



BLACK MAMBAS EXPANSION PROJECT

In the last 40 years, populations of the two species of rhino in Africa have declined by a staggering 90%. South Africa, home to approximately 80% of the world's remaining wild rhinos with around 20,000 rhino in total, is at the center of the rhino crisis. Black rhino in particular are of concern as there most of the remaining are in South Africa and predominantly in the Greater Kruger Landscape, which includes the Balule Nature Reserve and the surrounding communities in which the all-women Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit works. Since 2007 more than 5,000 rhino have been illegally killed across the entirety of South Africa alone.

Scientists have found no medicinal value in rhino horn but the illegal trade continues unabated. We must act aggressively to protect rhinos. Rhinos are umbrella species for the savannah habitat in which they thrive, as the poachers also hunt out almost any other large mammal for bushmeat, as well as pangolins and elephants for similarly illegal trade in scales and ivory.

Although the numbers of Black rhino are low, and are over 90% less than historical levels, the populations of the species have been steadily increasing since their nadir in 1995 at only 2,410. Currently, they number over 5,000 individuals in a highly fragmented landscape from South Africa north to Kenya.

Although unarmed, the front-line presence of the Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit in South Africa may be among the most effective counters to rhino poaching and community transformation. They are the first line of defense against poaching of Black and White rhino, as well as the dozens of other threatened species in the Greater Kruger Landscape. The Black Mambas act according to the British "Police Bobby on the Beat" model: presence leads to detection and deterrence.

Armed response units support the patrolling Black Mambas during active poacher incursions, but are extremely limited in size, expensive, dangerous, cannot be everywhere, and will never change the perception of poachers among the community. The Black Mamba Program seems to counter all of that in and around the 50,000 ha Balule Nature Reserve, part of the Greater Kruger Landscape of South Africa.

The Black Mambas have reduced overall poaching, snaring, and poisoning activities by 93% since their founding three years ago by daily patrolling dozens of kilometers of roads in

Balule (Craig Spencer, personal communications). Even with the recent surge in illicit rhino poaching due to the imminent legalization of South African rhino horn trading, they have still been able to significantly slow rhino poaching by over 50% since their founding (Craig Spencer, personal communications).

The Black Mamba Program also creates pro-rhino behavioral change in the three large nearby communities in which they live. Their 'Bush Babies' primary school education program works to inspire the next generation in a dozen local schools to counter the theft of their wildlife heritage by poachers. Poachers in these communities are often seen as Robin Hood, stealing from the rich by poaching their rhino. However, the Black Mambas are changing this narrative.

The Black Mamba Program empowers women as conservationists and community influencers. When they first started, the Black Mamba women were cultural oddities while driving, patrolling, and militaristic demeanor, all actions that are men's work in their culture. However, anecdotes suggest perceptual changes so that the Mambas may now be seen as community heroes. One measure of this is that hundreds regularly apply for the few open Black Mamba positions, even though the salary is barely above minimum wage.

Our proposed program will quantify Black Mamba Program impact for the first time, identify the essential components for replication, create a case study that should allow the program to spread, and begin exploring sites for possible Program expansion.

We expect the following steps in the process:

- Quantify likely great increases in self-reported changes in self-worth and dignity among new Black Mamba teams, changes in conservation perception among their communities, and impacts on poaching incidents since their founding - These outcomes will help to identify and quantify program impacts
- Document increases in Bush Babies students in attitude and behavioral intentions in support of rhino conservation - The Bush Babies program builds the next generation of APU staff and community support
- Create a Case Study of the Black Mamba Program – Will allow for expansion and dissemination of the impacts of the program to a global conservation audience
- Begin creating a Train the Trainer program - This program will distill the core necessary Black Mamba Program components into a template approach that can be used to begin to create new Black Mamba Programs elsewhere
- Begin recruiting additional conservation units interested in creating Black Mamba Programs – Sharing approaches to training, materials, and infrastructure, starting in South Africa and building on connections with similar APU groups

- Create Black Mamba Programs in other locations across South Africa and across the continent, building upon the successes and best practices of the Black Mamba program in Balule.
- Ensure that the new Black Mamba APU groups are self-sustaining in recruiting, maintaining staff, and finances
- Create evaluation and self-reflection approach that new APU units can use.

In sum, the initial focus of this project led by Helping Rhinos will be on the Balule Nature Reserve and other public and private reserves in the Greater Kruger National Park landscape where the Black Mambas currently operate. By characterizing the Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit in a rigorous case study, we will be able to build upon this successful program and expand it to other areas to protect African rhinos and other species of great concern.

We will be focused initially on evaluating the impact where the Black Mambas have been working for over three years. After our initial focus, we will expand to communicate with private and public parks near Kruger NP in northern South Africa, where there are rhino populations as well as other large herbivores.

Ultimately, our goal is to create a model with which we can expand the Black Mambas to many other protected areas across Africa, and we have had interest to this end in South Africa, nearby Zimbabwe and Botswana, and from our current collaborators in Kenya.

Helping Rhinos is passionate about ensuring the survival of Black and White rhinos in their natural habitats and across their original ranges. We do this using three core objectives: To rescue and protect Black and White rhino in their natural habitats by delivering tangible results in anti-poaching and habitat preservation; To help care for and rehabilitate orphaned rhinos; To instigate educational initiatives that inculcate pro-conservation gains in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs among the populace in range countries as well as globally. Our mission is being achieved by focusing its activities on three core objectives, underpinned by a competent fundraising and partnership model that recognizes the centrality of effective community engagement in the conservation of their natural patrimony.

Our best to you,
Dr. James A. Danoff-Burg
Director and Chair
Helping Rhinos USA
501(c)(3) Registered Non-Profit, based in California, EIN: 81-3266651
James@HelpingRhinos.org
www.helpingrhinos.org