

### 3 Black Rhino Challenges

By Gerhard R Damm

The black rhino was once a fairly common species for trophy hunters (in the mid-fifties, a general license in Kenya incl. 1 rhino, 2 elephant, 1 lion and leopard each, and a selection of plains game cost about \$1120); it was even routinely shot by game control officers. The onslaught of a terrible poaching endemic in East Africa reduced the numbers so drastically that only the immense experience and dedication of Namibian and South African wildlife authorities saved it from the brink of extinction.

The total number of living black rhinos today is higher than those of the white rhino, when white rhino hunting was re-started. And the white rhino has made a spectacular recovery through "incentive based conservation" – a feat, which can be repeated with its "black" cousin, now after CITES delegates authorized Namibia and South Africa to select 10 male black rhinos for trophy hunting each year. The quotas will become effective in 90 days.

Black rhino hunting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will, however, be a very different affair from the rhino hunts during the golden days of African hunting safaris. It will be highly regulated and the animal to be hunted will have been pre-selected by Nature Conservation officials on the basis of parameters like breeding redundancy, aggressiveness against other rhinos, age, etc. The prospective hunter will hunt a particular animal – usually in a finite area demarcated by fences. And these hunts will attract a lot of attention from hunters and non-hunters alike.

With something that exceptional as these rhino hunts, we have an extraordinary opportunity to show to the world that it is thanks to hunters' money that black rhinos will soon be as abundant as the white rhino. I suggest therefore that future black rhino hunts should not be marketed as a catch-as-much-profit-as-possible operation by individual outfitters, professional hunters and/or agents making deals with individual rhino owners.

We rather have to look for innovative ways to ensure that the highest possible economic value is attached to these ten rhino bulls and that the lion's share of the money goes back into conservation of black rhino habitat, reintroduction of black rhino in former ranges, research and management of black rhino as well as into benefit sharing with local communities (i. e. as a motivation to guard rhinos). We should include also – in the instance of South Africa – that private owners must see a powerful economic incentive in reserving land for black rhinos

Instead of leaving the scarce rhino permits for the relative few who will be able to afford the high price tag attached, we should rather think of spreading the chances and at the same time realize an even higher economic result per hunted animal. A series of worldwide raffles (say 500 tickets per bull at \$500 or \$1000 a ticket could do the trick!) will raise substantial amounts! In order to attract the highest numbers of potential raffle ticket buyer, funds need to be channelled through a suitable organization (like Conservation Force) for tax deductibility and minimal administrative deductions. This "Operation Black Rhino" cannot be the exclusivity of one club or association; it needs to be carried by a coalition of hunters' organizations, hunting media, etc worldwide to guarantee maximum exposure and marketing possibilities (see also my

respective thoughts in the editorial column).

Apart from the desire to create the highest economical impact, strict guidelines for black rhino hunting must be defined. Again, this should not be the domain of one organization, but of a coalition. NAPHA and PHASA could cooperate with the national regulatory authorities under the Conservation Force umbrella to define binding guidelines i. e. minimum number of days for a safari, the restricted and exactly defined use of vehicles during the safari, the qualifications of the outfitter and professional hunter, etc.

Conservation Force should also take the lead with the import permitting for US hunters. John Jackson has repeatedly shown that he has the necessary expertise and dedication.

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2 Botswana's Elephants

large scale culling was undertaken, no control measures have been taken. Elephants have, as a result, wrought great changes in the landscape, causing a "loss of scenic value, of shade and useful plant species, which are all viewed with concern".

Government policy on utilization of elephants (indeed, all wild life) is that the full potential of the resource should be utilized. If "a meaningful population reduction" was to take place requiring the "removal" of 10 000 elephants a year the DWNP report says it would yield 40 tons of ivory, 8 000 tons of meat, and 650 tons of hide per year. Restrictions on exports (*Editor's note: ... and external pressure on consumer behavior and social acceptance of elephant products in the first world societies*) would "severely limit the values of the products". In the new DWNP elephant policy six key points are now: to minimize human-elephant conflict; maximize elephant populations while ensuring the maintenance of habitats and bio-diversity; manage elephants to the benefit of the national economy; enhance benefits from elephant management to the rural population; meet international obligations; and manage elephants on the basis of sound scientific information!

These aims are as laudable as similar aims were 14 years ago. Now as then the problem will lie in their implementation! Improved public relations, and the need to inform the international public that control of numbers are clearly key issues and the report looks at various means of doing this. They include culling. Its advantages are that large numbers can be removed quickly; it is inexpensive if products can be sold; and, the DWNP says it causes minimal stress to animals if done properly. Culling is, however, "emotionally unappealing", potentially disruptive of tourism; requires large resources of equipment and skilled personnel; expensive and wasteful if there is no market for products; logistically difficult in some areas; dangerous, and can only be undertaken by skilled professionals. Translocation is more humane but hugely expensive. Passive dispersal may have to be "encouraged". Contraception cannot be seriously considered until there is a proven feasible method. Increased safari hunting and citizen hunting would bring in considerable revenue for DWNP and private operators as well as communities, but would not contribute to any herd size reduction

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## 1 Editor's Comment

Dear Reader,

since I got involved with hunting and conservation policies in Africa and more recently when I took up editing and publishing African Indaba, I have been exposed – sometimes rather painfully – at the game of conservation policies in Africa. I have realized – albeit unknowing during all that time – that Robert Kenward (European Sustainable Use Specialist Group ESUSG) expressed something in his August 2004 article *"Incentive-Based Conservation: Moving Forward By Changing The Thinking"*, that I seem to have felt all the time. We need *"to direct more attention towards better conservation (the target) than the process (sustainable use)"*.

Robert Model, current president of the Boone & Crockett Club, said in his Summer 2004 message in the club's magazine *"Fair Chase"* that he *"believes that the more moderate sportsmen and sportswomen, hunters, fishermen and the conservation community can agree to work together to work to achieve [common] objectives"*. And he continued to write that we cannot assume to reach absolute agreement from potential allies or they from us. Consensus and principled compromise are mechanisms of achievement in today's pluralistic global society.

Kenward reinforces Model's point by saying that *"protection and extraction organizations also need to cooperate to reduce polarization of public attitudes and hence pressures to over-regularize"*.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (CoP) of CITES during early October presented a perfect example of how principled compromise and networking function. The results of the committee and plenum sessions underline, that positive outcomes for conservation issues can be achieved by being consistent. The combined efforts were not restricted to the months leading up to the CoP, but formed an ongoing process of responsible cooperation between many organizations, individuals and at many levels to avoid what Model called *"extremists at both sides have [tried to] box the debate to one of winner takes all [without] respect of views and lifestyles of others"*.

In the immediate aftermath of CoP 13, a hunting organization, SCI ("First for Hunters" as the club has labeled itself) took ALL the credit for the CoP-13 rejection of Kenya's Lion Proposal in a boisterous media release. Not one word was lost about the personal, intellectual and financial contributions of other key role-players. SCI's delegation certainly contributed to Kenya withdrawing its proposal, but the emphasis must be on CONTRIBUTION and

certainly not on exclusivity!

The exemplary and comprehensive lion study, commissioned and financed with foresight 3 years ago by the International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) and Conservation Force and undertaken by IGF's director, Philippe Chardonnet was the clear focal point of the early resistance against Kenya's uplisting proposal by the African range states. Chardonnet's statistics and citations from his study formed the interlinking thread in virtually all assessments by organizations and individuals who really care about the fate of the African lion. To make it absolutely clear: ALL opponents to Kenya's proposal used the Chardonnet study as THE convincing argument.

Conservation Force and Dr. Craig Packer of the University of Minnesota – the readers of African Indaba know about Packer's work from numerous articles in this e-Newsletter – engaged at a very early time in the discussions where to spend scarce time and funds with the best possible prospects of success in lion conservation and lion hunting. Conservation Force's John Jackson had a lion video produced by Osprey Filming at shortest notice and distributed it with comprehensive literature to wildlife departments in Africa. Jackson, Packer and Chardonnet engaged key decision makers in discussions early in the process and in the process

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