Ark conservation work is pivotal to environmental stability and to secure the ecological goods and services provided by the 'water towers'. These are essential to attain sustainable development in Kenya. They are cross-cutting, underlying requirements to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Although Rhino Ark contributes towards nearly all the SDGs, it supports directly the achievements of SDG 1: Poverty, SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 15: Life on Land (see below).

Our conservation work also is a critically important contribution towards the implementation of multilateral environmental conventions, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); RAMSAR Convention on wetlands of international importance; and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

- Convention on Biological Diversity: by protecting the forest ecosystems and its wildlife; by promoting conservation-compatible livelihoods within the forest-adjacent communities; and, by rehabilitating degraded forest areas.
- Nagoya Protocol:
 - (i) by strengthening community forest associations that will be able to enter into an agreement with KFS to secure user rights; and
 - (ii) by carrying out a prior informed consent processes before implementing project activities.
- CITES: by helping protect species listed in CITES Appendices (Appendix I: African elephant, black rhinoceros, leopard; Appendix II: Yellow-backed duiker, *Prunus africana*).
- RAMSAR: by protecting the upper catchment areas of Ramsar sites (Lake Naivasha, Lake Elementaita, Tana River Delta).
- UNFCCC: by contributing towards Kenya's National Adaption Plan (2015-2030) through enhancing the resilience of key mountain ecosystems to climate variability and change, and by supporting Kenya's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) through replanting degraded areas towards achieving a tree cover of at least 10% of the land area of Kenya.



Why the Focus on Kenya's Montane Forests?

Most of Kenya's forests are in mountain areas, in particular Mt. Kenya, Aberdares, Mau Complex, Cherangani Hills and Mt. Elgon. These areas are known as the "water towers" of Kenya as they form the upper catchment of all but one of the main rivers in Kenya. Although these "water towers" cover less than 2% of the total land area in Kenya, they provide invaluable services to Kenya's inhabitants, economy and wildlife. They also support transboundary water bodies, underlining their regional and international importance.

The water towers are vital national assets, in terms of climate regulation; water storage; recharge of groundwater; river flow regulation; flood mitigation; control of soil erosion and reduced siltation of water bodies; water purification; conservation of biological diversity; carbon storage and sequestration; nutrients cycling and soil formation. These services support key economic sectors, including: energy, tourism, agriculture (cash crops, subsistence crops, and livestock) as well as water supply to urban centres and industries.

Water to urban centres and industries

The water towers are the single most important source of water for direct human consumption and industrial activities. Most urban areas depend upon their water, in particular the City of Nairobi where over 50% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product is derived.

Rural livelihoods

The majority of Kenyan livelihoods depend in some way upon the rivers, climate, forest and wildlife of these mountain forest ecosystems. Millions of farmers live on the slopes of these mountains and depend on their rich soils and their micro-climatic conditions that are most favourable for agricultural production.

Wildlife and tourism

The montane forests are rich in biological diversity, not only in terms of habitats, but also in terms of species. Although they cover less than 2% of Kenya's total land area, they host a disproportionately high percentage of the flora and fauna species (40% of the mammal species, including 70% of the threatened mammal species, and 30% of the bird species, including 50% of the threatened bird species).

The rivers flowing from the water towers are the lifeline for major conservation areas in the lowlands. These are key tourism destination areas, such as Maasai Mara National Reserve, Lake Nakuru National Park and Samburu National Reserve. These conservation areas host a high diversity of fauna and flora. Some of them are classified as Important Bird Areas as they host a rich avifauna.

Energy

The water towers also provide water to all hydro-power plants that represent 30% of Kenya's total installed electricity capacity.

Kenya's development blueprint

Looking forward, environmental stability and secured provision of ecological goods and services, such as those provided by the montane forests, will remain essential to attain sustainable development in Kenya. They are cross-cutting, underlying requirements to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030 - Kenya's development blueprint aimed at making the country a newly industrializing middle income nation, providing a high quality of life for all citizens in a secure and healthy environment.

The water towers and their forest ecosystems are fully recognized as a key component of the economic, environmental and social pillars. In recognition of their importance in socio-economic development, the rehabilitation of the five water towers is one of the flagship projects in the Vision 2030.

In this context, Rhino Ark is firmly on the ground in the three largest of the five main water towers to address the conservation challenges in these mountain ecosystems.



Aberdare Range:

Where the concept of fencing was mooted and became a blueprint for conservation

The Aberdares are vital to Kenya – a unique montane forest ecosystem in a country where just over two percent of the land is still covered by closed canopy forest. Spanning over 160 km just north of Nairobi, the Aberdares provide invaluable services in support of the nation's economic development, human well-being and long-term environmental stability.

A unique ecosystem

Four out of seven of Kenya's largest rivers, flowing north, west, east and south, rise in the Aberdares. They provide hydroelectricity power and water to seven major towns – including to over eight million people of Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. On the foothills of the Aberdares, 30% of Kenya's tea and 70% of its coffee are produced. Four million farmers depend on its rich soils and rainfall. The Aberdares are home to diverse species of wildlife, many of conservation interest – from elephant, giant forest hog, black rhino and leopard to the critically endangered mountain bongo: a valuable and popular tourism asset for Kenya.

Over the years, the increasing human population in the prime agricultural land surrounding the Aberdares meant that farming activity was being conducted right up to the national park and forest reserve boundary. Regular crop damage by marauding wildlife, especially elephant, was a major problem for the farmers, who suffered great losses. Encounters between farmers and wildlife occasionally led to human fatalities, and served to heighten tensions between humans and wildlife.

At the same time, the wildlife and forests of the Aberdares faced numerous threats arising from human activities, including poaching, bush-meat hunting, snaring, illegal logging, forest fires, charcoal burning and encroachment. By the 1980s, these activities had decimated the wildlife population, almost wiping out the black rhino in particular.

Early beginnings with a long-term vision

Committed to saving the dwindling rhino population in the Aberdares and seeking solutions to the human-wildlife conflicts around the National Park, conservationist Ken Kuhle established the Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust in 1988 with the objective of building a 38 km game-proof electric fence around the Park Salient jutting out into the farms around Mweiga. His background in engineering, coupled with his skills in farming and passion for conservation, positioned Ken well to ensure that the design for the fence would achieve its objectives.

What was originally a 38 km fence along the Park Salient of the Aberdares became, over 21 years, the world's longest conservation fence, nearly 400 km in length, protecting over 2,000 sq. km of prime forests and water catchments, often referred to as the Aberdare Ecosystem.

The fence rises seven feet above ground. It is electrified and wired down to three feet below ground (to deter burrowing wildlife) and the upright posts are hot wired to deter baboons and monkeys from scaling them.

Completion of the fence – proving a foundation for sustainability

The fence – completed in 2009 – was built in nine phases which were launched by Kenyan key personalities, including the late Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai, Minister for Finance Amos Kimunya, and Minister for Forestry and Wildlife Noah Wakesa. The fence was formally commissioned by President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga in March 2010.



Extension of the fence

Over the years, there arose a need to extend the fenceline to further curb human-wildlife conflict and illegal activities including charcoal burning and harvesting of red cedar trees.

In August 2024, phase ten of the Aberdare electric fence was officially launched at Sofia village in Wanjohi ward. This extra section (Wanjohi- Shamata) of 12km was completed in December 2024.

The President recognized the fence as an invaluable investment protecting water catchments, pristine mountain forests and an area of rich biodiversity – as he noted that:

“Our great mountain forests are the ‘water towers’ and the ‘lungs’ of our beloved Kenya. They and the precious flora and fauna within them must be sustainably managed and conserved for all Kenyans and as a global heritage for all time.”

Mount Kenya:

Fencing and conservation of Kenya's highest mountain



Mount Kenya, Africa's second highest mountain and Kenya's highest, sits on the equator - 180km north of the capital Nairobi. The purpose of the Mt. Kenya Electric Fence, which will stretch 450km in length, is to bring harmony between nature and the forest adjacent communities and to protect a natural asset of critical importance that supports economic development at national and local levels.

World Heritage site

Mount Kenya is a solitary mountain of volcanic origin which reaches an altitude of 5,199 metres with deeply incised U-shaped valleys in the upper parts. The mountain's natural habitats are protected areas. The moorland and the peak zone (71,500 hectares) received the status of National Park in 1949. The surrounding forest belt, covering approx. 212,000 hectares was gazetted twice, first as Forest Reserve in 1932 and later as National Reserve in 2002.

Designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 1997 the mountain has been described as *"one of the most impressive landscapes of Eastern Africa with its rugged glacier-clad summits, Afro-alpine moor lands and diverse forests, which illustrate outstanding ecological processes."* Mt. Kenya's forests present a rich biological diversity, not only in terms of ecosystems but also in terms of species, in particular plant species of which 872 have been recorded to date. The area also has a wide variety of fauna with six species of large mammals of international conservation interest, including elephant, black rhino, leopard, giant forest hog, bongo and black-fronted duiker, and twelve species of ungulates.

Mt. Kenya plays a critical role in water catchment for the entire country – including the Ewaso Nyiro River and the Tana River, Kenya's largest river which supplies water to the Seven Forks hydropower stations representing 30% of Kenya total installed electricity generation capacity, as well as to major irrigation schemes, including Mwea, Bura and Tana Delta.

Observed challenges

The boundaries of the protected areas on Mt. Kenya are characterized with dense forest next to some of the most densely populated areas of the country. Such co-existence brings a number of challenges which are unsettling the forest and the people. Regular crop damage, especially by elephants, is a major problem for farmers, and encounters between farmers and wildlife occasionally lead to human fatalities and serve to heighten tensions between them. Unsustainable use of forest resources in areas of high biodiversity result in forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and reduced catchment values.

Indirect impacts from climate change are compounding the increased temperature coupled with reduced cloudiness and rainfall has increased the vulnerability of the forest to fire. In the past decades, there has been a noticeable increase in both frequency and intensity of wildfires in the forest and the moorlands.



Strategic interventions

Launched by Hon. Njeru Githae, Ministry for Finance, on 7th September 2012, the Mount Kenya Electric Fence will encircle over 2,700 sq. km and will be approximately 450 km in length. As of March 2025, over 300 km of the fence has been built.

As one of key principles in all Rhino Ark fences, the Mt. Kenya Electric Fence is being built by members of forest adjacent communities under the supervision of a technical team from Kenya Wildlife Service. The involvement of the local communities creates job opportunities and ensures ownership of the fence project by the neighbouring communities.

Alongside the building of the fence, Rhino Ark supports conservation education projects in local schools, through the establishment of nature conservation clubs and the provision of educational materials.

Towards addressing the illegal exploitation of forest resources, Rhino Ark has established a joint aerial surveillance programme. Every three months, field managers from Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, Mount Kenya Trust and Rhino Ark fly together above the hotspot areas of the mountain to detect emerging issues and assist plan forest protection interventions.

Partners

In addition to the involvement of local communities in the project, Rhino Ark engages with a number of invaluable partners. These include Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, Treasury, County Governments, Community Development Funds, Upper Tana Natural Resources Management Project, Kenya Pipeline Company, Wildlife Conservation Society, Mount Kenya Trust, Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy, Ragati Conservancy, Bongo Surveillance Project, Space for Giants, and British Army Training Unit Kenya.

"The potential benefits of the electric fence are not illusionary. They are a reality, already demonstrated by the 400 kilometers electric fence built around the Aberdare ecosystem."

The experience of the Aberdare fence has provided a management and policy blue print for the protection and sustainable exploitation of our precious 'water towers' which are of critical value to us, and indeed the entire global community. Building on the lessons learned, we are today initiating a similar project for Mt. Kenya."

Hon. Njeru Githae, Minister for Finance, 7 September 2012



Mountain Bongo Antelope:

Mountain Bongo Recovery Programme

The mountain bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus isaaci*), also known as the eastern bongo, is a Critically Endangered endemic antelope species only found in Kenya (IUCN, 2022). Fewer than 80 individuals are believed to survive in the wild. Mountain Bongo *Tragelaphus eurycerus isaaci* has most recently been assessed for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 2016. *Tragelaphus eurycerus ssp. isaaci* is listed as Critically Endangered under criteria C2a(i). Population estimates have been determined through camera trapping efforts carried out initially by the Kenyan NGO known as the Bongo Surveillance Project (BSP).

Rhino Ark, in partnership with the Wilder Institute / Calgary Zoo, joined this effort in 2018 using a substantially increased number of cameras, with the goal of obtaining a more exhaustive answer to the question of: "Where are mountain bongo populations surviving?"

Their historical distribution once comprised healthy populations in several of Kenya's mountain forests including the Aberdare, Mt. Kenya, SW Mau, Maasai Mau, Mau Eburu Forests and the Cherengani Hills. At present, only the Salient Region of the Aberdare remains a bongo stronghold, with the bulk of Kenya's wild bongo ranging there in two or three herds (an estimated 50 to 60 animals). Also, a smaller group is surviving in the Maasai Mau Forest, and possibly a small number in the SW Mau as well.

This majestic forest antelope is one of two bongo sub-species, with the lowland, or western, bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus eurycerus*) found outside of Kenya in the low-lying forests of West and Central Africa. The lowland bongo is considered Near Threatened by the IUCN Antelope Specialist Group. This sub-species is not found in Kenya.

Conservation efforts

In the 1960s and 1970s, dozens of mountain bongo were live-trapped and exported from Kenya to zoos around the world. For these translocations to be successful, they were initially housed at the Mt. Kenya Wildlife Conservancy (MKWC) (then known as the Mt. Kenya Game Ranch) in Nanyuki, and then forwarded onwards to overseas destinations. Bongo not exported during this period were established as a captive domestic population in a breeding facility at Mt. Kenya Wildlife Conservancy.

Mountain bongo characteristics

- **Colour:** bright chestnut; males become black with age; 12 to 15 thick vertical paintbrush-style white stripes along the flanks
- **Horns:** carried by both male and female; spot the difference! - male horns angle outward and female horns angle inwards
- **Size:** cow-sized; height of 1 to 3 meters
- **Status:** endemic to Kenya; Critically Endangered on IUCN Red List
- **Behaviour:** nocturnal / crepuscular in the wild; prefer densely wooded areas; browsers

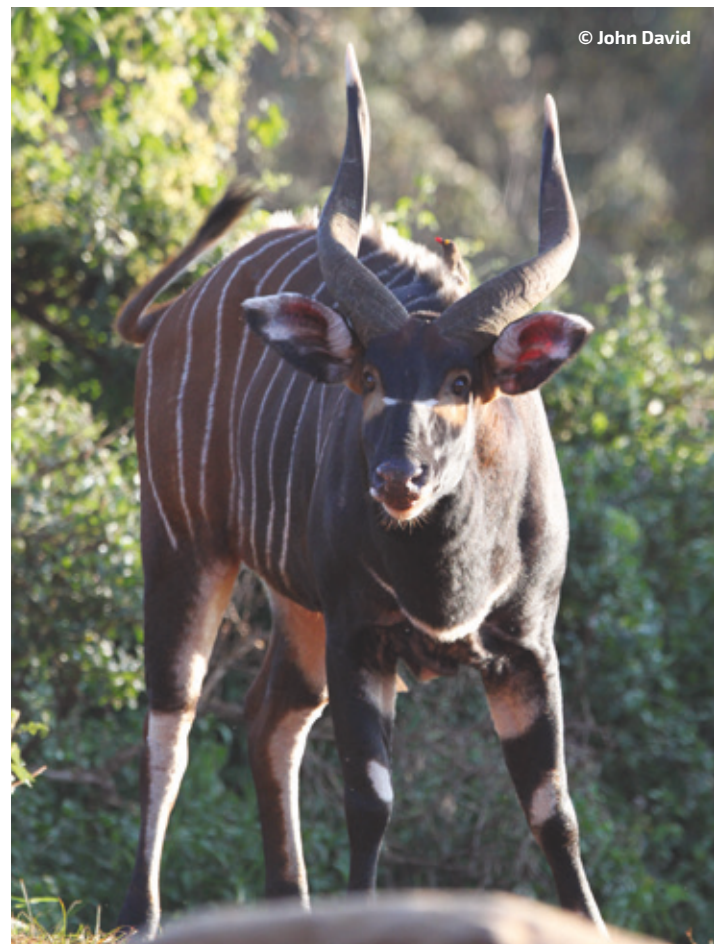
Over time, it became clear that the species breeds well in captivity. Current records (October 2023) indicate that more than 400 mountain bongo can be found in accredited zoos worldwide, with an additional unknown number in unofficial breeding facilities. Here in Kenya, the Mt. Kenya Wildlife Conservancy houses somewhere between 40 and 60 individuals at any given time in their breeding programme.

These domestic and international captive-bred bongo offer hope to the recovery of severely depleted wild bongo populations and Rhino Ark is an active participant in a massive endeavor to re-wild mountain bongo into Mt. Kenya (Ragati and Chehe Forest Blocks) and Eburu Forest.

Bongo Recovery Preparation Programmes

To give wild mountain bongo an opportunity to successfully recover into their former mountain forest ranges in healthy numbers and in relative safety, Rhino Ark in partnership with the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo, has put in place a number of essential foundational programmes.

Monitoring and Surveillance - As with other mountain forests where Rhino Ark works, Joint Security Units (JSUs) have been set up in Eburu Forest and in Ragati / Chehe forests, Mt. Kenya National/Forest Reserve. These units are comprised of community rangers who work together with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya



Forest Service (KFS) to conduct de-snaring foot patrols and other forest security activities.

As well, these JSUs are responsible for establishing, monitoring and maintaining fleets of camera traps. Cameras are installed onto trees at natural salt licks, game trail intersections, and at other natural features where wildlife gather. The cameras use infrared technology to record the image of anything that moves in front of the viewfinder.

Species records for mountain bongo and the full mammal assemblage are kept to determine species presence and prevalence by providing relative population estimates. Information about seasonality and activity patterns is also gathered through our camera trapping programmes.



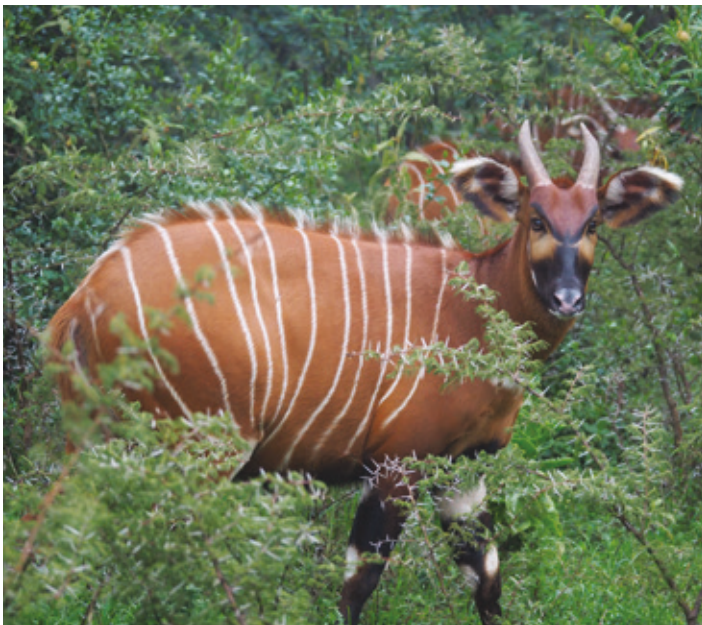
Community Engagement, Education and Awareness - In a 2021 household survey in Ragati / Chehe, Mt. Kenya, 92% of 202 forest-adjacent households (103 male; 99 female) across five Locations support the idea of a mountain bongo translocation.

In a similar survey conducted in 2018 in Eburu Forest, 94.5% of 200 local people in forest-adjacent households (107 male; 93 female) were in favour of a mountain bongo translocation.

Annual large-scale community meetings are held to keep citizens abreast of programme milestones & developing activities, including opportunities for their increased involvement.

We work together with the community organizations interested in their area forests through collaboration with the local Community Forest Associations.

With the awareness that successful bongo population recovery will require the future support from the next generation, we assessed conservation knowledge in 300-respondent student surveys at both Mt. Kenya and Eburu Forest and have established Nature Conservation Clubs in dozens of forest-adjacent beneficiary schools.



Collaboration and Partnership - Knowing how considerable the task is to return mountain bongo to their former ranges, Rhino Ark works closely with government, community, fellow NGO and private bongo stakeholders to succeed with mountain bongo recovery goals. For further reference, see the National Recovery and Action Plan for the Mountain Bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus isaaci*) in Kenya (2019-2023) (KWS, 2019), detailing the mountain bongo recovery mandate for Kenya.

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IUCN (2022). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2021-1: Summary Statistics* [Online]. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/summary-statistics>

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Historical Bongo Range Kenya-wide



Forest Elephant:

Bringing Harmony Between Elephants and People



Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Range are adjacent mountain forests roughly 12 kilometres apart at their closest points. Between them, they host an estimated 5,465 elephants, an endangered species. Historically, on both mountains, elephants exit the forest frequently as they seasonally migrate between their traditional dispersal areas.



During their migrations elephants raid adjacent farms, threatening the lives and livelihoods of farmers. Loss of human lives has sometimes led to retaliatory killings of elephants. In Mount Kenya's Imenti Forest, for example, 11 community members were tragically killed by elephants over a two-year period, with 11 elephants killed in retaliation. The Aberdare/Mount Kenya elephants, coupled with a population of 951 elephants in South Western Mau (where Rhino Ark also supports conservation) make up nearly 18% of Kenya's elephant population.

To address the escalating crisis of human/wildlife conflict arising from a burgeoning human population in traditional elephant dispersal areas, Rhino Ark continues to spearhead the development and implementation a mix of innovative, long-term solutions. We completed construction and now maintain a 412-kilometer game-proof electric around the Aberdare Range, and are currently building a similar 450-kilometre-long fence around Mount Kenya. Other innovations include the design and construction elephant grids at vulnerable points where our fences cross public roads.

Securing the safe movement of elephants from these mountain forests to other dispersal areas is also a key priority for Rhino Ark. Solutions implemented to date with partners include fenced elephant corridors, wildlife underpasses and one-way automatic elephant gates.



Black Rhino:

Securing a Future for the Black Rhino in Kenya's Mountain Forests



The muscular black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) is quick, skittish, and enigmatic. This iconic 2-horned wonder was once abundant in the pristine forests of the Aberdare mountain range. In the 1980s, however, the fate of the wildlife and forests of the Aberdare ecosystem took a grave downturn. Human activities including poaching, bush-meat hunting, snaring, illegal logging, charcoal burning and encroachment decimated the wildlife population. The black rhino, relentlessly poached for its extremely valuable horn, was nearly wiped out, becoming critically endangered.

Concurrently, regular crop damage on forest-adjacent farms by wildlife, especially elephant, was causing great losses to farmers. On occasion, encounters between farmers and wildlife resulted in human injuries and fatalities.

Rhino Ark was established in 1988 to save the dwindling black rhino population and resolve human/wildlife conflicts in the Aberdare ecosystem. Our first intervention, building and sustainably maintaining a 38 km game-proof electric fence around the Eastern Salient of the Aberdare National Park, proved to be a highly effective solution. This novel approach was subsequently adopted as model for natural forest conservation and human wildlife conflict management. In tandem with fencing, we have continued to support to the Aberdare Rhino security programme.

Over the years, the Aberdare fence was extended to cover the entire ecosystem (over 2,000 sq. km of prime forests and water catchments), and at 410 km is now the world's longest conservation fence. The completed electric fence was formally commissioned by the President of Kenya, H.E. Mwai Kibaki on 12th March 2010.

In 2010, Rhino Ark commissioned an independent study: the environmental, social and economic assessment of the fencing of the Aberdare Conservation Area. The study was co-funded by UNEP, Rhino Ark and Kenya Forests Working Group and supported by the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Kenya Forest Service and the Greenbelt Movement. The study revealed key positive outcomes attributable to the fence, including improved forest cover, greater security for wildlife and safer living conditions for local communities. It affirmed that the fence has been instrumental as management tool in addressing the challenges affecting the Aberdare ecosystem.

Over the past decades, the remaining small black rhino population has stabilized, but its low number remains a challenge to its viability.

Protection of the black rhino remains core to our conservation work. To secure the long-term survival of the Aberdare black rhino population, Rhino Ark and the Kenya Wildlife Service have jointly embarked on a new initiative to establish a black rhino sanctuary in the Eastern Salient.

The project aims to create a 45 square kilometers sanctuary that will receive black rhinos from overstocked sanctuaries to boost the small remaining population in the Aberdares. This will be the first mountain forest rhino sanctuary in Kenya.

The Rhino Charge:

The What, How and Why



How it began

The Rhino Charge was conceived in 1989 to raise funds for the construction of the Aberdare Electric Fence. Rhino Ark founder Ken Kuhle, Rally Enthusiast Rob Combes and Brian Haworth mooted the idea of an off-road motorsport event to support the fencing project carried out by the recently established Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust. The Trust was committed to saving the Aberdare National Park's dwindling Rhino population, as well as mitigating human-wildlife conflicts around the National Park. On 4th February 1989, 31 competing vehicles entered the first event which was won by Travers Allison in a Suzuki jeep. Whilst the first Rhino Charge raised only KES 250,000, this amount increased tremendously over the years to reach over KES 325 million in the 2024 event, which is the highest amount raised for a single year of fundraising.

How it works

The Rhino Charge is a one day off-road event during which a maximum of 65 competitors are required to visit 13 control points scattered over approximately 100 square kilometres of rough terrain within a 10 hours period. Supplied with a 1:50,000 scale map of the venue and the GPS coordinates of the 13 control points, each competing team decides the route they want to follow. The winner is the competitor who finishes at the control point where he started having visited all the other control points in the shortest distance (GPS measured).

The Charge is a unique and exciting competition that requires bravery and a high level of skill in off-road driving and navigation. To prevent adverse environmental impacts, entries to the event are limited to 65 vehicles. The popularity of the Charge is such that the organisers have introduced a preferential entry strategy favouring high value fund raisers because would-be entrants far exceed available places in the event.

Organization

The Rhino Charge is organized by a Committee of professionals who voluntarily prepare and run the event every year. It is held in a different location each year in some of the most remote and

wild areas of Kenya. The event takes place at the end of May/ beginning of June each year and is open to all, subject to the Rules and Regulations stipulated by the organizing Committee. The Committee keeps the event location secret until the day of the event. The secrecy of the location prevents people from being tempted to look at the site ahead of time while also reduce pressure on the local community.

Fund raising efforts

In order to be accepted to the event competitors are required to pledge and raise the minimum sponsorship set by the organizing Committee. Most competitors, however, raise considerably more. In 2024, the top three cars raised a total of KES 223,028,335, with Car No. 44 (Adil Khawaja) raising KES 175,100,595, Car No.23 (Adil Khawaja) KES 29,719,940 and Car No. 62 (Stanley Kinyanjui) KES 18,207,800. Long time supporters, such as Car No. 5 (Alan McKittrick) have raised a total of over KES 186 million since their first entry in 1989.

From 1989-2024, the Rhino Charge has raised over KES 2.4 billion. In order to ensure that the funds raised by the competitors go to conservation, the Rhino Charge event is organized based mostly on in-kind support provided by many volunteers and event sponsors. Since 1989, the funds raised have been used for the construction of the Aberdare Electric Fence and supporting conservation activities within the Aberdare ecosystem, in addition to ongoing maintenance of the fence and engaging fence-adjacent communities in conservation.

Since 2012, funds raised by the Rhino Charge are also used for fencing Aberdares (410 km completed) Mt. Kenya (300 kilometres out of 450 built to date), Mau Eburu (43 completed in 2014) and Kakamega (25 km completed), as well as to maintaining the 778 kilometres of electric fence already built. In addition, they are used to engage and educate forest-adjacent communities in conservation; promote conservation-based community livelihoods; establish wildlife corridors; rehabilitate degraded forest areas; conduct periodic joint surveillance flights; detect and monitor forest fires and support communities in combatting them; and monitor the health of the forest ecosystems.



The Rhino Charge:

Making an Extreme Offroad 4x4 Motorsport Event "Green"



As a conservation organization, Rhino Ark Kenya Charitable Trust is deeply sensitive to minimizing any environmental impact that could derive from its operations. This extends to the Rhino Charge, Rhino Ark's main fund raising event to support the conservation of Kenya's 'water towers'.

Mitigating the impact of the competition cars

The format of the Rhino Charge was developed towards minimizing the impact of the competition cars on the environment:

- To prevent any significant damage, the duration of the competition is limited to 10 hours and only 65 competition cars may participate in the event;
- To avoid cumulative impact from consecutive events, the Rhino Charge is organized each year in a different location.

In 2008 Rhino Ark commissioned an environmental and social impact audit of representative samples of venues where the Rhino Charge event had been held. The venues assessed were Tassia Ranch (Mukogodo Division, Laikipia), Swuari Lagha (Wamba Division, Samburu), Ol Kinyei Group Ranch (Mara Division, Narok), and Lorongoswa Group Ranch (Kajiado). The audit was carried out by African Conservation Centre.

The audit found that there was minimal impact on the sites arising from Rhino Charge activities. Recommendations arising from the

audit were incorporated into subsequent Charge venues and course designs.

Recycling the waste generated at the venue

One of the main environmental challenges of organizing an event with between 3,000 and 4,000 officials, participants and spectators in the most remote wilderness areas of Kenya is the management of waste. In keeping with Rhino Ark's conservation mission, the Rhino Charge Committee is dedicated to leaving each venue as they found it.

To this end, stringent rules have been set by the Committee to ensure that no refuse is left anywhere in the entire Rhino Charge venue. This includes a system of fines that is strictly implemented to address refuse generated by competitors and spectators. In addition, with the support of key sponsors, refuse is collected across the venue, including the Spectator Camp and the Gauntlet.

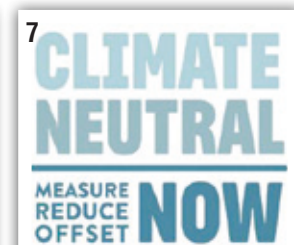
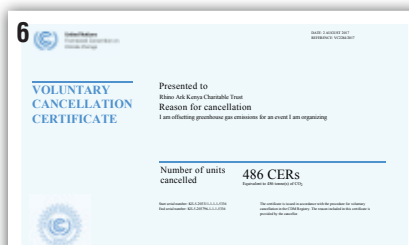
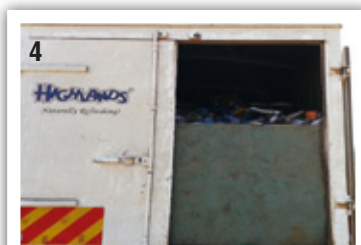
To promote refuse recycling, a Waste Sorting Station is set up at the venue. Glass, cans, tins, and plastic bottles, among others, are separated and brought back to Nairobi for recycling. Since 2013, over 50 cubic metres of refuse have been properly sorted at each event and removed from the venue for recycling.

Additional greening initiatives are implemented on an ad hoc basis. For example, to reduce the generation of plastic waste associated with one-use plastic items, in particular plastic water bottles, the Rhino Charge organizers have provided each person coming to the 2018 Rhino Charge with one multiple-use metallic water bottle.

Making the Rhino Charge Climate Neutral

Rhino Ark has committed to make the Rhino Charge climate neutral from 2017 onwards, namely to offset the CO2 emissions related to the event by purchasing corresponding amounts of carbon credits on the market. Rhino Ark purchases offsets to compensate for the CO2 emissions from the Rhino Charge from carbon projects implemented in Kenya that reduce deforestation and forest degradation or promote the use of, and disseminate improved cooking stoves.

As part of this commitment, the Rhino Charge has joined the Climate Neutral Now movement.



1. Waste sorting station
2. Waste sorting station in full activity
3. Sorted aluminium cans
4. One of the two Highlands trucks three quarters full of sorted plastic waste
5. Waste sorting site after the charge
6. Certificate of purchase of offsets
7. Climate Neutral Now
8. Use of metallic bottles



"This fence is a valuable asset in our efforts to protect wildlife as well as forest resources. Several critically endangered species including the black rhino and the mountain bongo are now better protected within a fenced ecosystem. Indeed, the Aberdares is a precious site of valuable biodiversity. We all have a duty to protect this God-given heritage in the interest of present and future generations of humanity."

Hon. Mwai Kibaki, EGH, M.P., President of the Republic of Kenya, 12 March 2010 at the Aberdare Fence Commissioning, Bondeni, Mweiga



"The Aberdares conservation efforts underline the extraordinary and wide-ranging returns possible when a more creative, decisive and sustainable approach to managing nature is undertaken - they also offer a model for exemplary public/private partnerships."

Achim Steiner, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNEP, 5 September 2011 at the Launch of the Environmental Social and Economic Assessment of the Fencing of the Aberdare Conservation Area Report.



"I feel honoured to play a role in the conservation of the Aberdares Forest System, a forest that plays important socio-economic and ecological roles not only for the local communities surrounding the forests but also for the global community through reducing global warming."

The late Nobel Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai in 2007 upon accepting to become one of Rhino Ark's distinguished patrons.

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