

BY STEFANNIE BERNSTEIN

a world without Rhinos?



MARK BOULTON/ICE

Since 1970, the world rhino population has dropped by 90 percent. AWF is finding that sanctuaries may be the solution conservationists have been searching for.

The African Wildlife Foundation has been at the forefront of rhinoceros conservation for several decades. In the early 1970s rhino horn was in high demand in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and these magnificent creatures were being poached to the brink of extinction. AWF recognized this alarming development and joined with other conservation organizations to target the specific consuming groups and launch conservation efforts.

RHINOS BEHIND FENCES: A LAST RESORT

In recent decades, rhinos have been hunted to the point of near extinction. The only two species found today in Africa are the white or square-lipped rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) and black rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*).

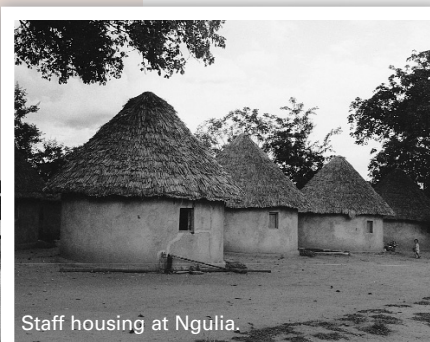
In attempts to protect rhinos in the least obtrusive way, AWF and other conservation organizations have supported anti-poaching efforts and banning trade in rhino horns. While dehorning rhinos seems to be a logical solution, the horn eventually grows back—and poachers kill dehorned rhinos just to avoid tracking them by mistake.

Because the value of these endangered animals is so great and the threats to their survival so intense, more drastic protection measures have been necessary, as exemplified by AWF's work in Tsavo East National Park's fenced sanctuary where rhinos have been reintroduced since 1993. The new "free-release" site is fenceless but heavily patrolled. AWF's vision is that one day all the fences will come down, and the wild and released rhino populations will mix. That will be the measure of success.

Rhino sanctuary ranger.



R. VILLARREAL/AWF (2)



Staff housing at Ngulia.

AWF cosponsored with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and IUCN an investigation of the rhino trade in North Yemen and Asia led by Esmond Bradley-Martin. He found that North Yemen was one of the highest contributors to the trade and that between 1972 and 1975 the amount of horn legally imported meant the deaths of nearly 8,000 rhinos. These results prompted AWF to join with other international conservation groups to eliminate the legal trade in that country.

AWF set out to influence the attitude of the North Yemeni government with a direct-mail campaign that explained the gravity of the Yemeni role and included a letter to the Yemeni prime minister requesting an immediate halt to the country's rhino horn trade. AWF President Robert Smith personally presented the case to the Yemeni ambassador to the United States. In 1982, the Yemeni government issued a decree outlawing rhino horn imports.

During this time, AWF supported Save the Rhino Trust in Zambia. The trust aided the country's scarce rhino population by providing administrative support to conservation efforts as well as the services of radio specialist Howard Wood. Wood helped develop an improved communications system that generated national and international publicity about the need for rhino protection and encouraged the government to take more stringent measures to protect the animals.

AWF also undertook another collaborative campaign with WWF and Bradley-Martin, who further investigated Asia's rhino trade by traveling to eight different Asian countries, including Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Thailand. He

asked traders to stop importing rhino horn for medicinal use and discussed alternative products. When demands for rhino horn increased in later years, however, AWF initiated a public awareness campaign on rhino conservation (1993) specifically for Taiwan and other East Asian countries that consumed rhino horn, in the hope that educating the public about the threat to rhino survival would reduce demand. AWF's Washington, D.C., office began working with the Clinton administration and the U.S. Congress to urge stronger rhino-protection measures, resulting in imposition of

U.S. trade sanctions on Taiwan for failing to enforce laws against trade in endangered species.

Despite valiant conservation efforts, by the mid-

1980s the rhino was a heartbeat away from extinction. AWF and other conservationists discovered the only way to secure the species' future was to build strictly protected rhino sanctuaries. In 1986, AWF helped construct the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary in Kenya's Tsavo West National Park. From its launch with three rhinos in about a third of a square mile in 1986, Ngulia has grown to 49 individuals in approximately 27 square miles, protected by an electric fence. From the beginning, AWF worked to assure that the park had long-term

funding, a vehicle, radio sets, binoculars, a hydrology layout and housing for sanctuary staff and rangers.

In 1993 African Wildlife Foundation extended its rhino conservation work beyond East Africa when AWF's Mark Stanley Price met with Namibian officials to discuss aiding Waterberg National Park—home to 50 white rhinos and 27 black rhinos. This park proved to be so invaluable to rhino conservation that from 1994 to mid-1995 AWF donated funds to the park for horseback patrols, camera equipment and incentives for rangers.

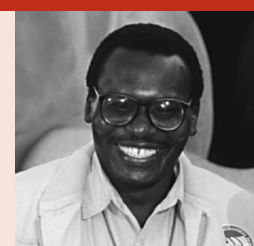
AWF undertook yet another critical rhino project last year, partnering with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania to support black rhino surveillance. The project assists NCA in monitoring and protecting the eastern black rhino as well as helping the small population (15 rhinos) reproduce. The goal is to increase the population by more than five percent per year to 100 by the year 2018. ○

**"THESE ANIMALS
ARE ALIVE BECAUSE
OF SUPPORT FROM
SEVERAL GROUPS,
ESPECIALLY AWF."**

—RICHARD KECH,
OFFICER IN CHARGE OF
NGULIA RHINO SANCTUARY
IN KENYA'S TSAVO WEST
NATIONAL PARK.

AFRICA'S "RHINO MAN"

Michael Werikhe symbolized Africans' concern for rhinos. His walkathons across Africa and other continents raised more than \$1.5 million to aid the species' survival. When he came to the United States in 1998, AWF supported his project. After he was killed in a mugging, a free-release rhino site in Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, was named in his honor.



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