

Losses of rhino to poachers had been small but significant and the poacher pressure was increasing. The government's anti-poaching unit was called in to assist but this proved unsuccessful and they were withdrawn. A plan was developed to increase the ranger strength from 8 to 16, to provide firearms, uniforms, tents and a radio system. Authority to arm the rangers was obtained and rifles were provided to replace the bows and arrows previously carried by the ranger force. WWF provided 16 sets of uniforms and donated funds from which radios, tents and salaries were paid.

A report in July from the ranch manager stated that expenses were very high during 1981 due to abnormally high pressure from poachers, but the situation was being contained and it was hoped to get on top of the situation within two months. Six rhinos were born during 1980-81; rhinos poached during the same period numbered five (four in 1980 and only one in 1981).

It is recognised that this is a "survival" measure and gives no long-term security to the wildlife on the ranch, but as the same situation pertains elsewhere throughout the country it must be regarded as acceptable. The security provided within the ranch is greater than that provided within the national parks and considerably greater than in the reserves.

Long-term protection of the rhinos and endangered game can only come from outside Africa by the elimination or strict control of the trade in wildlife products.

E T Monks
WWF-Kenya

KENYA, Rhino Action Group (Project 1724)

Investigations by WWF-Kenya in 1977 revealed that the export of rhino horns in recent years from Kenya must have resulted in a very severe depletion in rhino numbers. As a result of the concern expressed by conservationists, the Kenya Rhino Action Group (KRAG) was formed under the sponsorship of WWF-Kenya. It consisted of biologists, zoologists, government wildlife staff and all persons having an interest in the future of the rhinoceros. IUCN revitalised the SSC Rhino Group and WWF/IUCN established its Rhino Project with Dr Kes Hillman as chairman. KRAG and the WWF Rhino Project co-ordinate their work under the chairmanship of Mr Ian Grimwood.

A series of discussions located the priority areas and, in consultation with the Wildlife Department a Rhino Action Plan was evolved setting out the immediate and long-term priorities. Since it was not possible to give protection with anti-poaching units over the whole of the rhinos' range, it was decided that wherever possible rhinos should be captured and translocated to

safer areas where such protection was more likely. At the same time, the President of Kenya was approached and asked to extend special protection to the rhino over its whole range. This he did in a directive to the Wildlife Department.

To support the department by the provision of additional funds, KRAG undertook fundraising programmes and public awareness endeavours including

For some rhinos, capture and release in the
safety of national parks may be the only
answer



Darting a white rhino from a helicopter in Kenya

Photo: WWF/Peter Jackson

film shows, articles in the press and the production of stickers. A special appeal was launched for the rhino and a Rhino Fund established.

The Wildlife Department diverted its Capture Unit to the capturing of rhino and their relocation into national parks. The operation was not without its casualties and of some 40 rhinos captured, eight died. Casualties occurred primarily after release.

The Anti-poaching Unit increased its activities but animals still continued to be lost. Not until the killing of a notorious Somali poacher, nicknamed "Big-Foot" and the break-up of his gang did the situation start to improve.

Towards the end of 1981 the situation began to deteriorate again and KRAG was advised that nine rhinos had been killed within national parks. The capture of rhinos for translocation has virtually ceased and conservation of the rhinos within the national parks has lost its impetus.

Outside the national parks there are small concentrations of rhinos which are



Transporting a white rhino

Photo: WWF/J.H. Blower/J. Allan Cash

being protected by ranch owners and KRAG is giving support to these ranchers to continue protection.

The Wildlife Department is considering the establishment of two areas specially for rhinos within Meru Reserve and Tsavo West National Park. These areas will be fenced with electric fencing and an effort will be made to concentrate under close guard as many rhinos as the area can stand. To assist in this project KRAG has purchased 12 rhino crates for translocation.

So far KRAG has donated over 5 million shillings (US\$500,000) to rhino conservation.

E T Monks
WWF-Kenya

MALAWI, Conservation of Elephants (Project 1665)

The project forms part of the general research programme of the Wildlife Research Unit of the Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife. Its purpose is to assess the status of the elephant populations in Kasungu National Park and Nkhotakota Game Reserves, both situated in the central region of Malawi. This involves research on numbers, occupancy, age structure, calving interval and age at sexual maturity, as well as monitoring mortality due to poaching, crop protection shooting and natural factors.

In addition to standard techniques of photorecognition to determine social organization, photogrammetric methods to analyse age structures and aerial survey to estimate numbers and distributions, methods involving the use of elephant droppings to estimate numbers, distribution and age structure are being tested. These will provide cheap and practicable methods where other techniques such as aerial survey cannot be used, as in forest or mountainous country.

Finally, research on elephant browsing impact on *Brachystegia* woodland is being carried out in conjunction with the Wildlife Research Unit woodland monitoring program. This is intended to provide information on the dynamics of the elephant-woodland interaction in this extensive though comparatively little-studied biome.

A preliminary estimate of about 3,240 elephants was made for Nkhotakota Game Reserve. A high level of illegal activity was observed in the Reserve, which has probably kept the elephant population at a low level, well below the carrying capacity, for many years. This Game Reserve contains some of the most magnificent scenery in Malawi and has a relatively high carrying capacity for wildlife. It has a good potential for development as a tourist area. Funds are urgently needed to upgrade the law enforcement capability and install basic tourist facilities.