

Kenyan reserve to fly drones to tackle rhino poachers

December 7 2012

One of Kenya's best known private game reserves in Kenya announced Friday a plan to fly unmanned surveillance drones to monitor and protect critically endangered rhinos from rampant poaching.

Ol Pejeta, a 90,000-acre non-profit private wildlife conservancy in central Kenya's Laikipia District, holds four of the worlds last remaining seven northern white [rhinos](#).

"We are looking to fund our first drone," the conservancy said in a public appeal to raise the \$35,000 for the drone, which will be fixed with a live-streaming camera to track rhinos chipped with [radio frequency tags](#).

"There is currently a poaching epidemic with countless rhino being slaughtered for their horns," it added.

"In a country with an average wage of just a dollar a day, a rhino horn can bring in \$12,000," the equivalent a night's work for 30 year's income.

Kenya, which has the world's third largest rhino population—around 600 black and 300 white rhinos—is constantly battling poachers.

The illegal trade is driven by the voracious Asian and Middle Eastern demand for the animals' horns for use in traditional medicines for fevers, convulsions and as an aphrodisiac.

"The teams urgently need aerial support so that they can ensure they are covering the areas most at risk," it said, adding that the drone would be able to cover up to 50 miles (80 kilometres) and fly for an hour and a half on a single charge.

"Eventually it will also allow people all over the world, from homes to offices to schools and colleges, to take a virtual safari to an [African wildlife](#) conservancy," it added.

"The good news is that protecting wildlife means protecting tourism, and tourism mean more money for people in the local community, not just for a few [poachers](#)."

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