

Advising on translocation and re-introduction of African elephants

In collaboration with the IUCN/SSC Re-introduction Specialist Group, the AfESG established a task force to produce technical guidelines for in situ translocation of the African elephant for conservation purposes designed to help African wildlife authorities and donors to make informed decisions about translocation as a tool for African elephant conservation and management. These guidelines, which were published in early 2004, have been widely disseminated in French, English and Portuguese.

Disseminating information about elephant conservation and management

Since December 2000, eight issues of *Pachyderm*, the scientific journal of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant, African Rhino and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups have been produced by the AfESG. *Pachyderm* has a circulation of over 1,200 readers and contains articles in English and French on the most recent African elephant research activities and conservation issues.

The AfESG website, <http://iucn.org/afesg>, has been transformed into an effective platform for disseminating information about conservation and management of the African elephant. This site contains copies of all the main technical documents produced by the AfESG (including all those mentioned in this report), most of which are available in French and English, and increasingly in Portuguese as well, and consistently receives about 1,500 "hits" per day making it one of the most accessed of all the Specialist Group websites.

Mobilizing resources for African elephant conservation and management

The AfESG raised approximately USD 1,000,000 for activities directly related to African elephant conservation and management. In addition, the total voluntary contribution by the AfESG Chair and members during this time was estimated at more than USD 300,000 per year.

Holly Dublin, Chair

Leo Niskanen, Senior Programme Officer

African Rhino

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) has assisted African Range States in developing and revising the critically important national and organizational rhino conservation plans and strategies in line with the international best practice principles as outlined in the IUCN African Rhino Action Plan. Countries to have benefited include Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We have assisted South African National Parks to revise their strategic plan and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to develop a biological management policy for black rhino.

The AfRSG held its biennial meetings in June 2002 (Zimbabwe) and June 2004 (Kenya). As usual these meetings were attended by the majority of AfRSG members as well as invited observers, and they continue to provide a good forum for disseminating new knowledge and advice on rhino conservation as well as for workshopping specific topics. The continental rhino statistics are updated at these meetings and the recovery of black and white rhino populations continues with numbers in the wild up to 3,600 and 11,100 respectively and a further 242 and 747 in captivity. Poaching however appears to be increasing and the northern white rhino is facing a major threat with substantially increased poaching reducing numbers to about 17 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Numbers may have declined by 40% in the past year. The relic population of western black rhino in Cameroon is also perilously close to extinction. Importantly, the mix of official state representatives and specialists in the group, has, over the years, helped create and maintain a very valuable network for rhino conservationists throughout Africa. One major recommendation to emerge from the most recent meeting is that the AfRSG takes the lead role in facilitating the establishment of an Eastern African Community Rhino Management Group.

One of the major achievements in the reporting period was the holding of an international Black Rhino Biological Management Workshop to address issues around the declining performance of a number of important and key populations in several range states. The workshop produced a revised biological management harvesting strategy which should result in hundreds more black rhino being produced in the next few years. Subsequently, the AfRSG Scientific Officer visited a number of key conservation management agencies in South Africa, Kenya and Namibia to present the results to senior decision-makers and to management and research staff in the field.

The AfRSG Chairman, Scientific Officer and selected members also provide support for a number of regional initiatives. In particular we are part of the consortium driving the Italian-funded SADC (Southern African Development Community) Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation, providing technical direction and leading a number of projects. Apart from holding three full SADC rhino range state meetings and founding a SADC Rhino Recovery Group comprising six countries, the program has facilitated the exchange of rhinos between countries, for example the introduction of black rhinos to Zambia and Botswana and additional founder white rhinos to Botswana. It has also developed the WILDb rhino database management system, largely funded the complete revision of the "RHINO" Bayesian Mark-Recapture software package, and funded and held a number of courses on rhino identification based monitoring (using the revised AfRSG ID training



course); and developed improved horn fingerprinting analytical tools (which can now reliably identify species and source the region of horn recovered (but not yet the precise park with sufficient accuracy). It has completed a law enforcement and intelligence database to assist wildlife investigators and police, and sponsored the development of the highly successful Scene of the Crime training course which to date has been held in Namibia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Botswana.

The AfRSG continues to assist donor agencies, and especially US Fish and Wildlife's Rhino and Tiger Conservation fund, spend their monies wisely by priority rating and reviewing project proposals. It reviews CITES proposals on request from the IUCN/SSC Wildlife Trade Programme and is the Red List Authority for African Rhinos. The AfRSG has also regularly contributed articles and short notes to both *Species* and *Pachyderm*. With US Fish and Wildlife funding, the AfRSG has produced a number of revisions of its widely used rhino identification monitoring training course. In completing a questionnaire upon request of the SSC Chair, it became apparent how many of the AfRSG's activities are actively contributing to meeting the SSC Strategic Plan goals.

AfRSG members are also part of a new UK-funded Darwin Initiative project (together with the Zoological Society of London and Kenya Wildlife Service's rhino program) that seeks to build conservation capacity in Kenya. The Darwin Project has already trained 18 qualified monitoring instructors, has led to the improvement of the Kenyan rhino database management system and will result in improved status reporting, biological management and carrying capacity estimation in Kenyan parks.

In 2003, a number of AfRSG members also attended and participated in a very useful multi-disciplinary Ngorongoro Crater black rhino conservation workshop. In particular they were able to highlight specific problems that were negatively impacting upon black rhino population dynamics in the crater.

The AfRSG Scientific Officer has assisted the Rhino and Elephant and Security Group of Southern Africa develop focused terms of reference, and has participated in a number of their meetings. He has also acted as an expert witness in a horn dealing case in Swaziland. He has assisted Namibia by providing direction on how the population estimates of their largest black rhino population can be improved, together with providing easy-to-use spreadsheet tools to facilitate the future count planning and data analysis in this park.

The AfRSG is extremely grateful to WWF for its long-term support; because without it the group could not have achieved what it has during the reporting period. Core support and meeting fund-

ing is never easy to raise, but is essential for the productive functioning of groups such as the AfRSG. The WWF African Rhino Programme provides funds for the partial employment of the AfRSG's Scientific Officer and, funded the 2002 AfRSG meeting and co-funded (together with the SADC Rhino Programme) the 2004 AfRSG meeting. In addition WWF (South Africa) provides an operating budget for the Chairman.

Martin Brooks, Chair

Richard Emslie, Scientific Officer

Afrotheria

Africa supports a bewildering diversity of flora and fauna. Especially familiar are the large charismatic (and often exotic looking) mammals such as elephants, rhinos, giraffes, lions, etc. Africa also has numerous less familiar (but definitely no less exotic) small mammals, including Endangered oddities like the golden-rumped sengi (*Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*), the dryad shrew tenrec (*Microgale dryas*), and Van Zyl's golden mole (*Cryptochloris zylti*). However, few people - including many biologists - are familiar with these species and their strange-sounding names. Unfortunately, just because they are not well known does not mean that they have escaped the need for conservation action. Thus, we formed the Afrotheria Specialist Group in 2001 to focus attention and conservation actions on some of these lesser-known African mammals.

What is this term, Afrotheria? The development of molecular techniques to explore the evolutionary relationships (phylogeny) of animals has resulted in scientists gathering overwhelming support for a common African ancestry for several "odd" groups of mammals. This ancient radiation includes species with little superficial resemblance to each other. Only ten years ago, no one would have dreamed of grouping the elephants, sea cows, hyraxes, aardvark, sengis (or elephant-shrews), tenrecs, and golden moles into a single evolutionary unit, the Afrotheria. Some biologists do not accept this arrangement, but nevertheless it is a useful and efficient assemblage to focus conservation activities.

Because the Afrotheria is a relatively new concept, our specialist group is also new. Our 30-odd members include a Section Coordinator for each group (or clade) - the hyraxes, aardvark, sengis (elephant-shrews), tenrecs, and golden moles. We did not include the half-dozen or so species of elephants and sea cows in our group because these charismatic large mammals already had very active specialist groups. The smaller species of the Afrotheria, however, are often overlooked by the public, conservation organizations and governmental agencies. We want to encourage more conservation attention on these "forgotten"

