

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.

