

FROM SAN DIEGO ZOO SAFARI PARK TO THE SERENGETI

- Singita Grumeti Fund translocates a 1,157 kilogram eastern black rhino bull from San Diego Zoo to the Serengeti, Tanzania
- The epic 68-hour journey spanned five countries, requiring three aeroplanes and two trucks



An eight-year old eastern black rhino male gifted by San Diego Zoo Global has been successfully translocated to the western Serengeti, in an effort to save this critically endangered species from extinction. Bred in the US, 'Eric' is now safe and well in the Singita Grumeti Reserve after an epic journey from LAX, via Belgium, Qatar, Uganda and finally into Tanzania. With fewer than 750 black rhino remaining, the translocation completes the first phase of the Singita Grumeti Fund's Black Rhino Expansion Project.

September 2018 - The [Singita Grumeti Fund](#) has successfully planned, organised and coordinated the translocation of Eric, an eight-year-old eastern black rhino male from the San Diego Zoo Safari Park to the western Serengeti. Tanzania's newest resident was gifted to the government and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania by San Diego Zoo and to bolster an important satellite population of critically endangered eastern black rhino within the greater Serengeti ecosystem. Eric's new home is the exclusive 350,000-acre Singita Grumeti concession area in the western Serengeti where he will be protected and monitored by the non-profit Singita Grumeti Fund in close cooperation with the Tanzanian Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA).

It took two trucks and three airplanes, across five countries to get the 1,157-kilogram bull rhino back to his native habitat – an epic journey in which he travelled extremely well. “Our months of preparation for Eric’s travel were successful and the transport could have not gone any better,” said Steve Metzler, Henshaw curator of mammals, San Diego Zoo Safari Park. Eric arrived safely in Tanzania after an epic 68-hour journey which included a truck to Los Angeles International Airport where he was cleared by US customs and put on a Qatar Airways Boeing 777 freighter through Liege and onto Doha where he was well looked after at the carrier’s state-of-the-art Live Animal Centre. From Doha, Eric then flew to Entebbe and finally on to the Serengeti, Tanzania. Now safely in Singita Grumeti, Eric will reside in a rhino Intensive Protection Zone, along with another eastern black rhino female. With the help of a rhino behavior specialist, he will become acclimatised and sensitised to his natural environment over the next several months.

“This translocation is significant because Eric is genetically over-represented within the American zoos’ East African rhino population, yet he will play a vitally important breeding role in the wild Tanzanian population. We are hopefully going to see a lot of movement and mixing of the various satellite rhino populations in the ecosystem, where his impact on the genetics of the overall population will be crucial,” says Grant Burden, Head of Special Projects, Singita Grumeti Fund.

Fueled by a lucrative illegal trade in wildlife products, Tanzania experienced a poaching crisis, which decimated rhino populations, and today fewer than 750 remain across the whole of East Africa, classifying the eastern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*) as critically endangered on the IUCN red list.

The Singita Grumeti Fund has had tremendous success in curbing poaching since its establishment in 2003, which has resulted in dramatic increases in wildlife numbers. Between 2003-2018, the concession experienced a four-fold increase in elephant populations and over a ten-fold increase in buffalo numbers. With a strong anti-poaching presence in place and plenty of ideally-suited rhino habitat, under the co-management of the Singita Grumeti Fund and TAWA, the Singita Grumeti rhino expansion project is ideally positioned to meaningfully contribute to repopulation and protection eastern black rhino within the greater Serengeti ecosystem.

The Singita Grumeti Fund will work in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism's Wildlife Division, Tanzanian Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA), Tanzanian National Parks (TANAPA) and Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) to successfully implement and monitor this multi-phase project. The IUCN Species Survival Commission Guidelines for the in-situ re-introduction and translocation of African rhinoceros will act as the road map for this on-going translocation project.

The establishment of a viable satellite population of breeding black rhino within the Singita Grumeti concession area by mid-2019 is expected to provide the stimulus for rhino population growth with dispersing rhino venturing out and recolonizing new territories within the greater Serengeti ecosystem. As Stephen Cunliffe, Executive Director of the Singita Grumeti Fund, concludes, "Our ultimate goal and measure of success for the Singita Grumeti Black Rhino Expansion Project will be to have these reintroduced rhino breeding and thriving within their natural environment to the point where they start to disperse, and we see movement occurring between the various satellite rhino populations within the wider ecosystem."

Note to Editors:

Singita Grumeti Fund

The Singita Grumeti Fund is a non-profit organisation carrying out wildlife conservation and community development work in the western corridor of the Serengeti ecosystem in Tanzania. Their vision is a world in which people and wildlife live together sustainably, forever.

San Diego Zoo Global

Bringing species back from the brink of extinction is the goal of San Diego Zoo Global. As a leader in conservation, the work of San Diego Zoo Global includes on-site wildlife conservation efforts (representing both plants and animals) at the San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research, as well as international field programs on six continents. The work of these entities is made accessible to children through the San Diego Zoo Kids network, reaching out through the internet and in children's hospitals nationwide. The work of San Diego Zoo Global is made possible by the San Diego Zoo Global Wildlife Conservancy and is supported in part by the Foundation of San Diego Zoo Global.

Singita

Singita is a conservation brand that has been preserving African wilderness for the past 25 years, offering an exceptional safari experience with 12 luxury, award-winning lodges and camps across 5 regions in Africa. In partnership with non-profit funds and trusts who implement strategic conservation projects in each region, Singita is preserving and protecting pristine land and wildlife populations and helping to create economic independence within local communities surrounding the reserves.

Photography credit: Ami Vitale (www.amivitale.com)

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