

## BRREP heads into Phase 3

**T**HE Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) has completed its second three-year phase. Phase 3 is now beginning, and will take the Project concept beyond the borders of KwaZulu-Natal into other regions of South Africa and possibly beyond. The first two phases of the Project were very successful.

- Black rhino range in KwaZulu-Natal



increased by 25%.

- 15% of black rhino in KwaZulu-Natal are now on Project partner sites.
- A founder population of black rhino were released for the first time on to a community-owned site.
- The Project proved that partnerships between landowners and formal conservation organisations make otherwise unattainable goals possible.

## Comments



**NATHI GUMBI:**  
Somkhanda  
Game Reserve  
(Project site 4).

“WWF and the Black Rhino Project took my name from zero to something else; they took our area from unknown to famous; they took my community to the eyes of the world. I have learned what I never thought I could learn, especially about wild animals. I used to be very negative

about wild animals. I thought human beings and wild animals could never live together. But I was forced to think very deeply about how we could bring humans and black rhino together, and I found how it could happen by bringing benefits to my community. Now, government people focus on us, and talk about other areas of development. People are very excited, and it’s all because of the black rhino. WWF never gave me money to benefit myself. They gave me a big name, and it’s up to me to use it for the benefit of my family and my community. Because our Gumbi community is linked with WWF, we all have a big name and it up to us how we use it. We will do our very best not to disappoint WWF, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the government, and other communities who now want to follow where we have gone.”



**CLIVE VIVIER:**  
Zululand  
Rhino Reserve  
(Project site 2).

“THE minute one becomes aware of the plight of a key species, like the black rhino, one cannot but be motivated to try to do something if one possibly can. By achieving what we have, we’ve been able to contribute a little to the preservation of a magnificent species. One feels an incredible

reward to have done a little bit. It’s also been a fantastic catalyst in getting other people, who don’t necessarily feel the same way, to make commitments — such as pulling down fences — they would not otherwise have made. This has happened because of the dramatic increase in the value of their properties. If I had the opportunity, I’d like to do it all over the country.”

**Lesson learned:** “From a financial point of view, our lodge has not really benefited through eco-tourism because we no longer feel it is safe to take walks with visitors. We used to when we only had white rhino, but with black rhino we feel it is unsafe. The requirements of the new Gun Act make it very difficult to find people who can take guided walks. This is a possible area for a funder to look into: the training and equipping of people who can take guided walks with firearms.”



**JACQUES  
FLAMAND:**  
**BRREP Project  
leader.**



I FEEL very pleased in that the project has made a significant difference to black rhino conservation in KZN and has helped restore much damaged habitat. It was so rewarding watching fences being pulled down, livestock being removed and natural vegetation come back. But, I think that the project has just been a beginning in what was possibly the most difficult part of South Africa due to the smallness of the ecosystems remaining when we began. Now there is the prospect of placing black rhino onto even greater spaces in some of the other provinces by using the lessons learned in KZN, so that is quite exciting.”

## Phase 2 evaluation

*These are some principle findings of the external evaluation of Phase 2.*

- THE project has brought in a wider range of new partners into black rhino conservation with a common shared vision and added land to general conservation, protecting a broad range of species and habitats.
- There has been a further increase in black rhino numbers and populations, increased awareness, improved monitoring and increased security mechanisms, primarily in the founder populations.
- The translocation of black rhinos to new range areas has so far allowed for a net population increase of 7% (from 67 animals to 76 as of January 2009). These 76 animals would not have been kept in KZN had it not been for the BRREP.
- The removals for the BRREP programme (at 5-7% per year) appear to have stimulated a positive growth of the founder populations. Had the animals not been removed these populations would have suffered because of range competition and would probably not have shown a positive population growth.
- BRREP support of the notching programme in source populations has improved markedly the precision of the population estimates.
- In Phase 2 of the Project, black rhino range land has increased by a further 23,700 ha, which represents an additional 7% to the total black rhino range in KZN. A further 15,000 ha of land is planned for 2009.
- The inclusion of community managed game reserves during Phase 2 represents a new conservation model. Altogether 44 % of the range area added through BRREP is community owned.
- Other communities within and outside KZN have shown an interest in entering the programme, as have other private land owners in other provinces in South Africa.
- The introduction of black rhino has significantly increased land values in the project sites.
- BRREP has encouraged a greater conservation involvement by EKZNW in community conservation through the provision of additional game species to Somkhanda.
- It is evident that community-managed areas need ongoing support, particularly in general nurturing and capacity building (in business development, marketing and ecological management) to increase sustainability.
- BRREP has promoted a greater sharing of ideas on community conservation between provinces and countries. In addition, the project has promoted increased networking on conservation matters between relevant stakeholders within KZN, which in turn has led to an overall increase in security, capacity and awareness amongst landowners as a deterrent to increased threats of poaching of rhinos.
- The BRREP model is actually being magnified in the Pilanesberg-Madikwe corridor area, where black rhino range expansion is the vehicle for the development of a public-private-community reserve.
- The project has facilitated the development of new, safe and cheaper introduction protocols for black rhino, a technique that can be used by other conservation organisations.
- BRREP has increased opportunities for socio-economic development (job creation, direct income generation) in the project areas.

# News

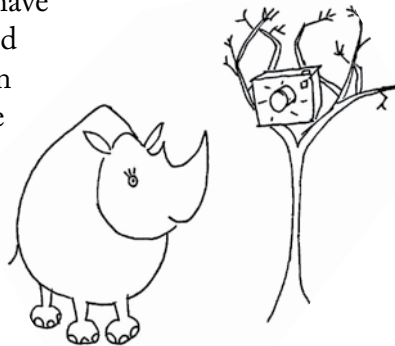
## MALAYSIAN VISIT

PROJECT leader Dr Jacques Flamand (third from left) was invited to visit the Sabah region of Malaysia in order to advise about conservation of the Sumatran rhino (which is critically endangered and about which relatively little is known). He was able to share experiences from KwaZulu-Natal, and suggest techniques for release and monitoring of Sumatran rhinos, as well as training of guards and opportunities for scientific research.



## CAMERA TRAPS AT SOMKHANDA

CAMERA traps have been purchased and are being placed on Somkhanda Game Reserve to help with monitoring of black rhino on the difficult, densely-covered terrain.



## CONGRATS TO ZULULAND RHINO RESERVE

Zululand Rhino Reserve, the second site to receive a founder population of black rhino through the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, has officially been proclaimed as a nature reserve. This is a milestone for the reserve as well as for conservation, as this privately owned reserve now falls under formal conservation and contributes to achieving national and provincial biodiversity conservation targets. One of these targets is the protection of the endangered Zululand Low Veld.

## CALVES

THE aim of the Project is to increase the growth rate of the overall black rhino population, and the birth of each calf is a cause for celebration. There are currently 13 calves on Project sites. One eight-month-old calf is being reared at the bomas at Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. Sadly, it had to be removed from Mnyawana Game Reserve (the first partner site of the Project) after its mother was attacked and badly injured by another rhino. The mother was also removed for her own

protection but unfortunately died. The female had been introduced as a "top-up" on to a new piece of land included into the reserve. This land was fenced, and the fence only removed when it was thought that she had settled enough. However, unfortunately she wandered into the territory of the established population. We believe that the release area may not have met all her requirements to live in. The experience has taught that there could be a minimum area for "top-up" introductions.



## POACHING

SOUTH Africa has had an unprecedented wave of rhino poaching. Just fewer than 100 were poached in 2008, of which 15 were in KZN, mostly in Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife controlled areas. The trend continues as already 6 have been poached in KZN in 2009, one of which was a black rhino. Fortunately, none have been in BRREP sites, perhaps partly because good security systems are in place, but no one can afford to be complacent and perhaps we have just been lucky, so all security personnel are regularly spoken to and briefed also reminding them of the dangers to the black rhino under their care.

### **KHULANI MKHIZE**

SADLY, former CEO of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Khulani Mkhize passed away recently. Khulani was CEO during much of the first two phases of the Project. He was one of South Africa's pioneer black conservationists and a passionate believer in community conservation. He believed it would take time and patience, but that it is essential to build a culture of conservation practice, such as visiting game reserves, in South Africa's black population. Farewell, Khulani. Rest in peace. *uHambe kable Khabazela. uLale ngokuthula.*



### **SCHOOL TRIPS TO MKUZE RESERVE**

NINE school trips to Mkuze Game Reserve, organised by EcoSchools co-ordinator Liezl van Lingen, have begun successfully. The schools are from the "rhino Ecoschools node", funded through the Project and the Green Trust. All schools are from areas near Project sites. The trips aim to improve long-term conservation of black rhino by inspiring teachers and children about conservation.



### **GETTING THE WORD OUT**

THE Project continues to produce *Somkhanda News* and *Wild Times*, free newspapers targeted at communities in Project areas. The papers aim to inform and inspire people about conservation, nature and the benefits of both.



### **VISIT FROM HOLLAND**

WE enjoyed showing Ellen de Wolf from WWF-Netherlands our project earlier this year. Here's a very tanned Ellen at Phinda Private Game Reserve the day before she left for Holland, which at that stage was icy cold. With her is Pam Sherriffs, communication manager for the Black Rhino Range Expansion Project.

