



Top media agencies unite to Save the Rhino

What does it take to wipe out a species of rhino? One AK47, 30 bullets, a good marksman, and that's the Northern White gone. Another 60 bullets and it's goodbye to the Javan; another 300 and the Sumatran rhino is consigned to evolutionary history.

So what does it take to raise a bit of awareness about an organisation dedicated to saving the rhino?

£150,000 worth of pro bono effort from an advertising agency, a media-buying agency and a top PR company wouldn't go amiss. That's what Save the Rhino has secured from Potter Dow, ZenithOptimedia and Borkowski PR.

Just airing is a hard-hitting 30-second ad that powerfully dramatises how few shots could render an entire species extinct. 50 TV spots have been secured from the Discovery Channel, Animal Planet and National Geographic. There is also a series of print adverts, focusing on the reasons for the rhino's poaching to near-extinction. A freefone number enables viewers or readers to make instant donations.

Cathy Dean, Director of Save the Rhino comments: "Some may find the adverts rather dramatic and gruesome, but we felt this approach was essential to reflect the seriousness of rhino conservation and the urgency of the situation."

All agencies involved have taken up the cause with enthusiasm. Simon Marquis, Chairman of ZenithOptimedia puts their commitment to the charity down to the "rewards and effect that such a campaign can have on the public". Ian Potter at Potter Dow added, "Because Saving the Rhino is not at the top of most people's list, it creatively is a tough job. We knew the ads had to be strong and impactful and make people stop and think." Both agencies will be working with Borkowski PR which recently committed to an intensive, 12-month publicity campaign for the charity.

Save the Rhino is a dynamic, passionate, unorthodox operation. It has the kind of can-do attitude and a taste for the dramatic that we relish, so we're delighted to be able to offer them all possible press and publicity support.

Mark Borkowski
Borkowski PR



Ugandan discussions

Two years ago, a pair of white rhinos arrived in Entebbe, Uganda, from Solio ranch in Kenya, and ever since then one person has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to set up Uganda's first rhino sanctuary. Yvonne Verkaik is a determined woman, and she is not afraid to explain to companies in Uganda why they should pay this project more than lip service. One company in particular has been convinced: DAS Cargo and their Chairman, Captain Joe Roy, who has also gifted 40km² of his cattle ranch over to the fund as the site for the sanctuary.

Ziwa Ranch lies 170km north of Kampala on the road to one of Uganda's main tourist destinations, the Murchison Falls National Park. The Ranch's location is a big advantage, as visitors will stop to see the rhinos on their way to the Falls. The ranch has excellent security, and the vegetation in the park lends itself well to the introduction of further white rhinos. It could also hold a small number of black rhinos (R Brett 2002). Whilst I was there in January, Yvonne was awaiting confirmation of funding for a sanctuary fence. At that point it wasn't looking hopeful, but we have just heard that the EU is likely to fund it. In addition, the UNDP has provided funds, and the Danish Embassy in Uganda is also supporting it.

Save the Rhino is fully committed for the financial year to 31 March 2004, but after that we hope to be able to fund some elements of the anti-poaching and monitoring teams, or help in the purchase of more white rhinos for the sanctuary. A Herculean task lies ahead for Yvonne and the Fund. But the reintroduction of rhino in a country devoid of them for so long will be a tremendous boost to the Parks. The people of Uganda are very eager to get tourism up and running in their country once again.

David Stirling
Project Advisor