

black rhinos being privately owned. In 2005, the 15 AfRSG-rated *Key* populations of black rhinos included 4 Zimbabwean and 1 Kenyan custodianship population; with a further 8 *Important* custodianship populations. From 1997 to 2005 the number of black rhinos managed by the private sector on a custodianship basis has doubled—from 394 to 797.

Communal land

More black rhinos than white rhinos occur on communal land (150 vs 39), accounting for 4.03% of all black rhinos.

Municipal, county council, area authority reserves

In South Africa and Kenya there are a limited number of reserves and conservation areas run by local area or municipal authorities. The Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya is run by the local Narok and Trans

Mara county councils. South Africa also has seven small municipally owned and run parks that have a few white rhinos.

Global status of rhinos in captivity (intensive management)

The latest estimates, presented by Evan Blumer at the 2006 AfRSG meeting, indicate that there are an additional 240 black rhinos (171 eastern, 69 southern, 0 south-western) and 760 white rhinos (10 northern and 750 southern) under intensive management worldwide. One of the northern whites has since died.

Postscript

Just before going to press the existence of one population of 7 southern white rhino was confirmed in Mozambique (as of 31/12/2006). Other reports of rhinos in the country still require confirmation.

Black Rhino Range Expansion Project

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Thirteen black rhinos were recently released onto the Pongola Game Reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The animals form the third founder population of the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, a partnership between WWF and the provincial conservation organization Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. To create the Pongola Game Reserve, six neighbouring landowners brought together 13,000 hectares of land under single management for the benefit of black rhinos.

Through the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project more than 80,000 hectares of land in KwaZulu-Natal have been brought under more rational conservation use over the last three years.



A translocated rhino is released on to Pongola Game Reserve.

Ezemvelo-KZN Wildlife



These large blocks of uninterrupted land provide new areas in which rhinos are breeding.

‘The project has contributed more than anything in recent years to creating large blocks of uninterrupted land devolved to sound conservation principles. It has been talked about for years—the project has proved that it can happen,’ says WWF project leader Dr Jacques Flamand.

The project aims to increase the number of black rhinos by increasing the land available for their conservation, thus reducing pressure on existing reserves and providing new areas in which they can breed rapidly. It does this by facilitating partnerships between neighbouring landowners to create large areas of land with good black rhino habitat.

The project’s first founder population of 15 animals was released on to Mnyawana Game Reserve in 2004. The second population of 21 animals was released onto the Zululand Rhino Reserve in 2005. Both reserves were created by a number of neighbouring landholders in order to receive black rhinos from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

‘We are delighted at how well things have gone at both of those sites. We have three calves so far and are expecting more,’ Dr Flamand said. He also praised the many landowners who have helped the project succeed. ‘Landowners have committed themselves to partnerships with one another and with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to look after black rhino on a custodianship basis. For many this has required brave sacri-

ifice. They have given up a degree of independence by taking down fences with their neighbours and they have contributed significantly, in cash and kind, to protecting black rhinos on their land.’

The uninterrupted blocks of land catalysed through the project range in area from 13,000 hectares to 24,000 hectares and there is the exciting prospect of links between them. There are also excellent

prospects of bringing in community-owned land, Dr Flamand said. ‘Through the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project we hope to make black communities real stakeholders in conservation, which is important for the long-term security of the black rhino and other endangered species.’

The WWF and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Black Rhino Range Expansion Project is made possible through funding from WWF-Netherlands, through WWF-South Africa, and is supported by the Mazda Wildlife Fund.

As part of the ongoing attempt to minimize stress for translocated animals, a new release technique was tried this year. The animal is given an anaesthetic in the crate. As it is about to fall asleep, the door is opened and it wanders out. A rope is held to slow its momentum. Ideally, it falls asleep just outside the crate. All equipment, lorries and staff leave the area, except for the person who administers the antidote. When the animal wakes up a few minutes later, there is nothing around to disturb it.

In almost all of the releases at Pongola, the translocated rhinos immediately started browsing.

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