

100 S. African rhinos moving to Botswana to escape poachers

February 12 2014



This picture taken on July 25, 2013 shows a white rhino at the Johannesburg Zoo

African safari operators and conservation groups said on Wednesday they plan to move up to 100 South African rhinos to neighbouring Botswana for safekeeping, as poaching levels spike to new highs.

"One hundred rhinos will be captured and safely transported from South Africa... and released in Botswana's remote wilderness," two conservation groups called &Beyond and Great Plains said in a joint statement.

A team of anti-poaching experts will be charged with monitoring the animals, which will be tagged and micro-chipped.

Last year more than 1,000 [rhinos](#) were illegally killed in South Africa, home to the majority of the world's rhino population, which marks a 50 percent jump from the previous year fuelled by rising demand for rhino horn from Asia.

"There is a battle for Africa's wildlife raging. Rhinos are being poached at a rate of one every nine hours," said Great Plains CEO Dereck Joubert.

The move is expected to take place in 2015 and cost more than \$8 million, which the groups hope to get through fund-raising activities.

Discussions are still under way about where the animals will be bought from—but will likely include both public and private game reserves.

"The initiative would be a good one, we need every initiative to save the species," said Isaac Phaahla, spokesman for South Africa National Parks.

South Africa is home to around 80 percent of the world's rhino population, estimated at more than 25,000.

Most dwell in the vast Kruger Park—roughly the size of Israel—which is also the poachers' preferred hunting ground.

More than 60 percent of South Africa's rhino poachings occur in Kruger.

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