

## A rich history of rhino conservation

On 30 April 1895, a conservation milestone was reached in South Africa when the proclamation of the 'Hluhluur Valley Reserve' and the 'Umfolozi Junction Reserve' was gazetted in Zululand by Government Notice no. 12.

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Hluhluwe Game Reserven

**T**hese became known as Hluhluwe and iMfolozi Game Reserves respectively. The area between the two Reserves was known as the Corridor, and was managed as a conservation area, but was only proclaimed a protected area in 1989, leading to the consolidation of the 96,000ha protected area now called Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. The Park is situated in the north of KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, at the junction of the coastal plain and the foothills of the interior. Ecologically the Park is managed as a whole, but for administrative purposes, Hluhluwe and iMfolozi are managed separately, with separate operational budgets.

The proclamation of these reserves was a response to an outcry caused by a 'white

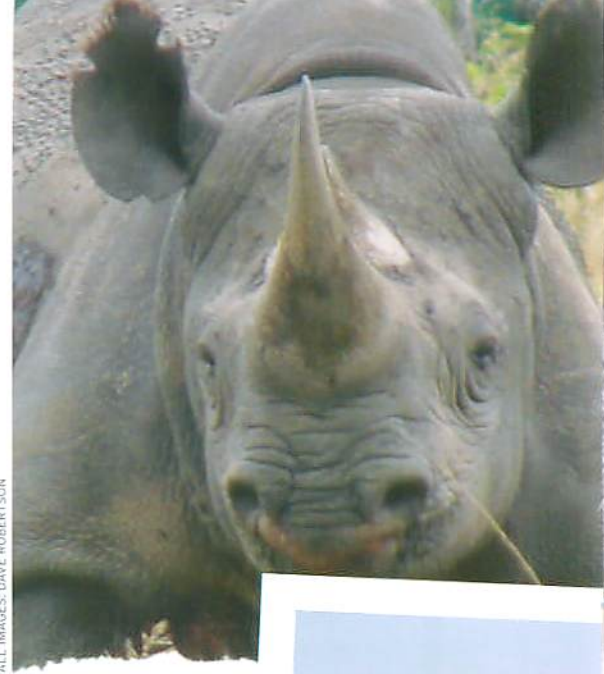
hunter' shooting six white rhino in the area. At the time the Southern white rhino was quite literally on the brink of extinction, and the black or hook-lipped rhino fared little better. These parks were administered by various government agencies until 1952, when control was handed over to the Natal Parks Board (In 1997, the Natal Parks Board merged with the KwaZulu Directorate of Nature Conservation to form Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNV)).

Under the dedication and sheer hard work of the staff responsible for managing these areas, the rhino populations flourished to the extent that, in the early sixties, there was a threat of over-population, and the Natal Parks Board launched 'Operation Rhino'. At the time, the parks were considered to have the last remaining viable populations of Southern white rhino, and Operation Rhino was initiated to capture and translocate them from the

park to areas from which they had become extinct. Within the first decade of Operation Rhino, over 100 animals had been translocated to parks and zoos within Africa and overseas - no mean feat when you consider the technology and equipment that was available back then.

In more recent years, as numbers of white rhino have steadily increased, the focus in the park has shifted to the more endangered black rhino (although surplus white rhinos are still captured for translocation every year). These are monitored intensively to obtain estimates of population numbers and performance, and for the last few years, we have been working to help identify suitable new areas for black rhinos, and stock them with founder populations removed from Hluhluwe-iMfolozi and other EKZNV parks. One of the requirements is that a potential recipient area needs to be of sufficient size to support a viable rhino population, and this has had the effect of encouraging private landowners to drop fences with their neighbours, creating large game conservancies. This obviously benefits a whole host of other species, including endangered mammals like the African Wild Dog, which needs a large area for a viable population, as well as benefiting local communities through increased tourism.

ALL IMAGES: DAVE ROBERTSON



*Rangers track rhino in Hluhluwe*

**Top:**  
A black rhino in Hluhluwe

**Right:**  
Lions, one of the many other species which benefit from protection within the Park

