VETPAW
VETERANS EMPOWERED
TO PROTECT AFRICAN WILDLIFE

ISSUE No. #01

THE QUARTERLY DIGEST

NOVEMBER 2020

OPERATION RHINO RISE

Launched for 2020 - 2021

A comprehensive effort to increase the population of Black and White Rhino, and other endangered wildlife to a realistic and sustainable number.

RHINO HORN TRADE

South Africa

International commercial trade of rhino horn remains prohibited in terms of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora (CITES).

COVID-19 & CONSERVATION

The Creation of a Global Crisis

The SARS-CoV-2 virus and COVID-19 illness are driving a global crisis. Governments have responded by restricting human movement, which has reduced economic activity.

VETERAN NEWS

Mental Health

Coronavirus pandemic, social distancing are taking toll on veterans' mental health. Veterans are feeling disconnected from their family, friends, or community.

Operation Rhino Rise is a comprehensive effort to extensively increase the population of Black and White Rhino, and other endangered wildlife to a realistic and sustainable number, capable of continuous growth for generations to come.

Since 2014, VETPAW has led the charge on the protection of Africa's endangered wildlife and precious ecosystem. We have only been so successful due to various missions, campaigns, and partnerships. This has only been made possible with the help of gracious donors supporting our cause internationally. Through many successful endeavors in wildlife protection, we are able to refocus efforts towards conservation, preservation, and the repopulation of Rhinos, Elephants, Cheetahs, Lions, and Pangolin. Operation Rhino Rise is essential in continuing our mission of conservation and protection.

Operation Rhino Rise expands on the effort of endangered wildlife repopulation. Currently, we have relocated 18 Black Rhinos to protected territory with the help of local government and private landowners. One of the main efforts of this operation is to introduce an additional 82 Rhinos into the protected territory by 2022 via relocation and natural breeding.

To Read More & Donate:

THE BOLD APPROACH THAT COULD SAVE SOUTH AFRICA'S LEOPARDS

by Heather Richardson

August 26, 2020

A new approach to conservation is less about walling wildlife off in nature reserves, and more about adapting our world to suit animals.

To Read More:

WORLD ELEPHANT DAY 2020 AND THE IMPACT CASUSED BY COVID-19

World Elerphant Day 2020 Falls on Uncertain Times for the Worlds Largest Land Mammal and Communities Conserving African Wildlife

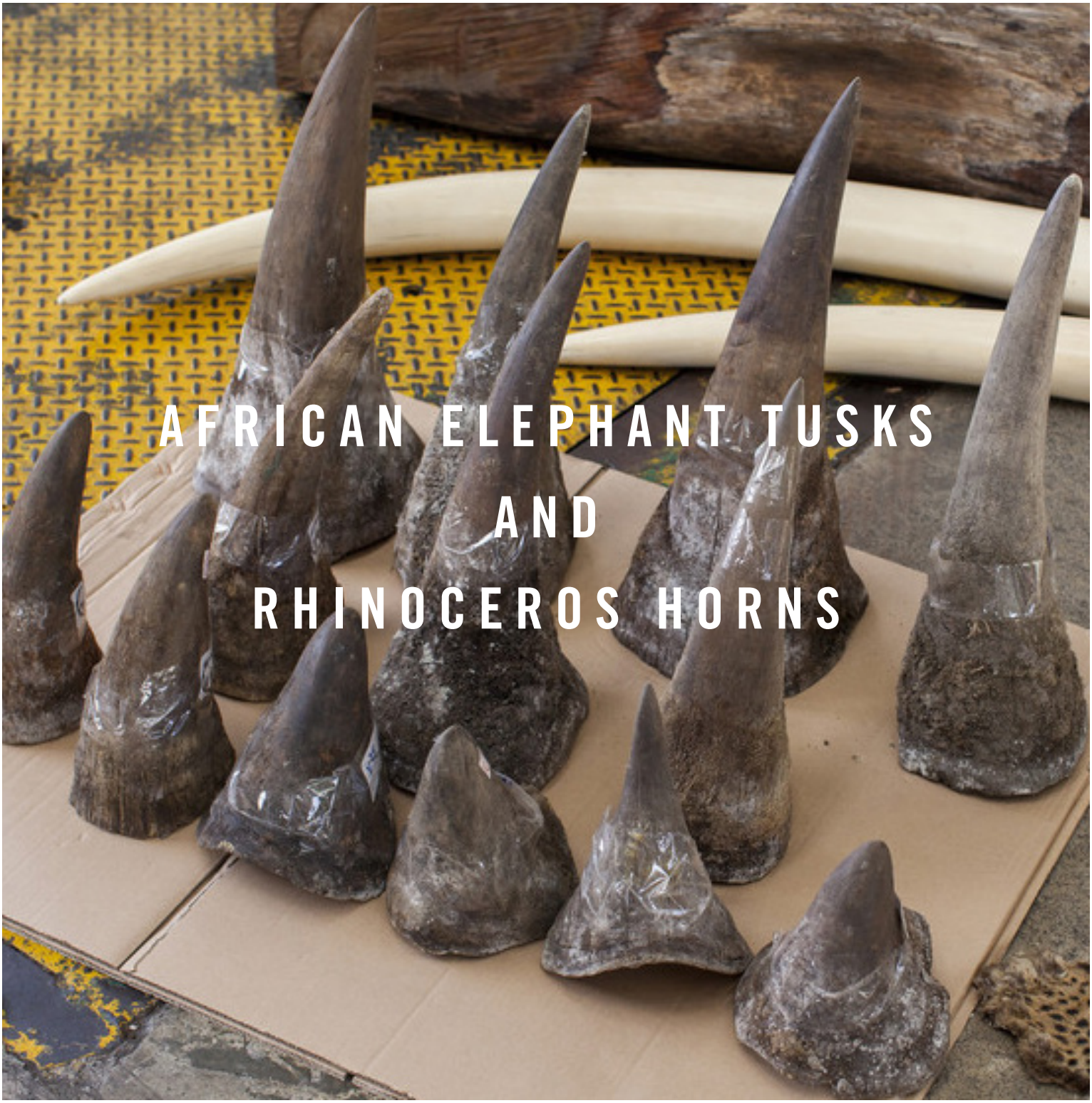
On World Elephant Day, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is reaching out to stakeholders, partnering NGOs and policy makers to shed light on the growing challenges to livelihood, food security and economic collapse in African communities doing the important work of wildlife conservation. Threats to conservation in Africa, including elephants, are on the rise due to effects from COVID-19. The surge in poaching in Uganda is a good example. Between February and June of this year, the Uganda Wildlife Authority recorded 367 poaching cases across the country, more than double the 163 cases recorded during a similar period in 2019.

To Read More:

CONSERVING AFRICA'S WILDLIFE AND WILDLANDS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The SARS-CoV-2 virus and COVID-19 illness are driving a global crisis. Governments have responded by restricting human movement, which has reduced economic activity. These changes may benefit biodiversity conservation in some ways, but in Africa, we contend that the net conservation impacts of COVID-19 will be strongly negative. Here, we describe how the crisis creates a perfect storm of reduced funding, restrictions on the operations of conservation agencies, and elevated human threats to nature. We identify the immediate steps necessary to address these challenges and support ongoing conservation efforts. We then highlight systemic flaws in contemporary conservation and identify opportunities to restructure for greater resilience. Finally, we emphasize the critical importance of conserving habitat and regulating unsafe wildlife trade practices to reduce the risk of future pandemics.

To Read More:



AFRICAN ELEPHANT TUSKS AND RHINOCEROS HORNS

In the last World Wildlife Crime Report, elephant ivory and rhino horns were discussed separately. Ivory was discussed under the heading of “art, décor, and jewellery” and as an investment commodity. Rhino horn was classified as a traditional medicine, although it was already apparent at that time that it had also become a status item. In the last four years, the evidence has mounted that rhino horn is being sold for its artistic and investment value, so it is similar to ivory in this respect. The two commodities are sourced from different regions in Africa but require similar skills and equipment to procure. They also share many commonalities in their primary destination markets. For these reasons, the two species are considered together here.

To Read More:

TEAM LEADERS UPDATE

Greetings and Salutations from South Africa!

Justin and Trevor here from the Veterans Empowered To Protect African Wildlife forward deployed team on the ground. First and foremost we would just like to say thank you on behalf of ourselves and the rest of our team for everyone's unwavering support throughout the pandemic and various lockdowns. Whether you have shown your support through donations of money or equipment (large or small), or just a positive message of encouragement when you have a moment, it has been greatly appreciated by ourselves and colleagues. Without your support, none of our efforts and accomplishments here would be possible. You are all as integral as the team on the ground and we are delighted to have this opportunity to express our gratitude!

Over the months since the lockdown began we have logged almost 52,000 miles on our vehicles in patrolling distance, tripled the amount of trail cameras we use to account for the rare and endangered animals in our care, and continued to support our neighboring communities and farms, as well as local security forces. This is all thanks to our generous donors who have continued to support our cause through one of the most trying events in the recent history of the world. These are developments that the VETPAW team as a whole are extremely proud of, yet our work is always an uphill battle with no real end in sight. However, we are always excited to progress and continue striving to further secure and safeguard the wildlife in our charge as well as provide assistance to those in need in our neighboring areas.

Directly because of your continuing support, we on the ground all have high hopes for the future of our small organization and look forward to what the years to come will bring. And we will continue to do our best to provide photos and videos of the amazing wildlife we have the privilege of keeping safe! (Just forgive us if our ugly mugs pop up from time to time.)

Cheers!!! Highest regards and thanks.

The VETPAW Team Leaders

BLOG BY: AARON MCMAHON

VETPAW:
GUN-TOTING POACHER HUNTERS OR ANTI-POACHING CONSERVATIONISTS?

The year is 2020 and rhino horn has been falsely labeled as a miracle drug, rumors dictated by poaching syndicates and black-market commerce. This has placed some of the world's last living dinosaurs on the brink of extinction. Today there are about 5,500 black rhinos left in the world. And although poaching has decreased over the past several years, every single year, thousands of rhinos and elephants are being gruesomely slaughtered for their horns and tusks.

IS VETPAW ACTIVELY FIGHTING POACHERS?

Since its inception, eight years ago, Vetpaw has maintained a presence on African reserves, providing security, training and assistance to keep wildlife safe from poaching threats. But, it's not just the rhinos that are suffering, local populations are barely thriving, unable to gain exposure to things that can pull them out of poverty – some unable to access or afford food. Vetpaw provides impoverished villagers with employment, training and various sustainable humanitarian efforts.

In a nutshell, what is Vetpaw?

Vetpaw is a nonprofit organization with on-ground professionals dedicated to combating rhino and wildlife poaching in South Africa. The organization is funded by those who would also like to see an end to the poaching epidemic in South Africa – people like you.

WHAT DOES VETPAW DO?

First of all, Vetpaw team members are not gun-crazy vigilante poacher hunters. We are not out here fighting poachers by kicking down doors and killing people. We are a group of conservation-minded military veterans who put our military training to use on the frontlines of the poaching epidemic. We are a relentless team of veterans who give a damn about the planet and its inhabitants – and are doing our best to fight back in any way possible. We are driven to improve the world, putting conservation and humanitarian efforts first. While we may not be fighting poachers with heavy artillery and hate, we are doing as much as we can to improve the situation and reduce the numbers of African wildlife being slaughtered illegally and inhumanely. Vetpaw team members are running continuous operations in South Africa. These often involve:

- Assisting in wildlife conservation, counter-poaching operations and anti-terrorism.
- Assisting with intelligence gathering, patrolling, security planning and operations.
- Enforcing the physical security of large properties and the endangered species contained within.
- Patrolling property and monitoring wildlife.
- Troubleshooting threats and potential threat scenarios.
- Promoting U.S. relationship-building in South Africa through sustainable community engagement and employment.

So what does Vetpaw do? They work tirelessly to decrease the number of animals poached in South Africa while supporting the humans who also inhabit the land.

This article is being written during the COVID-19 outbreak. There are currently six team members on the ground in South Africa, running missions day and night. Team leaders hold conference calls with the executive team 3x a week. For the team on the ground, it's business as usual. We work every single day to protect as many rhinos, elephants and other wildlife as possible.

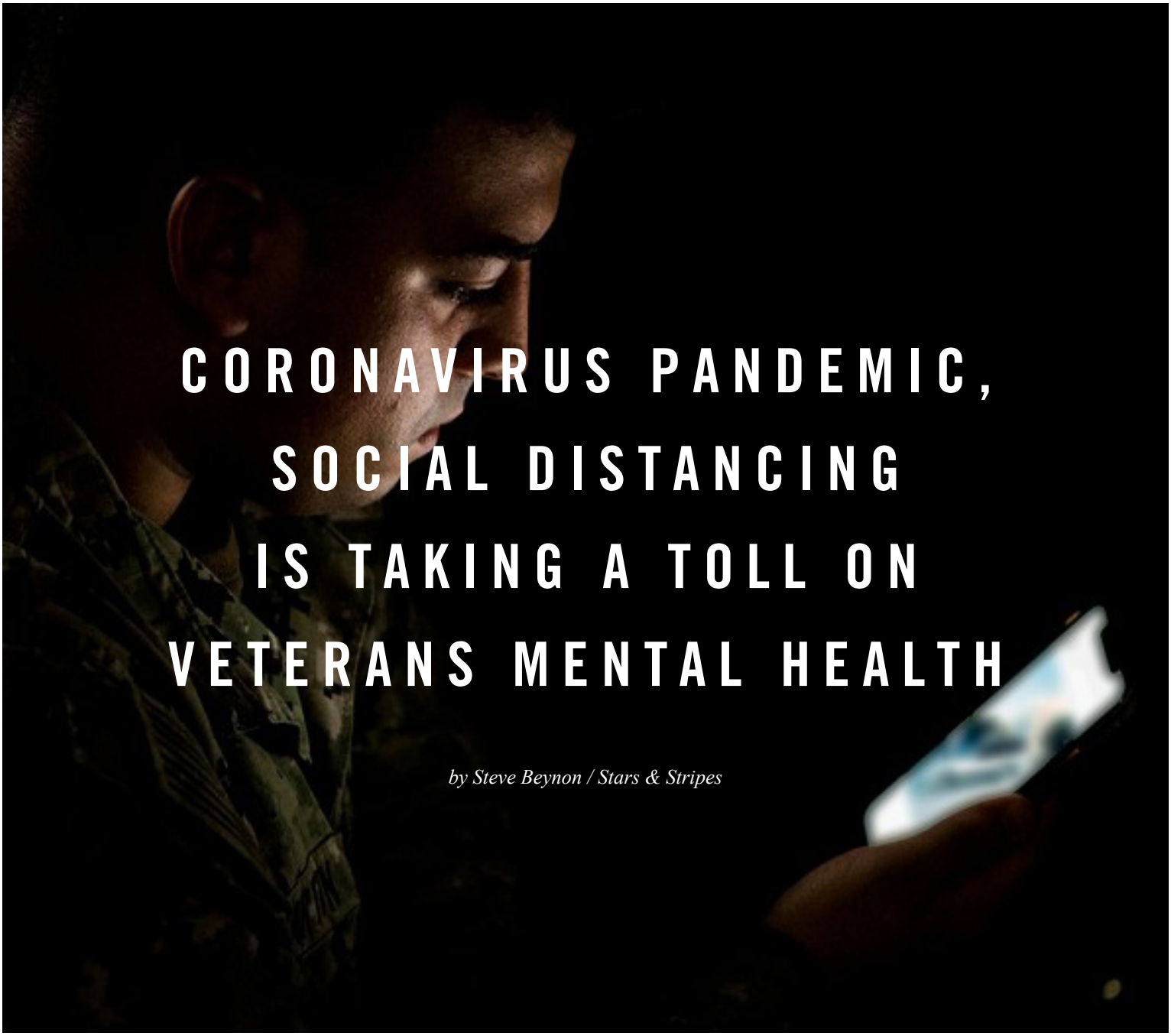
VETPAW, CONSERVATION & HOW YOU CAN HELP

Vetpaw is in the process of creating a ranger training platform in South Africa that will help game reserve owners hire legit, trustworthy, skilled and honest workers on their reserves. This initiative is one that can grow to higher heights which could potentially dramatically reduce and eliminate poaching in Africa. Of course, big initiatives take a lot of funding.

It is people just like you who donate and change the course of history, saving rhinos from extinction. Click here to donate or email shea.peaton@vetpaw.org for targeted sponsorships.

READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

VETERAN NEWS



CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, SOCIAL DISTANCING IS TAKING A TOLL ON VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH

by Steve Beynon / Stars & Stripes

September 24, 2020

Survey: Coronavirus pandemic, social distancing are taking toll on veterans' mental health

Veterans are facing increased mental health challenges during the coronavirus pandemic with less access to in-person therapy and isolation from friends and family, according to a new survey of Wounded Warrior Project members released this week.

About 60% of veterans surveyed reported feeling disconnected from their family, friends, or community. Half of veterans agreed their mental and physical health has worsened since social distancing themselves.

To Read More:

CARES ACT EXTENDS VA HOME LOAN OPTIONS FOR FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Source: blogs.va.gov

September 24, 2020

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, was designed to help Americans economically impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and to help homeowners avoid home foreclosure. Along with the CARES Act, the VA's Loan Guaranty Service is focused on ensuring veterans and their families facing temporary or more long-term difficulty paying their monthly mortgage understand their options.

To Read More:

VETERANS BENEFITS 2020: MOST UNIQUE OR NEWEST STATE BENEFIT

by Adam Stump

August 5, 2020

U.S. states offer Veterans a wide range of benefits. State representatives provided VA the most unique or newest benefit for Veterans, part of a five-part series. Below is a list of the benefits in alphabetical order by state.

To Read More: