



Durbanville Hills funds rhino conservation project in KwaZulu-Natal

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Durbanville Hills Wines has donated R60 000 to Project Rhino KZN and will at the same time also adopt one of the rhinos currently in the Pongola Game Reserve camp in KwaZulu-Natal.

The money will be used by Space for Elephant Foundation, one of the founder members of Project Rhino, to establish the training, equipment required as well as placement of rhino scouts or bodyguards who will walk with the rhinos in the bush most of the time. Rhino scouts are found to be the most effective way to safeguard the rhino whilst at the same time providing employment within the community, an initiative in full support of the Minister of Department of the Environmental Affairs. These scouts are also taught to collect information about the behaviour of the animals in their care intended for research purposes and to contribute to a central data base.

Members of the rural community living in an area adjoining the Lubombo Mountains and which is home to most of South Africa's rhinos, will also receive training in wildlife management. The area is part of the internationally protected Maputaland Pondoland Albany Hotspot, an area of exceptional biodiversity and protected by a number of organisations and NGO's. The community will acquire "ownership" of the area once its members have been fully trained.

Albert Gerber, managing director of Durbanville Hills Wines, said the objective of the cellar's sponsorship is not only to preserve wildlife but also to create employment in rural communities. "Contributing part of the proceeds from the sale of our Rhinofields range for the protection of rhino and the training of rural communities sharing their habitat is for us a natural extension to our own conservation efforts.

"At our cellar and on our member farms we protect close to 320 hectares of renosterveld, the indigenous and highly threatened biomes. The link of this plant species to the rhino's are a bit of mystery but there are documented sightings during the mid-1600's of rhino's roaming the hills of Durbanville, the very area where our vineyards are planted today. Some suggest that the dull, grey appearance of the renosterveld bushes when viewed from a distance resembles that of the wrinkled and rugged hide of a rhino. Others suggest that the rhino's which once moved freely in the Cape used renosterveld for food and shelter and derived its name in that way.

“We have founded a renosterveld garden at our cellar where visitors can enjoy the beautiful flowers in bloom during the months of October and November as well as named one of our wine ranges Rhinofields as a tribute to this plant family which forms such an important part of the Cape Floral Kingdom.”

Renosterveld, found mainly on fertile farm land along the Cape’s West Coast, is home to more than 5 400 plant species and among the diverse animal life it harbours are found the world’s smallest reptile (*Homopus areolatus*), its fastest bird (*Falco peregrinus*) and the rarest tortoise (*Psammobates geometricus*).

For more information on Durbanville Hills Wines, visit www.durbanvillehills.co.za. Alternatively, connect with them on [Facebook](#) or on [Twitter](#).