

The incredible bulk

Marianna Giusti stocks up at five fabulous plastic-free stores

Launched in Australia nearly 10 years ago, **The Source Bulk Foods** (thesourcebulkfoods.co.uk) has set an international standard for refill shopping. Branches in the UK, Singapore, New Zealand and Ireland sell locally sourced organic food, oils and snacks. And in the UK, where 660m kgs of plastic end up in the ocean and countryside every year, The Source has also helped save 200,000 pieces of plastic packaging from being produced, and donated £30,000 to support the ocean conservation non-profit Sea Shepherd.

During lockdown, such was the demand for ethical shopping at home that Berlin institution **Original Unverpackt** (original-unverpackt.de) introduced a home-delivery cargo bike

service. Started by friends Milena Glimbovski and Sara Wolf in 2014 through an online crowdfunding scheme, the store sells food, soaps, domestic cleaning products and storage items from two sleek industrial spaces. Glimbovski also gives talks on environmentalism and the impact of food waste on climate change.

In Los Angeles, **The Waste Less Shop** (thewastelessshop.com) plants a tree for every purchase, with charity One Tree Planted. Customers can find tree-free toilet roll and bulk ranges including household cleaners, plus essential oils, beauty products and base ingredients for DIY creations. Its best sellers

can be found at the Riviera Village Farmers' Market every weekend.

Edinburgh's largest plastic-free store, **The Refillery** (therefillery.co.uk), sits outside the city's historic centre, and is celebrated for its freshly made nut butters and plant-based milks, which it sells alongside food, cleaning refill ranges, and "kind" reusable shopping bags to raise funds for breast-cancer research. The online shop's philosophy is "Rethink, Reorganise, Refill".

Meanwhile, at Lauren Wedderburn's plastic-free shop **Something Good** (somethinggood.co.uk) – born in Newcastle in 2019, with a table at Tynemouth Market – the mission is to "make our everyday routine less wasteful". Now a luminous white and natural-wood shop, it boasts a zero-waste pantry, refillery and ethical products such as beeswax food wraps, stainless steel lunch boxes, and Georganics toothpaste tablets. ■HTSI

Top: Original Unverpackt in Berlin.
Below: The Source Bulk Foods



THE SHOP'S PHILOSOPHY IS "RETHINK, REORGANISE, REFILL"



Above: a mother and calf black rhino. Right: Ginger Mauney with an orphaned rhino calf. Below centre: one of B2Gold's bars of "rhino gold"



One in a BULLION

Pilita Clark finds out how the rush to buy gold could help save the black rhino

In the middle of February, as the coronavirus crisis was gathering force, a Canadian gold-mining company made an unusual announcement. B2Gold said it was donating 1,000 ounces of gold to help save what it called a "critically endangered global treasure": the black rhinoceros in the southern African country of Namibia.

It was an eye-catching move in the world of philanthropy. It would also prove a canny investment for those who backed it. The gold was worth close to US\$1.5m at the time of B2Gold's announcement and it was turned into 1,000 bars of varying sizes, each embossed with a black rhino mother and calf. The idea was to sell each bar for the prevailing market price, plus a 15 per cent "conservation premium". Proceeds would be reinvested in long-term, sustainable conservation funding, as well as community-backed efforts to protect the black rhino from the relentless threat of poachers, who slaughter it for its horns – a commodity worth more than its weight in gold in some Asian countries, where it is mistakenly touted as a treatment for hangovers and even cancer.

There were more than 100,000 black rhinos in Africa as recently as the 1960s, experts estimate, and though their numbers have risen from a low point in the 1990s, it is thought that fewer than 5,700 are now left in the wild. In north-west Namibia, the creatures roam across a vast stretch of remote land with few roads that is hard for rangers to patrol.

The gold bars came from B2Gold's Namibia mine, and the campaign to sell them took off with a bang. Ten half-kilo bars were sold within days at two launch events, one in Namibia's capital of Windhoek and another at a big mining conference in Cape Town, South Africa. "It was massive," said Ginger Mauney, the US-born, Windhoek-based wildlife filmmaker and conservationist who came up with the gold-bar idea. Mauney is on the board of the Save the Rhino Trust Namibia, which B2Gold had been supporting with cash grants for several years. When the company invited her to visit its Vancouver headquarters in late 2018, she began to think of ways to extend that backing "in a way that made sense to them as a company too".



Over lunch with B2Gold CEO Clive Johnson, Mauney says she suddenly had an idea. "I just looked at Clive and said, 'You've got gold, so why don't we sell gold bars in a way that creates long-term sustainable funding to protect rhinos?' He looked at me and said, 'Well, yes, I think we can explore that.'" The project came to life just over a year later, when gold was trading at around US\$1,500 an ounce. That made the first gold-bar sales a good investment. But as the coronavirus crisis deepened, investors rushed to the safety of gold. The price soared to \$2,000 an ounce for the first time in August. Even with the 15 per cent conservation premium, any buyer who sold would have made a tidy profit.

But the early sales were also timely. They came as the pandemic was beginning to devastate wildlife tourism, a vital source of income in Namibia and an important factor in rhino conservation. The physical presence of tourists

revenues also help to fund rangers and other wildlife protection measures. At the same time, conservation groups in Namibia had their budgets slashed by up to 30 per cent as international donors passed on their own funding cuts.

As the gold-bar money began to flow, it was used to help plug the gaps. Ranger salaries were paid to keep people in the field. A vehicle was purchased to help track poachers.

RANGER SALARIES WERE PAID TO KEEP PEOPLE IN THE FIELD

Within four months of the launch, 3.5m Namibian dollars, or more than US\$200,000, had been disbursed.

This shows the importance of finding fresh ways to finance wildlife protection, says Richard Diggle, business adviser for community conservation at WWF in Namibia. "Covid-19 has

highlighted that financing conservation needs to be rethought," he says. "We cannot depend constantly on conventional donor cycles and tourism. We need to be more innovative and here's a fantastic example."

B2Gold sold 600 gold bars in Africa and has now extended its campaign to North America, where B2Gold's Clive Johnson said he was confident the remaining 400 bars would sell well, despite the higher price of gold. People are prepared to pay a premium to help save an animal that's been roaming the planet for 50m years, he said. "And we're using some gold that was deposited 6bn years ago by an exploding star that ended up in Namibia.

"I like the historical context of using something as natural and ancient as gold to help save an ancient animal." ■HTSI
Pilita Clark is an FT columnist

HOW TO GIVE IT
b2gold.com
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