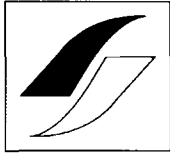


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From the
REF DESK

Edited by Dr Kees Rookmaaker

REF NEWS

Rhino & Elephant Foundation

Newsletter No 23 October 1999

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Message from the Executive Officer

Firstly, sincere apologies for the lateness of our editorial, due in the main, to many changes taking place within the infrastructure of the REF.

Undeniably, the Tuli Elephant saga has left its mark on the Foundation and we have lost members as a consequence thereof. We have seen the resignation of Dr Andrew McKenzie, past director and trustee. Sadly, deputy director Chris Styles, has also left the services of REF, to join the corporate world – a loss to conservation indeed. The purpose of this brief, however, is neither to justify, nor negate the stance taken by the REF in the Tuli Elephant Saga. Suffice to say, that this highly controversial issue has had the positive effect of highlighting and demonstrating the urgent need for conservation agencies across the board, to address the very demanding area of wildlife welfare within the southern African context.

NEWS FLASH

REF successful in helping to save 50/50

In March, the SABC planned phasing out the well-known and popular weekly environmental television magazine programme, 50/50. This programme helps us to continue to be aware of our responsibilities towards the environment and the need for all life to co-exist in the best interests of natural resource management. Through launching an appeal, which elicited an enormous response from the public at large, REF was successful and 50/50 will remain on air.

The REF has historically played a key role in pragmatic conservation, concentrating on those two magnificent mega herbivores, rhinos and elephants. We have influenced policy formulation through debates and facilitation and made a difference to on-the-ground fieldwork and research, directly benefiting these species. Whilst we will continue, in line with our objectives, to maintain a support base for research and the facilitation of conservation issues, we feel very strongly that a great deal of concentration has to be focused on the welfare of all wildlife, under the able guidance of Dr Hym Ebedes.

Where are we at present?

As a matter of urgency, the Foundation is presently in the process of addressing the:

- Re-constitution of the Board of Trustees
- Re-constitution of the Scientific Advisory Committee
- Re-definition of our objectives and mission statement

In order for us to successfully enact the above, we are counting on your continued support. We are firmly committed to going that extra mile and more, to ensure that you, our loyal REF supporters, can continue to be proud of an African NGO, addressing African issues and making the difference in the new millenium! And if indeed we are to succeed, then it must be by way of a co-operative and non-confrontational process only.

Upon ratification of the newly constituted Board of Trustees and Scientific Advisory Committee, you will be notified accordingly.

Enjoy the newsletter!


Sincerely,

Heather Cowie, Executive Officer

National White Rhino policy

Report of a meeting by Dr Kees Rookmaaker

The Rhino Management Group (RMG) facilitated a meeting of governmental and private stakeholders, held at Itala Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal on 23 and 24 March 1999, to discuss a South African White Rhino Policy. The meeting was chaired by Dr P M Brooks, Chairman of both the RMG and the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group. The participants of the meeting worked harmoniously towards a common goal and produced a draft document entitled *Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wild Populations of Southern White Rhino in South Africa*.

Dr Kees Rookmaaker attended on behalf of REF, while Mr Clive Walker and Mr Daan Buijs represented The African Rhino Owners Association (AROA). The conservation of white rhino has been very successful during the past years, with numbers increasing both in the national parks and in private hands. The formulation of this policy is necessary, firstly because the Southern White Rhinoceros is rated as "conservation dependent" on the IUCN's Red List, which means that it can become endangered again if current conservation measures would be withdrawn. Secondly, because the international animal rights movement is attempting to prevent all forms of sustainable use of wild animals, which has proven the backbone of white rhino increase. Thirdly, the draft should give a clear framework to guide white rhino managers, and finally international initiatives such as proposals to CITES need to be supported by national "policy" statements. The draft will certainly fulfill all these areas. 

COMPETITION WINNERS


Congratulations to the winners of the Ingwe Game Lodge Competition, which was run from the REF's stand at the Kyalami Outdoor Exhibition Show:

- 1st Prize Ms Vanessa Gallie
- 2nd Prize Ms Marie Novy Fraser
- 3rd Prize Mr Frans Steenkamp

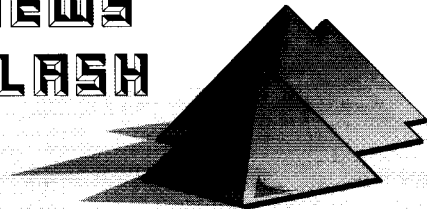
Well done to all of the above. For further information on Ingwe Game Lodge, located near Hoedspruit, call their Reservations (013) 752-6572.

REF supports tuberculosis research

Several species of wild animals in the Kruger National Park have been attacked by infection of the virus called *Mycobacterium bovis* which causes tuberculosis. At present it has not yet been established if any of the white or black rhinos in the park have been infected. However, the possibility that this may occur, is a very serious threat to all rhino populations in Kruger. It is known from other sources that rhinos are actually susceptible to different types of tuberculosis. Largely due to the absence of a sensitive test that can diagnose the disease in live rhinoceros, it has not yet been confirmed that KNP rhinoceros populations have been infected. The development of such a test has been undertaken by Dr Douw Grobler and his associates in KNP. It is hoped that with this test, it will be possible to detect minute amounts of bacteria in blood samples taken from living black and white rhino.

Through the generosity of Mr Brian Mayfield-Smith of Australia, REF has been able to financially contribute towards this important research. 

NEWS FLASH



Ivory freely on sale in Egypt

Dr Esmond Bradley Martin did a survey at the end of 1998 in shops in the major centres of Egypt. He found that at least 142 shops openly sold ivory trinkets, at least about 21 000 items were seen on sale. There was an upsurge in elephant poaching in central parts of Africa, certainly in the Congo, mainly led by Sudanese traders. The shopkeepers in Egypt stated that the majority of their customers are tourists, often from Europe or from Latin America. The import, export and sale of ivory are strictly forbidden in Egypt, as it is against CITES international agreements. CITES officials have told Egypt that it must enforce the ivory ban by the autumn or face international sanctions that would halt trade in all its legal wildlife products, including items such as crocodile skin.