

SANParks buys Foxbat light aircraft to combat rhino poaching in KNP

A whopping R2,940,000 was raised over the past year for the MyPlanet Rhino Fund thanks to 34,000 supporters swiping their MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet cards at participating retailers. The funding is vital to help boost rhino protection across South Africa.



Since last year, the MyPlanet Rhino Fund, which is administered by the Endangered Wildlife Trust, has donated more than R3.5m to nine different non-profit organisations engaged in rhino conservation. More than R1.4m was allocated to SANParks and specifically Kruger National Park, enabling them to buy a new Foxbat light aircraft. The more cost-effective Foxbat will play an essential role in monitoring rhinos, identifying and responding to threats, and ensure that Kruger's anti-poaching unit is better equipped when it comes to combatting increasingly sophisticated gangs of rhino poachers. The decentralised aerial capacity which the new Foxbat provides is pivotal in this struggle. In the face of the terrible, ongoing onslaught, the Kruger National Park remains home to the largest remaining populations of Africa's iconic rhinos.

“ Thank you for supporting the MyPlanet Rhino Fund. The Kruger National Park now has a new FoxBat Aircraft and hanger to help combat poaching.

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<pic.twitter.com/SngVDOJpgZ>— MySchool SA (@MySchoolSA) [October 22, 2018](#) ”

Great success due to aircraft deployment

“It is with great appreciation that SANParks has received the news that the MyPlanet Rhino Fund will be donating a Foxbat A22LS aircraft,” says Steven Whitfield, Marula North regional ranger in the Kruger National Park and also pilot responsible for piloting the new aircraft and project. “Over the last few years, we have had great success due to our deployment of aircraft piloted by rangers over the vastness of Kruger. Aircraft have become irreplaceable assets enabling quick response and support to poaching incidents. They are vital for combatting poaching on many levels; improving monitoring, identifying high risk areas, patrolling remote areas inaccessible by vehicle and foot, and enhancing our rapid detection and response

capabilities as poaching trends shift.”



The MyPlanet Rhino Fund Foxbat will be based at Satara, in a newly built hangar that was jointly funded between MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet and StopRhinoPoaching.com. “The hangar which will house the new aircraft will greatly enhance the airwing capability in this region of the Kruger National Park. The construction demonstrates what can be achieved with the collaborative effort of organisations working together,” says Elise Serfontein, founding director of StopRhinoPoaching.com.



8 suspected poachers nabbed in Kruger National Park

25 Oct 2018



Poaching has increased in areas outside KNP

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 of over R500,000 each to the rhino conservation initiatives of Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape and the Pilanesberg Wildlife Trust in the North West Province. Balule Nature Reserve in Limpopo has received R371,400 in support of its K9 anti-poaching and community outreach initiatives.



Education and the development of future conservation leaders are other important elements in sustaining the country's efforts to protect rhinos. This year, the MyPlanet Rhino Fund is continuing its support of the Lapalala Wilderness School and Rhino Revolution's Green Kidz programmes which raise awareness and involve the youth from vulnerable communities in rhino conservation education. Effective rhino conservation also demands the optimal use of data, and the remaining 2018 funds have been allocated to Endangered Wildlife Trust and Southern African Wildlife College projects that are focused on improving data analysis and developing a software tool to facilitate greater information sharing, gathering and reporting.

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