

## MyPlanet Rhino Fund supports variety of rhino conservation, education projects in 2017

Created in 2011, through a partnership between MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Braam Malherbe, local conservationist, the MyPlanet Rhino Fund has become one of the biggest citizen-driven fundraising initiatives for rhino conservation. More than R9.1m has been raised over the past six years, and has been used to fund a variety of rhino conservation and education projects.



World Rhino Day, celebrated on 22 September, confirms the intention of everyone from conservationists to concerned citizens to bring the planet's five rhino species back from the brink of extinction. In the past 12 months, over 54,000 cardholders have raised R2.6m for the MyPlanet Rhino Fund by using their loyalty cards at participating partner stores. Over the same period of time, the Department of Environmental Affairs reported a slight, but very welcome, [decline in the loss of rhinos](#) for the second year in a row, indicating that the increased conservation efforts are starting to pay off, most notably in the Kruger National Park, the country's rhino stronghold.

Each year, the MyPlanet Rhino Fund disperses funds to conservation organisations and parastatal agencies that use a variety of best practices and programmes to protect Rhinos. Conservationist and MyPlanet ambassador, Braam Malherbe who helped to establish the fund says, "It is really important that each year our supporter base grows and our fundraising increases. While good work is being done to improve the protection of rhinos, there are still far too many rhinos lost every year. Unfortunately, rhino poaching cartels are sophisticated and well resourced, and our conservation bodies have to match this if they are going to be effective. We're deeply grateful to our supporters, and hope many more South Africans who care about rhinos and the environment will come on board as MyPlanet Rhino Fund cardholders in celebration of World Rhino Day this year."

### More aerial support for Kruger National Park

The major donation of the MyPlanet Rhino Fund this year is R1,169,000 that has been allocated to the purchase of a Foxbat A-22LS aircraft for SANParks Kruger National Park, enabling the anti-poaching unit to improve aerial support. Aircraft are a critical component of the anti-poaching effort, enabling the unit to be more effective at monitoring rhino populations and movements over the vastness of the park; identifying high risk areas due to high densities of rhino; monitoring rhinos in remote areas of the park and increasing aerial patrols on the lookout for, or tracking poaching gangs.



Rhino killings in the Kruger National Park have marginally declined over the past two years, but poaching has unfortunately increased in other areas. The MyPlanet Rhino Fund has also made donations to help the Special Species Protection Unit of Savé Valley Conservancy, which is part of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, and to the Rhino Pride Foundation Trust, which implements layered, early warning security measures at key rhino sanctuaries. Rhino poaching in KwaZulu-Natal is on the rise and the MyPlanet Rhino Fund has donated R250,000 to the SANParks Honorary Rangers Kwazulu Natal Region's Climb for K9 campaign, which enables them to buy much-needed GPS tracking harnesses and medical trauma kits for their anti-poaching Canine (K9) Unit.

Dogs play an important role in rhino protection and another canine-focused beneficiary of the MyPlanet Rhino Fund in 2017 is the Balule Nature Reserve in Hoedspruit. A donation has been made to enable the establishment of a canine component of their successful Black Mamba All-Women Anti-Poaching Unit.



## Intelligence gathering

Apart from the on-the-ground efforts, there's a great need also for effective intelligence-gathering and real-time data processing and analysis. A donation from the MyPlanet Rhino Fund will enable Welgevonden Reaction of the Waterberg's Welgevonden Game Reserve to establish a joint operations centre to enhance rhino protection in Limpopo Province.

This year, the fund is also providing support to two programmes, the Lapalala Wilderness School and Rhino Revolution's Green Kidz programme which aim to foster awareness and develop conservation leadership in the youth from vulnerable communities.

For more info, go to [www.myschool.co.za](http://www.myschool.co.za).

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