

ADVERTISEMENT

KWS mulls relocation as rhino population overruns Nairobi National Park

Kenya Wildlife Service Director General Erastus Kanga says the park can ecologically accommodate about 90 to 100 rhinos.



by GILBERT KOECH

Nairobi

10 July 2025 - 07:00

In Summary

- Kanga says there are challenges when rhinos are overcrowded in one area.
- They will fight for territory, forcing some get to the community areas.



Audio By Vocalize



Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano poses for a photo with KWS leadership and conservationists during the launch of the translocation exercise on May 24, 2025/KWS

Rhinos in Nairobi National Park have made a remarkable recovery and are now above the carrying capacity of the conservancy.

The carrying capacity is the maximum number of individuals of a species that an environment can support.



“We started with a population of less than 10, and with translocation and births right now we are enjoying 49 white rhinos and 126 black rhinos. The rhino population in this park is about 175. That is a big population,” he said.

The park is over and above the carrying capacity by 70 or 80 rhinos. “Now we are suffering because of our success.”

Kanga said there are challenges when rhinos are overcrowded in one area. They will fight for territory, forcing some to move out to community areas.

Rhino fights are often deadly. “A few months ago, there was a male black rhino that went out of Nairobi National Park three times in a week. So, we went to translocate it into Tsavo West because that has huge space.”

Kanga said rhinos also suppress their birth rate when they are overcrowded.

The increase in the rhino population within Nairobi National Park is one of the successes of conservation efforts.

It is projected that there will be an annual five per cent increase in black rhino numbers in the country from the current base of 1,059. It is crucial that new secure spaces are established and rhinos translocated to the new suitable habitats.

“Our rhino population has reached the optimal level, and what we are doing now, the government is supporting us, is a huge programme that we are calling the Kenya Rhino Range Expansion. We are rebuilding not just Nairobi National Park but also Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary by expanding it from 92 square kilometres to 3,000 square kilometres,” Kanga said.

Rhinos in Kenya, especially the black rhinos, have grown from just 384 individuals in the late 1980s to the current population of 1,059.

Authorities attribute the resurgence largely to strategic national conservation efforts, with the Wildlife Research and Training Institute playing a pivotal role in providing the scientific data that informs these initiatives.

“The rhino was declared a protected species by our late President Daniel Moi around 1986. When that declaration was made, the rhino population had seriously declined. We were coming from a high population of about 20,000, particularly black rhinos to about 384. That time we had about 50 white rhinos,” Kanga said.

The Kenya Wildlife Service started rebuilding the population to prevent the species from becoming extinct.

“We have created about 19 rhino sanctuaries. Nairobi National Park happens to be one of them, along with Nakuru and Ngulia,” Kanga said.

“We have been able to grow the black rhino population from a low of 380 to the current population of over 1,059 in about 35 years. That tells you if the government had not taken an interest, we would have lost this species.”

Kenya today hosts more than 90 per cent of the eastern black rhino. “The white rhinos have also shot up, as they have increased from a mere 50 to now 1,048. We are holding the third-largest rhino population in Africa.”

Translocating rhinos to new habitats is a complex process that requires meticulous planning and data-driven decision-making.

The Wildlife Research and Training Institute’s research efforts are instrumental as they offer insights into habitat suitability, carrying capacities, and the health of rhino populations before, during and after the exercise.

Already, KWS has launched the stakeholder engagement for the Tsavo West Rhino Sanctuary expansion project at Tsavo West National Park.

Spearheaded by the Kenya Rhino Range Expansion programme, the initiative seeks to transform the current 92 km² Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary into a vast 3,000 km² Tsavo West Rhino Sanctuary.

The project seeks to address critical conservation challenges and promote community development by enhancing habitat for the critically endangered eastern black rhino.

Established in 1986, the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary was designed to protect the eastern black rhino, but it now faces serious challenges due to overpopulation, hosting over 140 rhinos against a recommended capacity of 60.

Kanga said other interventions include engaging private landowners and community conservancies within Laikipia so that they can create homes and habitats for rhinos.

ADVERTISEMENT

Related Articles



State fixing infrastructure in national parks to enhance visitor experience

KWS manages over 10,000 km of road networks.

4mon ago | GILBERT KOECH | Nairobi

MUGA: Why we must preserve Nairobi National Park

Tourism is perhaps our greatest post-Independence economic success story,...

4mon ago | WYCLIFFE MUGA | Columnists

NEWS

World
Africa
Corridors-of-power
Infographics
Podcasts
Big-read
Fact Checker
News Brief
Star-farmer
Twitter Space
Realtime
Breakfast-briefing

HEALTH**SIASA****COUNTIES**

Rift-valley
Nairobi
North-eastern
Coast
Central
Nyanza
Western
Eastern

OPINION

Columnists
Leader
Star-blogs
Cartoon

SASA

Lifestyle
Technology
Entertainment

BUSINESS

Kenya
Markets
Commentary

SPORTS

Football
Athletics
Rugby
Tennis
Golf
Boxing
Basketball

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Society
- Fashion
- Food
- Travel
- Books
- Events

IN-PICTURES

VIDEO

PARTNER SITES

- Mpasho
- Radio Jambo
- Songaplay



[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#)

© The Star 2024. All rights reserved



Advertise with us:

+254 116 008 003

+254 711 046 000

advertise@the-star.co.ke