

# REALLY, RHINOS!

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## Zambian Protection Unit Nabs Suspected Poacher

[Focus, 12(6):1.5, N/D, 1990]

"As part of Zambia's renewed efforts to control illegal killing of wildlife, investigators from the Species Protection Department recently intercepted a man armed with a .375 caliber rifle who was known to ferry rhino poachers across Lake Kariba into nearby Zimbabwe. Black rhinos almost eradicated in Zambia by poaching, are at risk now by poachers crossing Lake Kariba into Zimbabwe to strike rhino populations there. Earlier this year, WWF and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jointly pledged \$150,000 to support the new Special Protection Dept., part of Kenneth Kunda's effort to stop illegal wildlife killing and official corruption in Zambia as well as prevent the entry of poachers into neighboring countries. The Zambian investigators deployed in this unit are using four-wheel drive

vehicles, two-way radios, fuel, and field equipment supplied by WWF and FSW, increasing their mobility and ability to communicate over long distances and between countries." Anyone wishing to contribute to this effort can contact the World Wildlife Fund, 1250 Twenty-Fourth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

## RHINO SHOCK!

[BBC Wildlife, July, 1990, Lucy Vigne & Esmond Bradley Martin]

"Poachers of greater one-horned rhinos in India's northeastern state of Assam have struck upon an altogether new way, both ingenious and crude, of killing their quarry, and one of the best hopes of ending this practice may lie with a group of illegal extremists. The United Liberation Front of ASSAM (ULFA) has warned poachers, some of whom have been killing rhinos by electrocuting them, that if they do not stop their assault on "the pride of Assam," they will be caught and murdered. Greater one-horned rhinos were given official

protection in India in 1910 and have since then grown steadily to about 1,500, with 1,250 in the Kaziranga National Park, the rest scattered among Manas and Pobitora wildlife sanctuaries and Orang Game Reserve. But the increase in rhinos has been nothing compared to the rise in the price of rhino horn, which now sells wholesale in Taiwan and Singapore at \$15,000 a kilogram and brings the poacher nearly half that. In a place as poor as Assam, that much money can make people desperate so poachers turned to electrocution. The sanctuaries have high voltage power lines running through them. To one of these lines, where it runs near a track used regularly by rhinos, poachers will hook the two ends of a long wire, which is then suspended about a metre above the ground. When a rhino, which is usually using the track to reach a grazing field, touches the live wire, it receives a 10,000 volt shock. The animal struggles for about five minutes before it dies.

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Poachers quickly unhook the wire and cut off the horn and sometimes an ear, which can be shown later as proof to the middleman that a rhino is dead and the horn is genuine. Five rhinos in Kaziranga and two in Pobitora were killed this way in late 1989 and early 1990. Although forest guards have cleared the undergrowth beneath the power lines and patrolled regularly around them, there simply aren't enough guards. The police in Assam take the offense of rhino poaching lightly and many poachers and middlemen never get convicted. To protect Assam's rhinos, nearly \$3.5 million has been allocated by the central government in Delhi since 1985, but only about a half has been spent so far. There is an urgent need for more equipment - rifles, radios, night-vision binoculars, more guards and domesticated elephants are also required, and park staff should be given improved terms of service because of their dangerous work.

The safety of wildlife areas ultimately depends on the good feelings of the local people. With human and rhino populations increasing, there is competition and conflict. At night, wandering

rhinos trample and destroy crops belonging to neighboring poor farmers, which creates hostility towards the park and the rhinos. Perhaps if more compensation for such damage were paid, more cooperation between the villagers and the park would exist, and if informant money were provided and an organized intelligence-gathering network introduced, the local people would help the wildlife officials by giving them information about poachers."



"Yeah, I'm a rhinoceros, so what? Jesus! Why do people always have to categorize each other?"

Well, wouldn't YOU be angry?!

## RHINO I NEED THESE!

Bustamente! Do you own one? Pavo Real Gallery offers limited editions of the works of the internationally acclaimed Mexican ceramicist, Sergio Bustamante. My *objet d'art* is in the shape of a pear with rhinos coming out of the windows and down the steps. (reminds me of the old woman in the shoe) For the fine art

buyer, something to consider. Contact Joy Feldman, Pavo Real Gallery, MKPI Center, 200 State Street, Boston MA 20109. (617) 951-1477.

Baubles, bangles and beads! Direct from sunny Phoenix, Arizona, rhinophile, Nancy Nenad has created some truly funky rhino jewelry which I guarantee you won't find in any store or catalogue. Nancy uses pictures of rhinos and adds her own special glitter to form necklaces (\$12.50) and pins (\$12).

She will donate \$2 from each sale to Rhino Rescue. Curious? Write: Nancy Nenad, 4031 St. Joseph Way, Phoenix, AZ 85018. (By the

way, do you have rhino dog tags? I do!)

OUR FASCINATING EARTH 202 By Philip Soft, Ph.D.

