



SEBAKWE NEWS

Editor : John Gripper

Registered Charity : 328461

RHINO POACHING ON THE INCREASE

There is a serious and worrying increase in the killing of the black rhino by poachers in Africa. Reports from Kenya are that 11 rhino have been killed at Solio Ranch and that most, possibly all, the black rhino introduced to Tsavo East have been killed. In South Africa's Kruger National Park, 8 rhino have been killed.

In the Conservator's Report at the November 2003 meeting of the Midlands Black Rhino Conservancy, Glen Tatham spoke of the situation in Zimbabwe:-

Over a period of 10 years, from 1993 till January 2003 there were no rhino poached in Zimbabwe. Whilst sporadic killing of elephant has continued over this period, rhinos remained secure in all protected areas and conservancies. That was until January last year.

Elephant poachers who had entered Zimbabwe from Zambia were killing elephants in the Sinamatella/Robins area of Hwange National Park. Evidently, this gang came across rhino tracks and followed a rhino for a short while and killed it, removing the horns and returning to Zambia. Since then, armed rhino poachers have begun to increase their forays and have killed 24 rhino in the Hwange National Park. One gang of three poachers were killed in a firefight with a Hwange APU earlier this year. Another gang of three were intercepted in Matusadona National Park and were similarly dealt with. Another rhino was recently poached in Matopos National Park and one in the Bubiana Rhino Conservancy. Two more were poached in Botswana recently – the culprits have been arrested.

Our population has been growing at 9% per year. This recent loss of rhino in Hwange and the other two areas is indeed a tragedy. Not only has the nation lost 26 of its precious rhino, but the breeding potential that has gone with the animals is almost incalculable. In basic terms these rhinos have been butchered by cruel and dangerous criminals who, as we have learnt in the past, will stop at nothing to obtain what they want.

This places the Midlands rhino in as much danger as all the other rhino in our beloved country. We must therefore increase our vigilance and work quickly to bring about a concerted and sustained team effort from within our community. It is therefore in the National interest and in the interest of rhino conservation throughout the world and, Africa in particular, that those who have the custodianship of the rhino populations take on their responsibilities very seriously and thus keep our rhinos safe for the next generation.

The Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust

presents a

MAY DAY SPECIAL Charity Dinner & Show

with

PAM AYRES

Saturday 1st May 2004

at

Witney Lakes Resort, Witney, Oxfordshire



All the proceeds from the evening will go to help the Black Rhino Conservancy in Zimbabwe, and also to help local school children.

6.30pm Drinks Reception with Canapés
7.30pm Pam Ayres entertains
9.00pm Dinner – Raffle – Auction

Tickets are £40 each and can be obtained from

Annie Gripper, Manor Farm, Ascott-u-Wychwood, OXON OX7 6AL.

Tel: 01993 830 278

Fax: 01993 830 395

E-mail: johngrippervet@compuserve.com

www.blackrhino.org

www.pamayres.com

Adopt A Rhino - Annie Gripper

Thank you to everyone who has re-adopted a rhino again this year, and also those who have taken out adoptions for the first time. Your continued support is much appreciated.

The money you donate in this way goes towards the wages of the guards, who protect all the Conservancy rhino from poachers. Without their help the rhino would not be so safe.

An adoption makes a good and unusual present to give to friends and relations. Several schools and groups of people are amongst our kind supporters. £25 for a two year adoption makes a worthwhile gift and we are always looking for new adopters.

Thanks – our special thanks to Henry, Freddie and Katarina, aged 9 years, who ran a very successful cake stall at school and also thanks to 9 year old Francis who raised money by selling things at camp – well done to all of you.

Plant Sale – Gail & Sue's Plant Sale will take place on Saturday 22nd May 2004 on the Village Green at Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxon from 10.00 .to 12.30. All proceeds will go to the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust – so please come along.

STOP PRESS – In December Tapiwa had a male calf called Tavani – mother and son are fine.

Greg bounces back !



Greg Rasmussen, Director of the Painted Dog Research Programme in Zimbabwe, is making a good recovery from his plane crash last July, when he had multiple fractures in both legs.

Following further corrective surgery in Harare, he is now getting around in a wheelchair and using crutches. He is full of praise for his surgeon and the physiotherapists who have helped him make a remarkable recovery.

He is back in the UK, and in January will be part of the WILDCRU team at the Zoology Department of Oxford University where he is studying for his PhD. Greg plans to be back in Zimbabwe later this year, once he has completed his academic studies.

SELOUS BLACK RHINO PROTECTION PROJECT

by John Gripper

The Selous Game Reserve lies in the south-eastern part of Tanzania and is the second largest game reserve in the world and a World Heritage Site. It is teeming with wildlife, including a few black rhino – but nobody knows how many!

The Selous Black Rhino Protection Project was set up to stop the black rhino from becoming extinct in the Selous. The project's work includes protecting the rhino that are left and determining the number of black rhino in the reserve and then developing a long term conservation and regeneration plan. The project is currently receiving part of its funding from the EC and also the Save the Rhino International, which is a trustee of the project.

For the last three years Friedrich Alpers has been the coordinator of this project with the help of 12 trained rangers from the Tanzanian Wildlife Division, who track the rhino for periods of seven to fourteen days in teams of four to six.

I visited the Kidai Ranger station, which is situated near the Sands Rivers Lodge, to see the progress of this research project. This station is well equipped and fully solar powered.

The rhino are very difficult to see in the thick bush and identification is from spoor, DNA dung samples and limited visual photography. Preliminary results indicate that so far 15 different individual rhino have been identified in only one sector (8 female, 7 male). DNA on dung sample extractions have been carried out by the University of Cape Town and footprint tracing techniques and night surveillance with digital video have been used to establish the rhino ID data base.



Since the project started no evidence of rhino poaching has been found, which is hugely encouraging and reflects the commitment and efforts of the team. However maintaining a highly visible anti-poaching presence continues to be a crucial deterrent.

With a new phase of EC funding scheduled to start in January 2004, the project is now expanding its



activities from the northern sector of the Selous to cover the entire reserve. This will allow expanded anti-poaching presence and help in gathering more robust data on rhino numbers in the Reserve. Being a non-profit making organization, the project relies entirely on donations and grants to survive and is constantly seeking new areas of funding to supplement existing grants and to ensure the long-term success of the project and the Selous rhino.



Brickwork for washroom / toilet block



Dual bungalow accommodation building



Looking across the site



Thatching works



The roofing carpenters



The dining area

The New Edu an Conservancy Hea

As can be seen from the surrounding gallery of pictures, construction has been progressing at a good pace. These pictures were taken in early December 2003.

The majority of the buildings which had brickwork are now complete. Construction of the traditional gum pole roof structures was slightly behind the original programme due to supply issues in the local area.

A start on the plumbing and drainage work had been made and was now underway.

At the time of this news letter going to the printers the buildings were scheduled for completion during early February 2004 and the fit out and equipping the complex begins.



The plumbers



Looking into the courtyard of the office building

Education Centre and quarters Project

Since taken since our last report, building work on site has been taken by Nigel Overal during his visit to Zimbabwe in

work completed up to wall plate level.

Works were well advanced. The thatching work had begun, but due to a lack of a good quality grass not being available within

the site, and preparations for the surrounding security fence

building works have advanced still further. They are now concentrating on the task of landscaping the grounds and the fitting



The Classroom building



The staff accommodation blocks



Forming concrete window sills



The Education Officers cottage

Aid for the Children and

As I approached the British Airways check in desk at Heathrow's Terminal 4, I did so with a broad smile and tried to give the impression that the two bulging holdalls I was carrying were light in weight. This was a complete act, as I knew that these bags were well above my weight allowance on their own, before you even started to consider my personal belongings which were stowed in my rucksack. However that remained out of sight on my back as hand luggage !!!

The holdalls were packed with donated aid which I was taking out for the schools and clinic - footballs, tennis balls, skipping ropes, play bricks, folders & paper, games, posters, knitting and sewing materials, wet wipes, cotton wool, stethoscopes.....and more. As I lifted the bags onto the check-in scales my fears were confirmed, I was some 43% over my permissible weight allowance. I broadened my smile and responded politely to the questions I was being asked about my baggage. 'Yes I packed it myself', 'No I don't believe anybody has tampered with either of the bags', 'No I'm not carrying anything sharp in my hand baggage'. I continued to smile and was ready to recite my well-rehearsed reason for the overweight bags. However this was not needed as within minutes they had been labelled and were on their way along the conveyor to be loaded onto the waiting aircraft – Thanks BA, that was the first hurdle jumped.

The second task was to get those same bags through the customs check out at Harare airport. On previous trips this had always been successfully achieved by being very patient and carefully timing ones approach to the custom check points - Bingo success again, and I was on my way heading towards the doors that led out into the arrivals hall with all the aid intact.

To be able to give something to children who have so little is a very rewarding experience. To see the smile on their faces as you tip out a bag full of colourful play bricks or hand over a football or skipping rope. As you witness the clinic sister carefully stowing away on an empty shelf in a nearly bare cupboard, the supplies you have taken is always a stark reminder of the things that we in the western world simply take for granted.

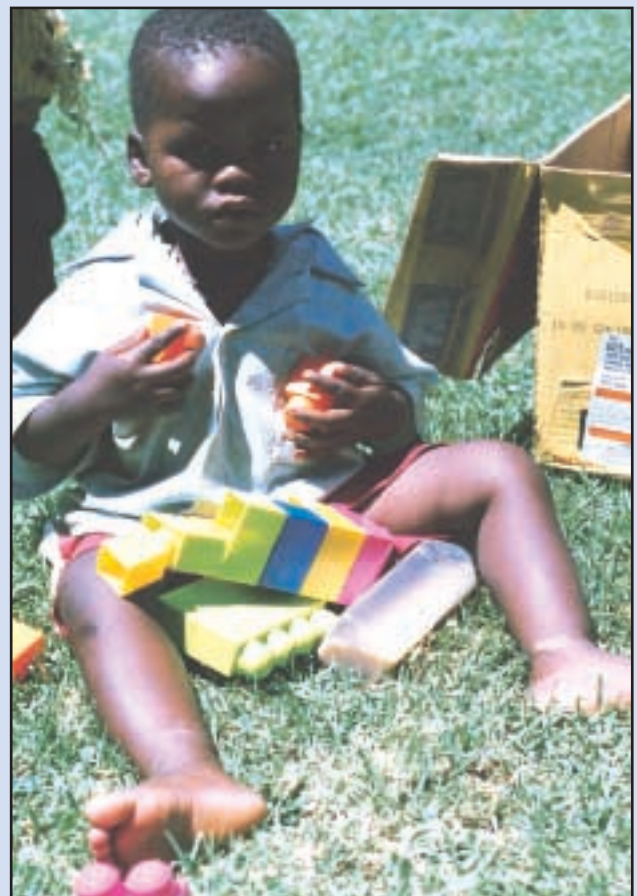
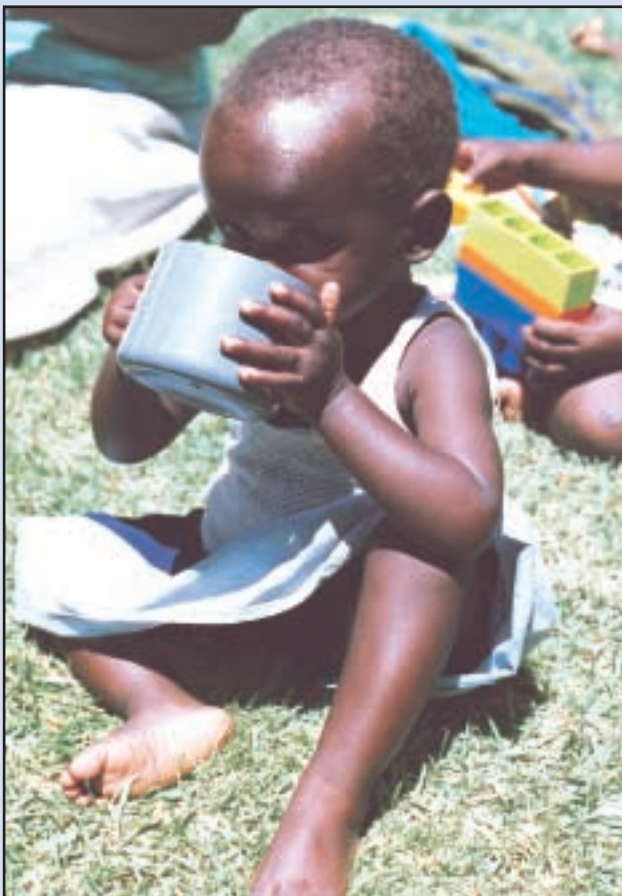


the People of Zimbabwe

by Nigel Overall

Due to the current crisis within the country of Zimbabwe there are drastic shortages of basic foods and many of the people including children, are going hungry. Food aid is being supplied by various charities but its distribution is being controlled by the authorities within the country and is not always being made available to all. Over the past few months the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust has been making funds available to secure at least one feed a day of a high protein drink for the children within the local schools that it supports.

Following the front page article in our last news letter (Spring 2003) we have received many generous donations with requests that they were specifically to be used towards continuing the funding of this feeding programme. We can confirm that when the children at the schools which we support, return for the start of their new school year, they will each continue to receive their daily meal of high protein drink. Our thanks again to Bob & Jenny Swift for ensuring that the necessary supplies are sourced and made available.



Zimbabwe children hit by rising school fees

In December 2003 it was reported that fees at the state schools were about to go up by at least 10 times. At a typical working class school this will mean a rise from the equivalent of 50p a term to £5.00, whilst in a typical middle income earner school fees equivalent to £25 can be expected. When the new school year begins in January nearly half of the income of a working family will now be required to send just one of their children to school. However with unemployment up to about 80% most will simply not be able to afford this increase and their children will therefore be unable to go to school.

www.blackrhino.org

Our website has now been completely redesigned and updated by David Gripper. This site now provides information about rhino and the latest news from the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust and the Midlands Conservancy in Zimbabwe.

It also contains our recent Newsletters and Quizzes. On the 'News' page we have introduced reciprocal links with other organisations who are involved either in animal conservation or Zimbabwe.

The site is now being more actively managed and we shall be continually updating the information provided.

Please visit the 'How to Help' page to see the many ways in which you can become involved in saving a small part of the world's dwindling rhino population.



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Founded by Joy Baker in 1998 as a result of a desperate shortage of all basic educational equipment within many schools in Zimbabwe, School-Aid have expanded their operations to include South Africa, Uganda & Eritrea. Over 3,000 boxes of educational donations and hundreds of desks & chairs have been successfully distributed to over 50 African schools.

At some schools a complete lack of classrooms means some children take turns to do their lessons outside under a tree, and write in the sand instead of on paper. Shortages of desks and chairs mean children often sit on boxes, planks or on bare earth floors.

Textbooks are shared between several children or in cases where only one book is available, teachers copy the exercises on to card and hang them from the ceiling and walls. Paper, pencils and teaching aids are always in short supply. Sports equipment and musical instruments are rare. Libraries, reading and reference books are seldom found in rural schools. Many schools still lack fresh water or electricity.

Teachers often have very basic accommodation and work with minimal resources. Their dedication to encourage pupils in very difficult circumstances is inspirational.

School-Aid has set up working links with other charities and individuals who are similarly involved with African communities. One of these is The Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust.



Donations of computers and software teaching programmes have been made to the Sebakwe School by School-Aid.

Further donations of Play equipment were taken out to the schools supported by SBRT on a recent visit and these were gratefully received.

