

## PRESS RELEASE

### Miraculous recovery of Kenya's rare black rhinos so successful that animals will move to a new sanctuary to relieve 'overcrowding'

- Kenya's black rhino numbers quadruple from 240 in 1984 to 966 today
- Miraculous recovery thanks to Kenya's security which has brought poachers to justice
- Rhinos are solitary creatures that need space to avoid overcrowding
- Loisaba Sanctuary offers new home for 21 rhinos in one of Kenya's largest translocations ever

Kenya, 12th January 2024: -- Three decades ago they were on the brink of extinction, but since then Kenya's black rhino numbers have climbed so rapidly that they are 'overcrowding' their sanctuaries, which is why 21 of the rare animals will soon be moved to a new safe haven.

This month the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) will translocate a mix of female and male eastern black rhinos to Loisaba Conservancy, in the highlands of Laikipia County. It will be the first time Loisaba has seen rhinos since poachers killed the last of the species there 50 years ago.

"It's incredibly exciting to be part of the reintroduction of rhinos to a landscape where they've been absent for 50 years," said Tom Silvester, CEO of Loisaba Conservancy. "It means so much to us on Loisaba to see this iconic species come home again and it is a mark of Kenya's conservation success."

The operation marks an amazing turnaround for Kenya's black rhinos. Numbers have risen from 240 in 1984 to 966 today. Kenya's success, thanks to heightened security and success in bringing poachers to justice, means the East African nation now hosts the third-largest rhino population in Africa, after South Africa and Namibia.

Research shows Kenya needs a stable number of 2,000 eastern black rhinos for the species to survive here in the face of threats to their survival, including climate change, disease, poaching and loss of habitat. Kenya's government has made a strong commitment to achieving this goal.

The key to success has been Kenya's efficiency in safeguarding keystone species like rhino in protected areas. Black rhinos are solitary animals and without enough room to disperse, they cannot be encouraged to breed. With some of Kenya's existing 16 sanctuaries nearing maximum capacity, there is an urgent need to create new ones offering ideal conditions: the right habitat, effective security, plus strong support from neighbouring communities.

Loisaba, a Kenyan conservancy that exists for the benefit of local communities in Laikipia County, has set aside around half of its 58,000 acres for the rhinos, securing this new sanctuary with a world-class security operation and low-profile fencing to allow free movement of all other wildlife species.

KWS will lead the upcoming translocation. Highly-skilled vets will move the rhinos – which can weigh up to 1,400 kilos – by truck to their new home. Supporting the project are San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, The Elewana Collection and Space for Giants. The rhinos will be coming from Nairobi National Park, Ol Pejeta Conservancy and Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

**Dr. Erastus Kanga Director General, Kenya Wildlife Services, said:** "As we embark on the historic translocation of 21 black rhinos to Loisaba Conservancy, guided by the Immobilization and Translocation Protocols, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the protection, conservation and expansion of Kenya's black rhino population. The success achieved in sustaining their numbers is a testament to our relentless pursuit of security measures against poaching and our dedication to the principles outlined in the 7th edition of the Recovery and Action Plan for black rhinos in Kenya (2022-2026). This strategic action of having 21 rhinos in Loisaba Conservancy aligns with our vision to establish viable habitats, fostering optimal conditions for rhinos to thrive".

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**Laikipia community leader Mathew Nauptari said:** "Rhinos coming to Loisaba will benefit us as a community. They will boost ecotourism, while preserving and protecting the landscape which is culturally so important to us."

**Munira Bashir, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Kenya Program Director, said:** "Securing this habitat at Loisaba and bringing rhinos back to this landscape with support from the government of Kenya is an incredible conservation success story that The Nature Conservancy is proud to be a part of."

**Dr. Nadine Lamberski, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance chief conservation and wildlife health officer, said:** "San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA) is proud to support Kenya Wildlife Service and Loisaba Conservancy in the designation of Loisaba as a sanctuary for the critically endangered eastern black rhino. San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance plays a multidimensional role in supporting this relocation and we are honoured to be a part of this transformative project that provides black rhinos with a protected area for them to thrive."

**Dr Max Graham, CEO and Founder of Space for Giants, said:** "The reintroduction of the eastern black rhino to Loisaba is a testament to our collective ability to enact meaningful change for Kenya's iconic wildlife and be a force for nature. We are delighted to play a role in the conservation of this critically endangered species alongside Kenya Wildlife Service and our dedicated partners."

**Dr Domonic Maringa, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Head of Conservation and Wildlife, said:** "This translocation showcases our unwavering commitment to securing the future of these iconic animals and underscores the collaborative approach to safeguarding Kenya's natural heritage. Together, we strive to create a harmonious environment where wildlife can flourish, ensuring a legacy of conservation for generations to come."

**Samuel Mutisya, Head of Research and Species Conservation at OI Pejeta Conservancy, said:** "We at OI Pejeta are incredibly proud to be a source population for this, and hopefully future, expansions of black rhino habitat. Immense effort by our supporters, staff and our surrounding communities have gone into creating a safe haven for the critically endangered black rhino. Having now exceeded our carrying capacity, and whilst we seek contiguous habitat for black rhino expansion, we look forward to seeing these rhinos flourish at their new home on Loisaba."

**Note for editors: please contact us for video and photographic materials**

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