

After 40 years of extinction, rhinos return to Mozambique

By [Sisipho Skweyiya](#)

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Over four decades after they became extinct locally, rhinos are roaming again the wilds of Mozambique, which is bringing the endangered species from South Africa in efforts to breathe new life into its parks and boost local tourism.



A rhino is seen at a game reserve adjacent to the world-renowned Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga. Reuters/Siphwe Sibeko

A group of rangers captured, sedated and moved Black and White rhinos over 1,610km to Mozambique's Zinave National Park, which has over 400,000 hectares and more than 2,300 other reintroduced animals.

"Rhinos are important to the ecosystem, which is one of the reasons why we're moving them all this distance and doing all this effort to get them there," Kester Vickery, a conservationist who is supervising the rhino translocation told Reuters.

The Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) conservation group, which is conducting the operation, aims to relocate over 40 rhinos in the next two years to Mozambique.

Its project manager, Anthony Alexander, said that the group has already brought in certain predators and many elephants to the park and that it was now rhinos' turn.

"It's very exciting now to complete the presence of historical species in the park," Alexander said.



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Saving the endangered species

This initiative is part of a campaign to save the endangered species by relocating them to safe havens where they have a chance to increase their population.

"We are effectively spreading our eggs and putting them in different baskets," Vickery said, adding that he hoped to see a thriving population of white rhinos in Zinave in 10 years.

Mozambican environment minister Ivete Maibaze said in a statement that this historic translocation will also be beneficial for the country's emerging eco-tourism industry.

Mozambique's wildlife numbers were badly hit by a 15-year civil war that ended in 1992, and by poaching.

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