



Community in conservation: Members of the Kipipiri community assist in fence construction.

Aberdare Fence... final countdown to completion

The Aberdare Fence will be completed by September this year. It will be a distance of almost 400 kms. (see map on page 4)

As of March 31 this year, 21 kms of the Kipipiri Extra Section totalling approximately 40 kms in length was completed. This leaves a balance of 19 kms to build.

At present the steep mountain sides of Kipipiri are proving one of the toughest of the entire project and similar to those in the titanic task the build team faced on

the 82 km Phase Five in 2003-05. Our teams are carrying every post, rolls of heavy wire, nails and insulators as much as 1.5 kms to reach sections of the fence line. Roads do not reach such areas. The Eastern side near Gaita will be easier and faster to build.

The two teams totaling over 60 men are making very good progress. They are being greatly assisted by two fence line community groups which have formed specifically to provide no cost labour to clear the line and dig holes.

Rhino Charge 2009 Roars off May 31

The world famous, world unique Rhino Charge 4x4 off-road event, is fully subscribed. Vehicles - of all shapes and types - some with mind boggling modifications and ordinary 4x4s will compete. This year's event is slated for the 31st May at a secret location which will be unveiled the day before the event by the Clerk of Course Anton Levitan.

Money raised from this event is used for the building and maintenance of Rhino Ark's fence, helping to conserve one of Kenya's finest indigenous forests and its total habitat.

"Entries are strongly competed for under Rhino Ark's pledge system whereby

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Chargers Rev up!

The event that raises the greatest funds for conservation in Kenya's history - the annual Rhino Charge is just weeks away!



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Rhino Ark Objectives

Rhino Ark seeks solutions in the Aberdare mountain range and its eco-system to:

- Conserve one of Kenya's finest indigenous forests and its total habitat.
- Resolve human/wildlife conflict.

Rhino Ark is Committed to:

- Mobilise stakeholders nationwide and internationally for initiatives to protect and conserve the habitat; and promote managed use of forest products for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Raise funds and other forms of support for the building and long-term management of an electrified fence to encircle the Aberdare National Park and demarcated forestry areas which form the Aberdare Conservation Area.
- Build mechanisms and management structures to prevent illegal exploitation of the forest habitat wherever it is threatened. In so doing, all stakeholders will benefit and the rhino, bongo, indeed all flora and fauna species will be secure.

Act now!... help us to continue our work

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Colin Church

Chairman's View

We have done it!

Progress on the final – and extra – section of Mt Kipiri is going faster than scheduled.

This means that unless we come up against an intractable situation on fence alignment, the fence – almost 400 kms in final distance and started 21 years ago – will be complete as early as September this year.

The challenge that those who started this project in 1989 faced was massive. Though to be fair the original concept has grown exponentially down the years. The early beginnings were focused upon creating a safe sanctuary for Black Rhino in the Salient section of the Aberdare National Park and easing the unrelenting walk out of elephant, buffalo, bush pig, wart hog and porcupine from the Park into shambas of potatoes, maize and fodder. Those who were motivated to protect Black Rhino and gave tiny amounts of seed money then, awoke to notice that the forest and park edge farmers were celebrating. Their farms were 100% productive and their children could walk safely to school. A formula with much greater implications had been found.

Historically there had been a moat. But it failed to do the job. Fencing was the next option – and it is working. Perhaps as technology advances there will be new techniques sometime in the future.

What matters is our ability to manage our environment proactively and so that we secure optimum utilisation of every hectare of land for the national good. Indigenous forest is primarily water catchment and home to precious and severely threatened wildlife, flora, indeed a myriad of biodiversity gems that need to be both protected and husbanded in perpetuity.

What matters in equal measure is that there is sufficient understanding throughout all strata of our society of this value. Rhino Ark has succeeded in convincing forest and national park edge farmers of this. It has not been so successful in the wider society where some key decision makers and policy makers still believe that indigenous forests are for mining not conserving. There is lack of will amongst some of those at the centre of policy to implement drastic measures to ensure that the forests have the same protection as the forest edge farmers now have as they live in harmony with a fence.

Today, three years after Rhino Ark called for a gate access policy for all the forest edge gates (as opposed to national park gates), no such policy has been finalised, let alone enforced. Our surveillance units constantly report specific cases of pit sawing deep inside the forest, bangi fields and snaring. Livestock enter at will.

Just as the fence is a management tool, so its gates require assertive management and both a policy and enforcement process to enable that to happen. This primarily can be achieved by close collaboration with forest edge communities. Such communities know of the abuses, know who turn a blind eye and which commercially linked group is in cahoots with various levels of authority that allow such practices to continue under the very eyes of those who are in charge of a particular section of forest.

There is lack of cohesion and master plan thinking. Rhino Ark has taken issue with the Ministry of Roads who continue to provide funds for the survey of a major tarmac road over the highest points of the moorland and right through the fragile environment of the national park and mountain upland. Such an attitude flies fully in the face of campaigners for forest conservation such as Noble Laureate Wangari Maathai.

But the achievements of the fence cannot be underestimated. The Butynski Report of 1999 – the EIA assessment that re-enforced the principal for fencing off the precious Aberdares, the Aerial Survey conducted in 2002 with UNEP backing all confirm that the fence can do the job. A further survey is now called for to review objectively what has been achieved.

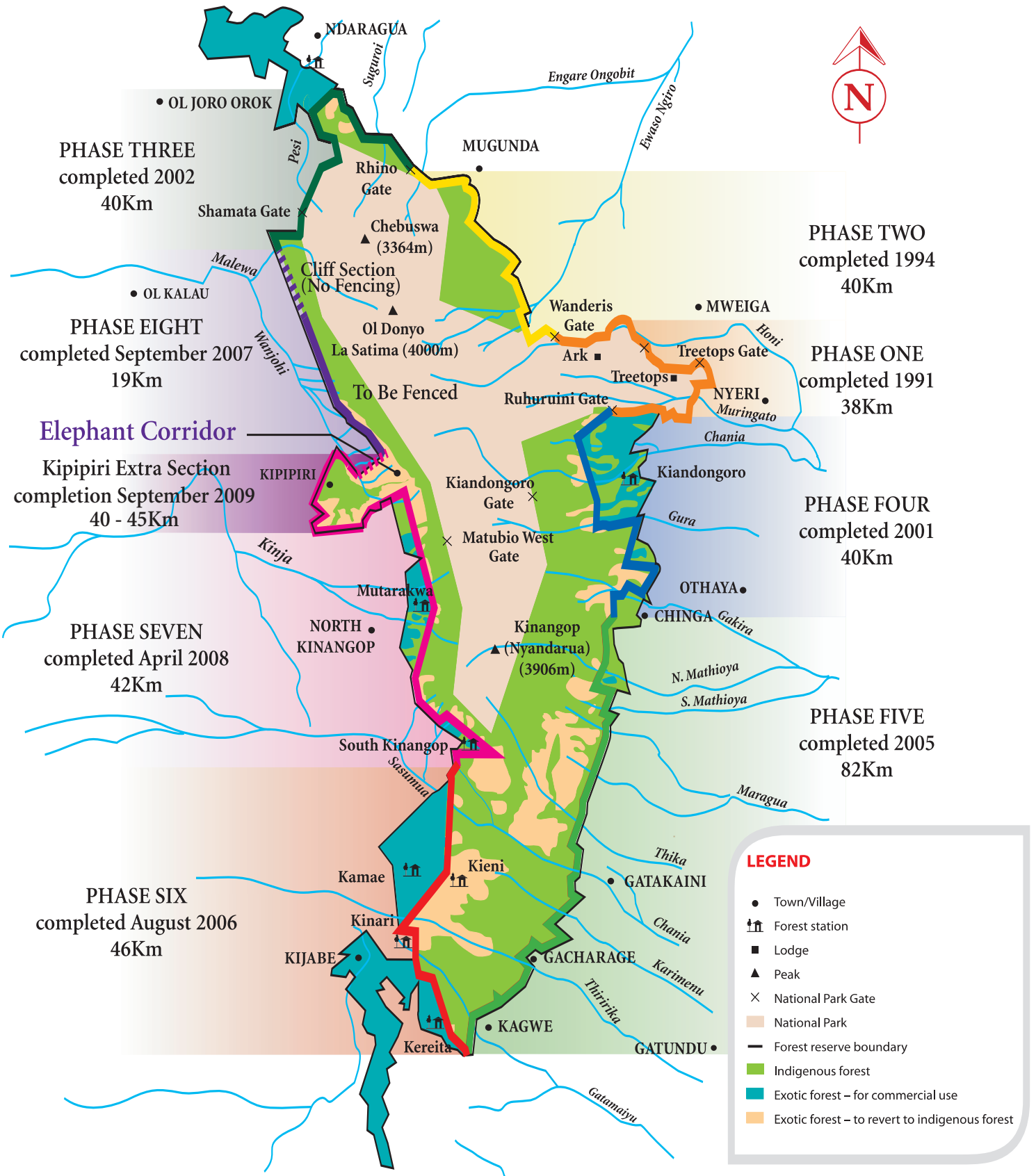
So as we head towards fence completion, it is time to celebrate. We will have a commissioning celebration of the fence before the end of the year. Once we have done that, we with KWS, KFS and our community friends can focus on resolving the outstanding issues of managing and funding the management of the fence permanently.

In so doing Rhino Ark will remain part of an ecosystem that works to its best capacity.



FENCE CONSTRUCTION

Fence will be almost 400kms long when complete in September 2009



Continued from page 1

Rhino Charge 2009 roars off May 31st

every car raises donations for the Aberdare fence – its construction and maintenance,” said Colin Church, Rhino Ark’s Management Committee Chairman. “We received the pledges in reducing levels – ksh 1million, ksh 500,000 and ksh 200,000 in July, August and September 2008 immediately after the previous Rhino Charge event on June 1 2008. By September 1, all the restricted number of places were taken, and the bookings closed,” said Mr. Church. The 2008 Rhino Charge raised a record breaking USD 1 million.

The event which has been featured on such prestigious global news channels as National Geographic, the BBC’s Top Gear, DSTV, CNN and Reuters Africa Journal still remains “the only event of its kind in the world”, said Mr Church. “It is a measure of Rhino Ark’s success in dealing with core issues of poverty eradication, job creation, better farm revenue and conservation of the Aberdares’ precious ecosystem that such considerable sums are raised by the annual Rhino Charge 4x4 off road event”, Mr. Church added.

Raffle Tickets and Prizes Galore!

The 2009 Raffle tickets are ready for collection on request. This year promises exciting prizes never witnessed before!

Most teams have already collected their tickets. More tickets are available from the Rhino Ark offices.

Continued from page 1

Chargers Gear up!

On May 31, 2009 over the June 1 bank holiday weekend thousands will gather in a secret place somewhere in the great Kenya bush country – far from the bustling cities – to battle it out in a world unique extreme sport event.

Undeterred by the credit crunch and the global economic downturn – yet again 2009 Rhino Charge starts with a full entry for the limited number of ‘pledge’ places on offer.

Entries for the 2009 Charge were filled even earlier this year – indeed by August 22 2008! Why so soon after last year’s event? The Rhino Charge pledge system gives three categories of entry – Ksh 1 million to be signed up by 31 July 2008 –

just two months after the last event, Ksh 500,000 one month later on August 31 and again at the end of September for any places left after that. But there were no places left by August 22! There is no waiting list.

Rhino Chargers are committed to ensure the environment footprint is as small as possible for raising as much money as possible. So hence the limit for entries between 55 and 60 maximum.

Any car capable of going in as straight a line as possible in impossible Kenyan terrain can compete. Tractors, tanks, crawlers and trail bikes are not permitted. You can try it in a two wheel drive. Way back a winner managed this

using tractor size tyres! But 4 wheel drives matter in this teamwork event where up to six in each machine drive, navigate, push, pull, grunt, groan and winch their way to complete as many guard posts as possible in the ten hours permitted.

Everyone who raises money is a winner in the Rhino Charge. Every winner has the kudos and chance to be part of the fun of the event and to try to win outright or win the most coveted prize – the Victor Ludorum – highest placed and highest fund raise on a formula.

For further details about the camping arrangements, read more on page 7.

Braeburn Schools to host Drivers’ Briefing May 9th

Drivers’ Briefing on May 9th will have a new venue - Braeburn School.

Braeburn Schools have agreed to sponsor the Drivers’ Briefing at a Nairobi venue – Braeburn School, Gitanga Road, Lavington. The Rhino Charge Committee formally accepted this offer. “We are sad in many ways to say ‘Kwaheri’ to Ruiru Sport Club; however we salute the Club for the many years it has supported this important event”, said Anton Levitan Chairman, Rhino Charge Committee.

Another contributing factor to the venue change has been the major road development on the Nairobi – Thika highway and the never ending traffic challenges faced by commuters plying this route.

The late Rob Combes, Rhino Charge’s first Clerk of Course and it’s then Committee Chairman, introduced Rhino Charge to Ruiru.

Rhino Charge dedicated website will be launched at briefing



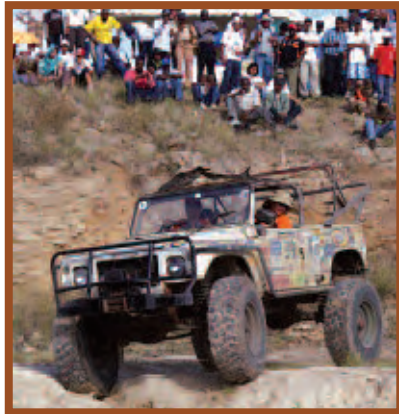
Quattro Charge - November 1st, 2009

This year's Quattro Charge has been fixed for the weekend of November 1 at the Athi River Quarry.

Last year's event raised a total of Ksh 1,783,500. The prize money as promised by organiser and ex-Rhino Charge veteran winner Rob Collinge, who retired from the Rhino Charge last year, was distributed to the ten 2008 Rhino Charge entries who participated. Smaller cash prizes were given to "budding Rhino Chargers" in the Intermediate, Junior and Quad sections.

Over 40 vehicles are expected to participate in this annual event before a crowd of 1,500.

In previous years, Quattro Charge has raised money for organiser, Rob Collinge's car. Rob promised that future Quattro Charges would raise funds for Rhino Charge cars which enter the event.



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Many thanks to our Raffle Committee:

Jenny Davey, Henrietta Remnant and Belinda Levitan
 for their voluntary efforts to secure these prizes



Camping – 2009 Charge Tarpo Appointed

Much attention is given by the Rhino Charge Committee each year to ensure that our camping facilities and the area set aside for camping are as Charger-and Spectator-friendly as possible. This year will be no exception. Our camping facilities are always dictated by conditions on the ground and hence vary from year to year. The Committee is constantly looking at improvements. There will be two distinct areas for camping.

These are designated *Competitor Camp* and *Spectator Camp*.

Competitor Camp: Once again this year Car Entrants are being requested to submit the names of those in their campsites in advance of entry. The Committee will be asking for these names at the Rhino Charge Briefing (Braeburn School, May 9th at 11.30 am).

Spectator Camp: This will be in its own identified area.

This year the pre-Charge excitements such as Scrutineering on May 30 will be open to everyone. There will be a payment of a Ksh 500 per head Venue Area entry fee (under 18 years old, free entry).

The low cost of staging the Charge is because an army of people give hours and hours of time to ensure it happens. So it is thought that a venue entry charge from Spectator Camp is a fair added contribution to the overall fundraise.

The same wrist band system will be in force – a three colour coded one for a) Competitor camp entrants, b) Officials and sponsors, c) Spectator Camp visitors. All persons who enter the check-in gate – including camp staff must wear the wrist bands at all times. Those found without a band by officials and KK Guards, our security service team, will have to pay again.

This year the Spectator Camp will be under the management of an appointed safari outfitter - Tarpo Industries Ltd.

Tarpo will have three separate operating centers:

- A three tier fully equipped camp – *Maridadi, Kijiji and Boma Camps*.
- The self-service Spectator Camp area.
- A food and drink outlet – set near and within easy access on foot of the self service Spectator Camping area that will be open for competitors, spectators, sponsors and officials.

Tarpo is the appointed Spectator Camp outfitter for the 2009

Rhino Charge. Please contact Ruth or Asim:

info@tarpo.com Tel: (020) 2018655 /0736 958400 for details.

Tarpo will run a tent bar and snacks outlet at HQ/Scrutineering 30 - 31st May and for prize giving on June 1st and a soft drink and snacks outlet at the Gauntlet on Charge day May 31st.

As has always been the practice, the appointed outfitter can accommodate competitors, sponsors and media teams in their camps.



Peter Mwangi - Honorary Warden



Bongo picture taken by trap camera

Guardians of the Mountain Bongo

Conservation by the Community

Story and Pictures - Eric Kihui, Resource Development Manager, Rhino Ark

The Eastern Mountain Bongo (*Tragelaphus euryceros isaaci*) is one of the rarest and most beautiful antelopes in the world. Big (up to 400kg fully grown), with a rich chestnut coat with narrow white vertical stripes, this elusive creature has been sighted by only a handful of people in recent times. In bygone days bongo were abundant, and respected by the local communities.

It was widely believed that seeing a bongo brought good luck. Only a few of them now survive in the wild, mostly in the dense forest areas of the upper Aberdare mountain range. The Eastern Bongo is a distinct subspecies from the much more common Lowland Bongo which is found in the lowland rain forests of West Africa, the Congo basin, Central African Republic and S. Sudan.

Among the few living humans that have seen the bongo in person in the wild is Peter Mwangi. Born 72 years ago into a poor family of hunter-gatherers living in the Aberdares, he was inducted into the forest life from early childhood. Following in the footsteps of his father, he learnt the fine art of honey gathering and hunting game for meat in the misty forests of the Aberdares through the 1940's. He perfected tracking wildlife from spoor, examining hoof prints, droppings and even how twigs had been chewed to determine which animal had passed.

The 1950's political turmoil occasioned by the struggle for independence and declaration of a state of emergency by the colonial government displaced many into the Aberdare forests. These forest squatters, increasingly reliant on game meat for sustenance, may have been one of the factors contributing to the decline in bongo and other wildlife populations.

At this time, professional game hunting safaris were long established in Kenya. Peter's legendary tracking skills helped him get employment as a tracker for a professional hunter, Tony Archer, who was searching for bongo. Through this opportunity he realised that a decent living could be made by using his skills for something other than poaching.



Trap camera in focus

In the mid 1960's a new opportunity presented itself, in the form of demand for live African wildlife by foreign zoos. In 1967 Peter was hired by Don Hunt, based in Nanyuki, as a tracker to find and safely trap bongo for export. Peter's legendary tracking skills paid off handsomely. By 1978 he had helped Don capture 27 bongo for export. The income earned from his employment enabled him to purchase a farm in Kinangop. He left the forest for the more sedentary life of a farmer, where he remained through the 1980's and '90's.

By the turn of the new millennium, a wind of change was blowing in local conservation circles. The population of bongo had been decimated by habitat loss, poaching and bush meat hunting. Realisation had dawned that unless drastic steps were taken, these beautiful animals would be lost forever. There had been no reported sightings of bongo in years, and many wondered if any were even left.

By 2003 an initiative to protect the bongo had come into being. The Bongo Surveillance Project was conceived by Honorary Warden Mike Prettejohn, a former game hunter turned conservationist. Mike began to recruit a team from amongst the local community with experience in wildlife tracking to carry out surveillance of bongo habitat to determine their population and range. This team became known as the Bongo Surveillance Unit. Through mutual acquaintance Tony Archer, Peter was introduced to Mike and joined the team.

Mike, the architect of the surveillance programme determines possible bongo areas using aerial patrol, plots the GPS coordinates and plans the teams' activities. The ground surveillance teams use Mike's data in the forest. A typical bongo surveillance operation in the forest lasts about 2 weeks and involves a 5 to 6 man team accompanied, for security, by armed Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) rangers. From an initial base camp they split into groups of 3 and patrol an area for 3-4 days. They will collect data on bongo tracks, droppings, signs of poaching activity, sightings of poachers, illegal loggers and any other relevant information. The team sets up trap cameras at areas such as salt licks known to be visited by bongo, and they also inspect the trap cameras and download the images taken.

They move methodically from one sector to the next as per the patrol plan, shifting base

camp as they move along. Their findings, GPS coordinates of relevant sightings, trap camera pictures and other data are compiled and shared with KWS. Through this initiative, a clearer picture has begun to emerge about the bongo population and range. The bongo's excellent hearing and adeptness at hiding make them hard to see, and most evidence of their presence is indirect, through spoor, droppings and trap camera pictures. Peter is one of the lucky few to have seen bongo up close. In 2004 he sighted a group of 14 bongo at Wandare in the north eastern Aberdares, and in July last year he saw a bongo cow and calf.

By 2004 the level of surveillance activity was ramped up by the support of Rhino Ark, that provides funding for operations. Various donors and partners have come on board to provide financial or technical



BSU patrol on the move

support including AFEW, Eden Wildlife Trust, the Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust, The Rare Species Conservatory Foundation, The Tusk Trust, ILRI, University of Cardiff, University of Nairobi, Woburn Safari Park (UK), East African Wildlife Society, Rufford Trust, Small Grant Trust IFAW and University of Virginia. Notable grants received include funding for bongo DNA analysis by AFEW and a \$50,000 2-year grant from UNDP's Small Grants Programme to further expand the bongo surveillance operations, to mention a few.

Before I met with Peter I had taken the opportunity to accompany a patrol unit into the forest for a routine trap camera inspection. I witnessed first-hand the very real risks attendant in this work when our party came across a bull elephant at very close range, almost within touching distance. It

was only by sheer luck that the beast did not charge. It was a reminder that courage is a prerequisite in this line of work. Elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard are all found in this area, and an encounter with any of these can result in disaster.

I posed the question to Peter of what role the local communities play in conserving or endangering the bongo. He shared an anecdote on how the most skilled bongo poachers were men of his generation, people he knew personally, and most of whom have passed or retired and have not passed on their 'trade' to their descendants. The constant presence of the surveillance team in the forest has also acted as a deterrent to poachers as the likelihood of discovery is much increased. The members of the team, some of whom may have otherwise turned to poaching, are gainfully employed and now appreciate the importance of conservation. Peter observed that many young people in local communities are not familiar with the bongo, but that the schools outreach component of the bongo programme was beginning to make a positive impact.

I asked Peter why he does this work. His reply was simple: it is what he knows, he's good at it and it has helped him raise his family. Two of his sons have followed in his footsteps and are now members of the team, so the family legacy carries on into the

next generation. Though soft spoken and slight of build, Peter exudes the energy of someone half his age. He still puts in as much field patrol time as any of the other team members and shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon – a truly remarkable feat.

Local communities can, do, and should play a greater role in conservation. The experience of the bongo surveillance team, made up of community members clearly proves this point.



Peter (centre) and sons Laban (left) and Stanley (right)

Michael Rannerberger visits Aberdare Fence, commends Rhino Ark, KWS partnership



Power testing the fence at Kieni - US Ambassador, Michael Rannerberger (centre) with KWS Assistant Director Mountains, Baraza Otungah (left) and Rhino Ark's Fence/Community Manager James Githui

American Ambassador, Michael Rannerberger, visited the Aberdare Conservation Area (ACA) on 18th March. The Ambassador, accompanied by his daughter Elizabeth with his Staff Assistant Jonathan Howard, traversed the Aberdare Conservation Area (ACA) with Colin Church, RA Chairman. KWS was represented by Assistant Director, Mountains Baraza Otungah and Senior Warden Mungumi Bakari.

The Ambassador kicked started his tour with a visit to the Safaricom funded Elephant grid at Kieni Phase Six Southern Aberdare. RA's Fence and Community Manager James Githui introduced him to the Kekika community group who are the beneficiaries of this section. Next on the Ambassador's trail was a visit to the scenic Chania waterfalls, where he sampled the breathtaking waterfalls before a game drive in the vast Aberdare National Park. The entourage met the press at the world renowned Treetops over lunch.

Commending Rhino Ark and KWS for their conservation efforts, Mr. Rannerberger said, "Destruction of crops by wild animals has been reduced drastically since the erection of the Aberdare fence. Farmers have recorded a 100% crop production. The fence has reduced poaching and illegal logging".

Colin Church commented that the Aberdare project was a Private Public partnership into which huge donations of tax payer's monies had gone. "So far Rhino Ark has raised over Ksh. 600 million for the building of the fence. We have been raising funds continually without rest since 1989 when we started the Rhino Charge. We now have to focus our energies on fence maintenance. We will require a total of Ksh. 800 million for the endowment fund to be run under the proposed Aberdare Trust. These monies will be used to pay up to 100 workers and support all materials and management. Such a fund will provide Ksh 40-50 million per annum".



Kipipiri community groups from Kekika, Geita and Bushy discussed issues with Ambassador Rannerberger at Nandarasi gate.



Hon. Warden Mike PretteJohn of Bongo surveillance explains the project.

Commissioning – Plans now under way

A ceremony to commission the Rhino Ark initiated Aberdare Fence – started 21 years ago – will take place towards the end of this year.

We all need a party!

Those who have worked on the fence line building it; the Kenya Wildlife Service, the lead government agency partners whose consistent participation, often in difficult times, has been essential for the completion of the fence; the Kenya Forest Service, a prime benefactor from the fence and its proven ability to improve eco-system and indigenous forest management; the fence line communities whose lives have been drastically impacted by the results of the fence; and all the thousands of people who have donated funds – mainly through the Rhino Charge - to build the fence.

A special site has been selected for the event. A planning team made up of Rhino Ark and KWS under the chairmanship of the Director of KWS – Julius Kipng'etich and inclusive of the Kenya Forest Service has started work.

There will be activities in which the fence line communities and those Rhino Charge veterans – the key fundraisers now supported by both Kenya Government and international conservation bodies – will be recognised.

Further announcements will be made later in the year once a date has been firmly secured.



RA receives money raised from Dosika 2208 Pick Up promotion



The Dosika 2208 promotion which was used to raise money for the Aberdare fence for a better part of 2008, finally came to a close on the 24th December 2008. Two Isuzu DMAX pick ups were won during the promotion which involved sending sms '2208' as many times as possible for a chance to win the pick ups.

Ruth Mugugu, from the General Motors Marketing Department is pictured presenting an Isuzu DMAX Pick Up to the lucky winner accompanied by Rhino Ark's Resource Development Manager, Eric Kihui. Rhino Ark received a total of Ksh 266,244.70/- from the promotion.

Rhino Ark donates six cameras



Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Assistant Director - Mountain Region, Baraza Otunga (far right) with the Park Warden and Aberdare National Park Staff after an in-house photography training workshop organised by Rhino Ark at the Aberdare National Park Headquarters in Mweiga. Rhino Ark donated six cameras to be used to capture images of the Aberdares. Rhino Ark's Resource Development Manager, Eric Kihui, says that the initiative will provide a platform to inform, educate and engage various stakeholders in conservation activities through photography.

New Appointments



Beryl Okundi



Kate Mwangi

Beryl Okundi has been appointed Public Relations Manager at Rhino Ark. Beryl has had broad experience in both media and public relations having held both corporate and consultancy positions within the PR industry for the past ten years.

Kate Mwangi, now a graduate of a degree course in journalism and media studies at Nairobi University, was on attachment to Rhino Ark last year and is now confirmed as PR programme assistant both for resource development research and public relations activities at Rhino Ark.

Christian Lambrechts wins Werikhe Award



Colin Church, Chairman, Rhino Ark Management Committee (far left), presents the Michael Werikhe Award, 2008 to Christian Lambrechts of UNEP (far right). Looking on is Ali Kaka, former Director, East African Wild Life Society (second left) and Prof. Fred Owino, Chairman of EAWLS (second right).

The Michael Werikhe Award, 2008 for services to conservation in the Aberdares was awarded to Christian Lambrechts of UNEP. The Award was conceived by the East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS) and provided to the Rhino Charge Committee to nominate the winner each year.

Lambrechts, a professional in engineering and environmental law, has been in the forefront of conservation in Kenya since the early 90's. He has helped to create national attention about the critical state of the Aberdares, Mau and Mt. Kenya. He has also dedicated much time to work with the Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO), a community based organisation in the Kereita area of the Aberdares.

As a member of Kenya Forest Working Group (KFWG), Lambrechts has contributed his expertise particularly in carrying out aerial surveys of the Aberdares, Mt. Kenya and the Mau. This has provided hard information as to the state of indigenous forest cover and areas under devastating destruction by illegal elements.

The Michael Werikhe Award is given annually in recognition of special conservation achievement in the Aberdare region. It is in honour of the late Michael Werikhe, better known as the "Rhino Man". His conservation efforts, supported by East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS) helped bring attention to the plight of the Rhino in Kenya in the 80's and 90's.

Previous winners over the last five years have been:

- 2003 - The Gatamaiyu/Karimenu Fence Community - which raised Ksh 1.54million in donated labour charges for Phase Five of the Aberdare Fence.
- 2004 - Sarah Higgins - for her services particularly to water catchment conservation for Lake Naivasha.
- 2005 - George Odhiambo - the anchor person in KWS for the fence's construction for over 15 years.
- 2006 - KEKIKI Community - which raised over Ksh 2.4million for Phase Six construction of the Aberdare Fence and for their re-forestation of indigenous trees inside the fence.
- 2007 - The Bongo Surveillance Team - for their work for bongo conservation in the Aberdares and elsewhere.

Fence Scouts people at the sharp end

As fence maintenance becomes the focus of attention, the role of the people on the ground – the Fence Scouts - will increasingly need more resources and support.

When the fence is complete later this year there will be nearly 100 fence scouts employed. Their task – to daily walk the fence line to check its performance, clear undergrowth or fallen trees, animal impact and to ensure that electrification by impulse is at full performance - between 5000-7000 watts.

Re-named Fence Scouts and formerly known as Fence Attendants, it is Rhino Ark's policy to accelerate the support for these people.

Ever since the first kilometer of fence was completed in 1990, KWS has engaged staff to attend to the fence's daily maintenance. The Aberdare Fence Management Strategic Plan, which envisages the formation of a Trust to manage the fence, emphasises the importance of this daily maintenance routine.

The Fence Scouts are engaged after a period of work building the fence. This has always been the policy. It means that each person now on the fence line knows how to fix broken fencing, and how it works. Every one has 'graduated' as a builder of the actual fence. It is tough work. But it means the fence will have a body of people who understand the job well.

A major element of the funds needed for maintenance and management will be allocated to the establishment costs for the Scouts.

During the past eighteen months, Rhino Ark has undertaken a specific activity to secure corporate and conservation body support for the construction of housing for the Fence Scouts. The buildings are sited every 20 kms - being the maximum distance between energizer bases. The buildings are built to the latest KWS standard for employees in the field and contain accommodation for two Fence Scouts in separate attached flats and the energizer room and store for materials. Each is manned by radio.

In the period ahead Rhino Ark's focus will be to undertake training programmes for the Fence Scouts and build them into a key force capable of interacting with the fence adjacent communities – many of whom have helped build the fence by clearing the fence line and digging holes on a no pay agreement. These groups are important stakeholders.

Many from the fence line communities have also been engaged to join the construction team. The best two of up to sixty men working on the fence are then re-engaged as Fence Scouts on the completion of each new eight kilometer section.

Namunyak 08 Charge Camp fees dispersed

Namunyak Group Ranch in Samburu District - where the 20 Anniversary Rhino Charge was staged last year - has reported its allocation of the Ksh. 2 million camping fees raised by all those who paid to stay on the ranch land for the Charge.

According to the Group Ranch Manager, Titus Letaapo Saayio: "We allocated Ksh.1,200,000, or 60%, towards community development: paying school fees to high school, college and university students from Sarara and Sapache ranches within our group and for development projects - mostly supporting the following community components - water schemes, school developments and dispensaries. About 10% of this amount went to support payment of essential medical bills to some group ranch members who were unable to pay.

The balance of Ksh. 800,000 , 40% of the total was used to support Namunyak conservation efforts including the paying of salaries to security scouts and vehicle maintenance.

Moorland eland herds healthy



Eland herds in the Aberdares have been intermittent and a heavy toll from snaring and predators has greatly reduced numbers in the past.

A healthy and sizeable herd is now ranging in the moorland and hagenia belt and can be seen quite easily on the Wandare Road, linking the Honi River to the centre moorland.

This herd was 23 strong two years ago. When counted again last year it has increased to 33 and in February this year its total complement was 43 and included many young animals.



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Bongo extinction looms - a global initiative now imperative



The story of the Eastern Mountain Bongo monitoring in the Aberdares since it was started in 2004 has captured the attention of a number of respected global research institutions.

Two valued research papers have now been submitted to KWS and the Bongo National Task Force.

These include the results of a four year research primarily to understand bongo habitat selection and by inference their movement and distribution over the Aberdare Mountain Range. The research was carried out in Mt Kenya in parallel to independently evaluate model performance in Aberdares areas where herds frequented.

One of the aims was to show via spatially comprehensive habitat data that similar suitable range areas existed on Mt Kenya. This research was undertaken by a team headed by Dr Lyndon Estes on behalf of the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation and the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Virginia. Major inputs for the field research were provided by the Bongo Surveillance Project teams and by field researcher Adam Mwangi.

Research findings suggest that bongo primarily choose habitats based on their ability to escape human pressure. Another important, but less influential, factor is the presence of suitable vegetation structure. Less than 25% of the total forested areas on each mountain is suitable "core" bongo habitat, according to these criteria. The research report further recommends that aggressive anti-poaching measures should be targeted in areas around Kwanjiri Hill, Northern Aberdares and the Salient and in the vicinity of the surviving

bongo herd above Ragati on Mount Kenya. Reintroductions should be targeted preferably in the area above the park headquarters on Mount Kenya, based on the proximity of park rangers and the availability of suitable habitat, but should only be undertaken following a complete genetics assessment of the wild and global captive herds.

Mitochondrial DNA analysis was conducted with the help of the University of Nairobi, Cardiff University, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and Rhino Ark with funds provided from the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW).

The second is by Dr Jake Veasey, European Coordinator for Eastern Mountain Bongo and Head of the Department of Animal Management and Conservation at Woburn Safari Park in England.

His substantive report made following thorough field work in the Aberdares and other areas where Bongo have been found to still exist in forests seriously threatened by human activity, confirms the existence of herds of a mean total of 100 animals - with over half existing in the Aberdares and small groups under huge threat in Mt Eburu, the Mau and Mt Kenya.

Dr Veasey assesses that a global management plan is urgently needed to

secure the remaining Eastern Mountain Bongo from extinction. Dr Veasey gives at best a 50 year cycle for the Aberdares and Mt Kenya herds and a far worst scenario for the isolated and hugely threatened herds in the Mau and Mt Eburu. He stresses that only with a greatly enhanced and comprehensive protection plan, in parallel with a global meta population management programme of captive herds including the need to establish the genetic viability of the Kenya captive herd currently at Mt Kenya Game Ranch, Nanyuki, can a final viability analysis be assured.

Given sufficient support for security, forest management and the essential scientific research particularly on the genetic 'missing factors', the carrying capacity of Kenya's four sites has been estimated at 600 for the Aberdares, 40 for Eburu, 300 for the Mau and 600 for Mt Kenya.

Since Bongo roam at varying altitudes of between 2000-4000 meters and like many other precious species in the forests of the Aberdares and Mt Kenya - indeed all the country's mountain ecosystems, it is becoming increasingly apparent that conservation areas require managing as complete units. This in no way precludes their legal status as a National Park, National Reserve or National Forest Reserve. Again it is the management factor that must urgently be addressed to ensure their security.

save The Mountain BONGO

Endemic to Kenya, the Mountain Bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus boazi*) is one of only two recognized sub-species of the Bongo in Africa. The other sub-species is the Low Land Bongo (*Tragelaphus e. eurycerus*)

Conservation Status

The mountain bongo is an endangered species and is only found in Kenya. Fewer than 200 are believed to remain in the wild. Their numbers are declining as a result of poaching and the loss of their forest habitat. The bongo is a highly vulnerable species in the Mau, and it is a priority species of the Mt Kenya National Park.

FACT FILE

Physical Characteristics: Colour bright chestnut with old males almost black • 12 to 14 vertical stripes • Large and broad ears • Both males and females have spiralled lyre shaped horns

Swahili Name: Bongo

Scientific Name: *Tragelaphus eurycerus boazi*

Size: Height (While standing) 1-3 metres • Length (Nose to tail) 1.8 - 2.4 metres

Weight: Male (240 - 400kg) • Female (200 - 250kg)

Life Span: 19-22 years recorded in captivity

Habitat: Rain forest with dense undergrowth

Diet: Herbivorous browser

Gestation: About 9 months

Predators: Humans, spotted hyenas, leopards

Reproduction of UNDP's Small Grants Programme School's Poster produced by Rhino Ark.

Lord Aberdare succeeds father as patron



Alastair Bruce, the current holder of the family title Lord Aberdare has accepted the Trustees invitation to be a Patron of Rhino Ark, the Kenya Charitable Trust. He is the great, great grandson of the then President of the United Kingdom's Royal Geographical Society (RGS) when the British explorer, Joseph Thomson traveled in the early 1880s through what was to become the Republic of Kenya and named the mountain range – The Aberdare Range after the then RGS President.

His father, The Rt Hon. Lord Aberdare KBE was a patron of Rhino Ark for over 15 years.

In a letter to Michael Karanja, Rhino Ark Chairman of Trustees, Lord Aberdare writes: "It is a great pleasure for me to share a name with such a special range of mountains. I am enormously impressed by what I have learnt about your organisation. I am proud to join such a distinguished group, and to do what I can to support Rhino Ark in pursuit of its important goals".

Castle Donington, British Indoor 4x4 Show



Rhino Ark UK recently took part in the British Indoor 4x4 Show 2009 held at Donington Exhibition Centre in Castle Donington, Leicestershire.

A free stand was given to the organisation in which to showcase its fundraising activities and events in Kenya as well as to market the 2010 UK and Kenyan Rhino Charges and to demonstrate the work of the charity in Kenya.

The event featured over 90 exhibitors and modified 4x4s of all shapes and sizes were on display. The event was organised by the publishers of Total Off Road and Planet 4x4 magazines. The show had some-

thing to interest anyone interested in off-road motorsport and of course the annual Rhino Charges.

It is hoped that we can spread the word about our events and secure more entrants for the UK Rhino Charge in September. Existing competitors and Rhino Ark UK supporters manned the stand and were delighted to welcome interested or curious 4x4 fans.

A big thank you goes to Total Off Road and Planet 4x4 for their generosity and continued support for the charity. Details of the show can be found on: www.britishindoor4x4show.com

"Spirit of the Charge" 2008

Film Premiere - Nairobi

Over 230 Chargers and their donor supporters relived their thrills, spills, scratches, battle with the thorns and moments of hilarity and despair as they watched the *Spirit of the Charge 2008* premiere at Simba Grill Carnivore, Nairobi on November 22 2008.

Nairobi's Hootenany Players commemorated 20 years of Rhino Charging as top fund raisers received their special film copies and cut a celebratory cake.

Spirit of the Charge films are one of Rhino Ark's strongest promotional outreach tools for Chargers. Copies are available from Rhino Ark.



A Tale of Two forests

This article is reproduced from 'Letter from East Africa' - a column by **Wycliff Muga** as published in African Business Magazine, March 2009

Just slightly over one year ago, Kenya faced a political crisis ignited by a deeply compromised presidential election. And one of the key issues which the resulting violence and anarchy brought into focus was that the country has too many poor farmers trying to support their families on too little land.

The immediate manifestation of this problem at that time was in the brutal evictions which involved those said to be "settlers" being chased off their farms by those who claimed certain areas as their "ancestral land". But the problem is one with deep historical and demographic roots, and represents a challenge which in one form or another will sooner or later confront other African governments too.

Perhaps the most crucial factor in Kenya's land problem, is that about two-thirds of the country's land mass is either arid or semi-arid. This would be no problem if Kenya had major oilfields in the vast desolate plains of the North Eastern Province – but unfortunately Kenya has no oil, and is essentially a nation of small scale farmers, with about 80% of its population living off small scale agriculture, just as is the case in much of Eastern Africa.

Added to this is the fact that Kenya has a rather high population growth rate – the average Kenyan woman has between 4 and 5 children.

So there is bound to be explosive pressure on the comparatively small amount of high potential agricultural land available, with ever increasing demands being made on elected leaders to find more farmland for their supporters.

This has led some observers to ask: Given that Kenya has part of Lake Victoria within its borders, why has no Kenyan government embarked on large scale irrigation projects to increase the amount of arable land available to its rapidly-increasing population?

Well, the problem is that Kenya is not really free to use the waters of Lake Victoria as it pleases. And neither is

Uganda or Tanzania, which are the other two countries surrounding this lake.

It is well known that Lake Victoria is a principal source of the water that flows through the River Nile. What is not equally well known is that there is a Nile Basin Treaty which was signed back in 1929, and ratified in the early 1950s – years before any East African country became independent.



This treaty binds 10 African countries to restrict their use of the waters of Lake Victoria, as well as of the tributaries of the Nile. This is intended to prevent any reduction of the volume of water flowing through the Nile as it heads towards Sudan and Egypt.

Egypt specifically, has made it clear that it considers any interference with the flow of the Nile to be an act of war.

The rationale behind this treaty is that whereas the economies of the tropical countries around Lake Victoria can flourish to some degree without relying on the water from the lake, Egypt which is mostly desert does not have any such flexibility.

All of its agriculture and a good deal of its tourism depend on the steady and

uninterrupted flow of the Nile. From the Egyptian point of view, it is simply inconceivable that the amount of water it receives from the Nile should be allowed to diminish in any way.

So even though the demand for more farmland by a rapidly expanding rural population is known to be one of the fundamental problems that Kenya faces, large scale irrigation projects are not likely to feature on the government's agenda anytime soon.

This combination of factors has had tragic environmental consequences: it has encouraged political leaders to look towards forests as an option for settling their "landless" supporters.

And so we find that Kenya offers fine examples both of how to conserve a vital forest, and also of how to destroy a forest complex of great national significance.

Let's start off with the example of destruction: during the rule of the former President Daniel arap Moi (and especially from the early 1980s to the late 1990s) forest land was often parceled out to the politically favoured "landless" over the protests of environmentalists.

Mau Forest in the Rift Valley Province was one such area. And records indicate that about 10,000 families mostly from communities indigenous to the Rift Valley were settled within that area over time.

However there are actually very sound economic and environmental reasons for not interfering with forests in this way. These forested mountains are usually the "water towers" of a country: heavy rains are concentrated in these areas and from them flow streams which make up the bigger rivers which in turn feed the lakes within the country.

If you remove enough of the "forest cover" from these hills and mountains, all sorts of strange effects will be felt many miles away: rivers and lakes will begin to dry up, and their capacity to generate hydroelectric power can diminish in a few short years.

Continued on page 18



Aberdare Elephants

Well, the short-term populism which encouraged settlements in the forested highlands of what is usually termed as “the Mau forest complex”, has led to two quite spectacular results:

First, the Mara River (famous for being crossed by millions of wildebeest during the annual migration) which is fed by streams flowing from the Mau Forest, receives so little water now that it may well dry up completely within a decade or so.

And second, the giant Sondu-Miriu hydroelectric project in Western Kenya – a key development initiative of the Japanese government – sits idle as it does not have enough water flowing through the Sondu River to operate its turbines.

Indeed this project just about summarises why long-term environmental planning is so vital for the economy of a country: there was plenty of water in the Sondu River when the project was first conceived over a decade ago. And it was finished just in time to find that there was no longer enough water to make it work, thanks to the massive deforestation in the Mau forest.

As for the right way to conserve a crucial water catchment, the example here is the Aberdares Ecosystem Management project. This has been the focus of the Rhino Ark Charitable Trust here in Kenya for nearly twenty years, and has involved building more than 300 kilometres of electric fencing around the Aberdare Forest, located on the Aberdares mountain range in Central Kenya, which is Kenya’s largest area of heavy and reliable rainfall.

The many small streams flowing from the Aberdares link up to form three of Kenya’s main rivers: the Ewaso Nyiro River, the Tana River and the Athi River, all of which are important for irrigation and the supply of drinking water to Kenyan towns and villages.

The city of Nairobi in fact depends entirely on the Aberdares streams for its water supply. And Tana River is additionally significant - it’s the source for the bulk of Kenya’s hydroelectric power.

Because the Aberdares forest has been so effectively protected, the supply of water to Nairobi continues to be reliable, and the

hydroelectric power stations along the Tana River are still a principal source of electricity for the country.

According to Mr. Colin Church, the Chairman of the Aberdares Fence Project, it was not always easy to persuade the local communities that building this fence was in their interests: after all, as far back as anyone could remember, the local people had been free to go into the forest and harvest firewood, as well as cut down trees for building houses or for making charcoal.

What probably saved this project from outright rejection is that the Aberdares National Park (of which the forest is a part) has very many elephants which were accustomed to wandering out and feeding off the nearby farms: so there was bound to be support for the fence as a means of keeping the elephants out of the farms, if not for keeping people out of the forest.

At any rate, the fencing project has been a huge success, involving an elaborate partnership between the private sector; the government through the Kenya Wildlife Services; the charitable trust itself; and the local people.

So here we have within the same national borders, two forests, each of fundamental economic value to the country, which have suffered very different fates:

One is permanently protected by an electric fence, with the overwhelming support of the local communities.

And the other has been extensively deforested and subsequently occupied quite legally by thousands of small scale farmers, who now flatly refuse to move out of the area – even though the environmental impact of this settlement is now clear for all to see.

Best Ranger Picture - Solomon Kinyua



Thank You

Rhino Ark wishes to thank the following people and companies who have provided services or specific donations in cash or kind to Rhino Ark.

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Rhino Charge 2009

Order your copy of:

- **Strategic Evaluation of the Aberdare Fence... transition from fence build to ecosystem management**
(Published February 2007)
- **Aberdare Profile.**
- **2008 Spirit of the Charge film in DVD and Video. Available for Ksh 2,000 only.**

All the above are available from Rhino Ark offices in Nairobi, UK and the USA

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