

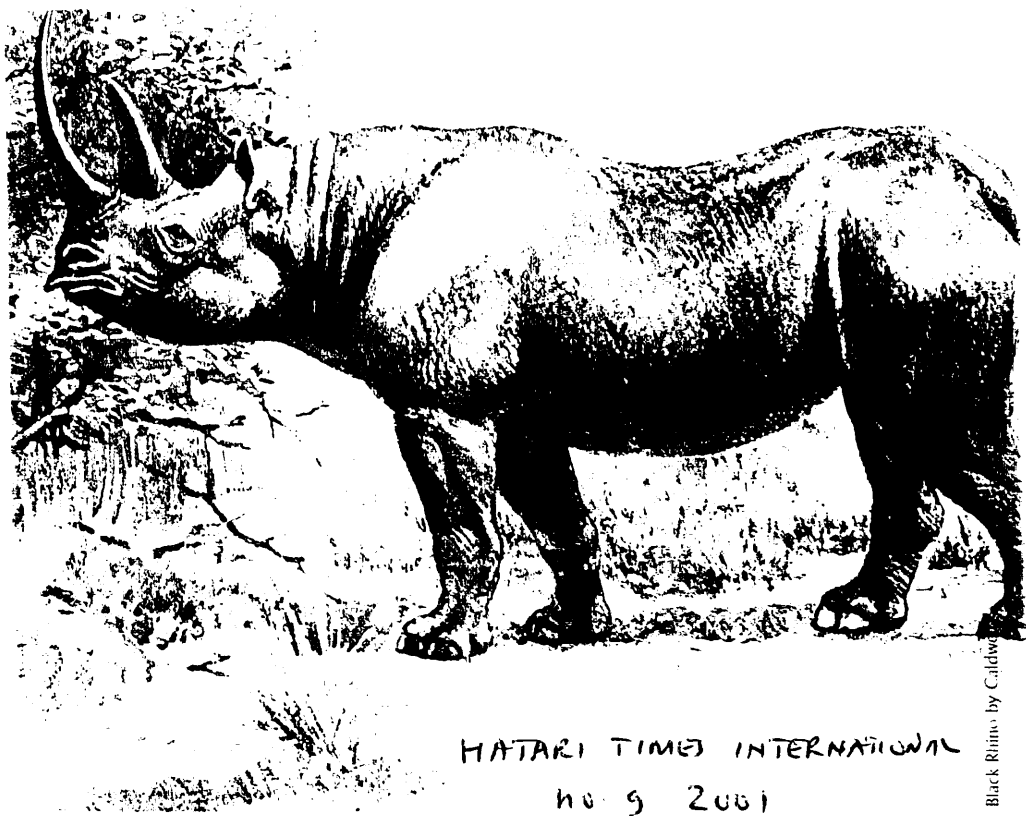
# Black Rhino

by Ron Thomson

It has been variously estimated that there were 100 000 black rhinos in Africa in 1960 and that there are only 2 600 alive today. The black rhinos of Africa became a serious target for poachers during the last three decades of the Twentieth Century and, in the face of this continuing challenge, this article addresses their chances of survival on two fronts. Firstly, we shall discuss the ecological facts relating to the species as a whole; and, secondly, we shall investigate the management and protection options. Finally, we shall consider what contribution, if any, the hunting of surplus bulls can make to black rhino 'conservation'.

The black rhino belongs to an order of animals known as the Perissodactyla, or 'odd-toed animals'. Horses also belong to this group. Within the rhinoceros family there are five species: the black and white rhinos of Africa; the great Indian one-horned rhino; the Sumatran rhino and the Javan rhino. The white rhino is the biggest of them all being the second largest land mammal on earth after the elephant.

The black rhino attains a shoulder height of 160 cms and a mass of about 1000 kgms. Unlike its white cousin - which is a gazer - the black rhino is a 'stick-eater' (not just a browser). It eats small



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Black Rhino by Caldwell

branches and saplings, in their entirety, up to the diameter of a man's finger. The rhinos are equipped with a prehensile upper lip that they use like a small trunk to pull small branches into their mouths. Hence the black rhino's other name - 'hook-lipped' rhino.

It is a solitary animal. Adult bulls are nearly always found on their own and cows are usually accompanied only by their dependent young. Ones and twos, therefore, are the normal group-sizes. Threesomes occur when a bull consorts with a cow that is in oestrus - the third animal being the cow's dependent calf. On the other hand, a cow and her dependent calf are sometimes visited by the cow's previous offspring (now subadult and independent). Such visitations, however, rarely last more than a day or two.

Black rhinos - like all other wild animals - live in very distinct populations. By definition, a 'population' is a group of individual animals of the same species that live in the same habitat together and interact with others of the same group.

One cannot manage a 'species'. This is because a species is comprised of many different 'populations' each of which have many different pressures applied to it all the time. These pressures vary according to many factors - for example: water supplies; good quality habitats; the existence of predator populations; the existence of heavy poaching; and so forth. The way one manages each population, therefore, must be determined by the specific nature of the 'pressures' that are exerted upon each population. *Ipsa facto*, the 'endangered species' concept is a fallacy and it has no place in practical management.

The black rhino's habitat, ideally, comprises a mosaic of broken or undulating countryside with areas of open grassland and open woodland, and with extensive areas of dense thicket. Black rhinos, however, can live in a very wide range of habitat types - provided there is water to drink and woody plant species to eat. If large numbers of black rhinos are to live happily in a small area the habitat in that area must comprise lots of very dense bush. They can live in very open grassland-type habitats but when this is the case they will occur there only in very low numbers.

During the hot dry summer months the rhinos feed throughout the night, during the late afternoon and in the early morning. Most of this feeding is done in open woodlands, scrub lands and along drainage lines. They move down to water in the early hours of the evening, most animals having slaked their thirst before nine o'clock at night. Throughout the hours of darkness they move about their individual home ranges, feeding, resting and dust bathing - sometimes sleeping a little. Come the dawn they start moving slowly



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back towards their midday resting places - feeding all the while.

Their diurnal sleeping sites are normally located deep inside a dense thicket that the rhinos enter by about eight o'clock in the morning - just as the sun begins to get hot. By nine o'clock they have settled down into a nice puddle of soft sand, in the shade, and there they go to sleep. They may get up and shift their positions from time to time (especially if the wind changes direction), or they may move into another nearby patch of shade but, generally, they stay put in one place for the whole of the day.

They do not go to exactly the same resting-place every day. They often do not even go to the same thicket. And sometimes - in habitats where they are not disturbed - they may rest in the total shade cast by a big baobab tree right out in the open. Sometimes they will rest under a shady bush on an exposed hillside to enjoy a particularly cool breeze on a hot day. Their preferred daytime retreats, however, are the dense thickets.

Black rhinos move out of their daytime thicket resting places, and they start to feed on the thicket edges, when ambient temperatures begin to cool off, between four and five o'clock in the afternoon.

What black rhinos do not do is eat during the heat of the day. In evaluating why thicket is so important to the black rhino, therefore, we can eliminate food as the attraction.

The fact that black rhinos 'use' thicket when they go to sleep during the heat of the day and that they feed mainly out in the open during the night, means that they must get something other than food from thicket vegetation. That is security. It is no coincidence, therefore, that rhino population densities are directly related to the amount of permanent woody cover in their habitats. In some places very broken country provides the black rhino with additional security. Very broken country can sometimes substitute for thicket in terms of determining a habitat's black rhino carrying capacity.

The black rhino's use of thick bush as a diurnal retreat affects their behaviour in many ways. For example, in thicket habitats - or in very broken country - a suddenly disturbed rhino will run only fifty metres or so before stopping and turning round to 'see' what had disturbed it. In wide-open country that same rhino, after being similarly flushed, will run into the faraway next valley before stopping. Distance, and not thicket cover or broken terrain, therefore, provides these rhinos with the 'sense of security' that they need.

The species' reputation for aggression is also related to its preference for lying up in very thick bush during the day. A sleeping black rhino, immobile and hidden, is often literally walked upon by an unwary man - and, when suddenly disturbed, the rhino's immediate and instinctive reaction is to attack the intruder. When a black rhino is aware of a man's nearby presence in good time, however, it is no more aggressive than any other wild animal.

An imperative in black rhino habitat is permanent water. During the winter months, when temperatures are cool and the woody vegetation that they eat is succulent, black rhinos will not

drink for up to five days at a stretch. During the final three months of the hot dry season (in south-central Africa), when midday shade temperatures sometimes soar to 50° C, black rhinos become distressed if they cannot drink every night.

So important is permanent water to black rhino that, during the three hottest and driest months (August, September and October), they will wander no further than about five km from their permanent waterholes. This period is the 'ecological bottleneck' of the entire year. No matter how extensive a black rhino sanctuary might be, its effective black rhino carrying capacity is determined solely by the numbers of black rhinos that can live amicably together within five km of the waterholes at the height of the dry season - no matter how good the habitats might be beyond that five kilometre radius.

An interesting peculiarity of black rhino behaviour is that, whenever a rhino lies down to sleep, it always turns its buttocks into the wind. Resting in this position, with the breeze wafting over it from behind, the rhino is able to detect potentially dangerous predators (including man) by scent if such danger threatens from the rear, and it will hear approaching danger from the front.

Black rhinos are also attended by oxpeckers during the day. These are small brown birds picking ticks from its hide and eating the dried blood from old scratches. These little birds act as the rhino's first line of defence because, on the approach of danger, they alert the rhino by means of loud churring calls. When oxpeckers are in quiet attendance, the rhino often drops off into a state of very deep sleep.

Black rhinos have incredibly acute senses of hearing and of scent, but they have very poor eyesight. In the open, they will see a man moving at a range of about 35 metres. Beyond that distance their sense of hearing takes over. For example, in dense bush, an alert rhino will detect the sounds made by a moving man, no matter how quiet he may be, at ranges in excess of 100 metres. And even a totally asleep rhino will detect a man's scent at 300 metres (and more) if the wind is right. On the other hand, if a man disturbs a rhino at just ten metres in very thick bush, and the man stands absolutely still, the rhino will not recognise him visually. Nevertheless, at that distance, should the man move the rhino will immediately attack him.

Within any given population individual rhinos live within their own private home ranges. They do not wander over the whole of the population's habitat. They get from their home ranges their living 'needs' - comprising air, food, water and shelter. Occupation of their own specific home range adds, therefore, to each rhino's individual chances of survival - because they get to know all its nooks and crannies intimately.

A rhino's home range overlaps repeatedly with the home ranges of other rhinos in the population to a greater or lesser extent. Home ranges within a population, can be likened to a complex matrix of overlapping circles, each circle representing one home range. And the outside edges of the outer home-range circles represent the perimeter of the population's habitat.

A man living in a city (his habitat) uses his habitat in exact-



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ly the same way that a black rhino does. Although, from time to time and for different reasons, he may visit other parts of the city, for the most part, he occupies only one small part of the greater whole. And his 'use' of his home range is very specific. He works at the same place every day. He buys his groceries at the same supermarket. And he knows exactly where his doctor's surgery and the local police station are located. These 'uses' of his home range are all related to his 'living' needs. Most of these factors enable him to enjoy a comfortable life. Some of them, however – because he is totally familiar with his surroundings – help his chances of survival. And as happens within a rhino population, the home range of a man living in a city overlaps repeatedly with the home ranges of many other people who live in the same part of the city. Yet it never touches the home ranges of many other people who live in another part of the city.

Black rhino bulls are influenced by two additional factors. First of all, a hierarchy of dominance exists within the male component of each population. From the time they are independent of their mothers young black rhino bulls spar with each other constantly. At every passing encounter they fence with their horns, and they push each other about with their great strength and weight. These are not serious 'fights' but they have a very serious long term purpose. Throughout their lives the young bulls gradually find out which of their siblings are the stronger individuals, and as they mature they develop a personal understanding about each other that, in adulthood, translates into a vital rank and dominance structure.

Within any given population there are a number of 'dominant bulls', several sub-dominant bulls, and many more of lesser stature. The dominant bulls occupy very specific 'territories' the boundaries of which they scent-mark by way of ritual urinations. These scent markings advise all other bulls in the area regarding the limitations of the dominant bull's territory – and any other dominant bull which crosses that line faces a fight to the death if it does not vacate the area promptly.

Territories are all about breeding. It is within territories that

mating takes place between females in oestrus and the dominant bulls. No other bull gets a look in when a cow-in-season enters a dominant bull's territory. Unlike most other species, however, a black rhino territory does not just occupy part of a dominant bull's home range, it occupies the bull's whole home range. Cows will wander into several dominant bull territories during a single oestrus cycle and they will be served by them all.

Whereas black rhino bulls become sexually active at about five years of age, therefore, they are normally not allowed to actually mate with the cows until they are much older – because of the rank structure that exists amongst the mature bulls in black rhino society.

Dominant black rhino bulls tolerate the presence of lesser ranking bulls whose home ranges overlap with their own – provided such bulls do not challenge the dominant bull's supremacy and provided they are subservient. In all circumstances lesser ranking bulls have to give way to the grand master.

When two dominant bulls meet they will literally fight to the death if neither is prepared to pay homage to the other. The same thing happens when a rising sub-dominant bull screws up enough courage to challenge an older bull's high status.

When a dominant bull has been supplanted by a younger animal it takes only a year or two before the older bull dies. Wherever he goes after his defeat, the vanquished bull is challenged by every other adult bull that he encounters. And they fight and harass him all the time. This is because not only has he lost his territory he has also lost his entire home range. Wherever he goes, therefore, nobody wants him. Under these conditions, if he is to survive, he must vacate his old habitat entirely and find some other place where he can live in solitude – and, in modern times, this is not always possible.

Dominant bulls that have lost their prime status in the population, therefore, serve no further purpose in black rhino conservation.

Black rhino cows enjoy a very different status in the population. Unlike young bulls they do not spar with each other and they



baby rhino's diet for the first twelve months of its life.

Calving intervals average about 30 months and when a cow gives birth to a new baby she physically chases off her previous calf. This is quite a traumatic experience for the youngster because he cannot understand his mother's sudden aggression towards him. To help 'break the cycle' the mother and her new baby range widely. She leaves her traditional home range and literally becomes a wanderer - whilst the older calf seeks to find its mother in the old home range with which it is familiar.

The most important reason why the cow breaks from her old routine, however, is to reduce predation pressures that threaten her new calf. The biggest predators on black rhinos are spotted hyenas and once a hyena - or worse, a pack of hyenas - discover a black rhino with a new baby they harass the pair continually until the baby is taken. Photographs of rhinos with one ear missing, or with no ears at all, or with no tails, are all manifestations of unsuccessful hyena attacks when those rhinos were babies.

When the rhino cow does nothing in a routine fashion it provides hyenas (and lions) no pattern to follow. By not being in the same place twice the mother outwits the predator. In effect, being here today and gone tomorrow helps the rhino cow to 'hide' her baby.

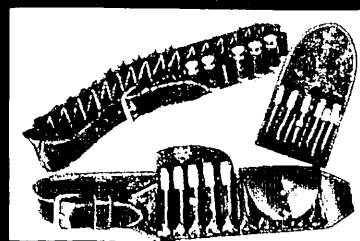
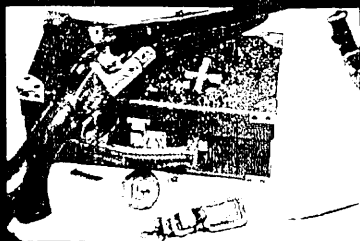
She still, however, has to drink and

have no dominance structure whatsoever. In all the 140 black rhinos that I have captured, for example, I did not find one single female that had 'sparing scars' on its forehead - whereas the bulls always sported such scars.

Cows become sexually mature at about five years of age. The youngest known age at which a female rhino in the wild is known to have conceived is two - but this is

abnormal. They have a gestation period of about fifteen months. The calves continue to suckle from their mothers for up to two years - but such late suckling is not obligatory. Babies start to eat vegetation within the first week or so after their birth and by three months of age they are eating large quantities of vegetation every day. Mother's milk, however, remains the most important part of a

photos: R. Thomson



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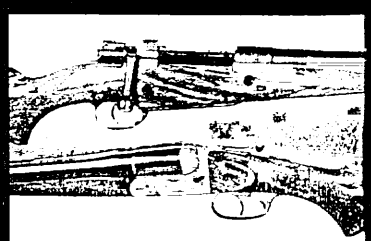
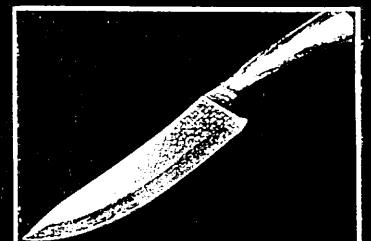
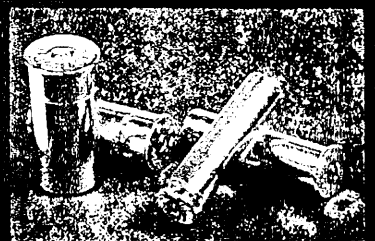
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waterholes are the places where cunning predators often pick up their prey. In order to avoid this trap, therefore, the mother rhino carefully hides her baby in the hills, or inside a deep thicket, when she needs to visit a waterhole. These hiding places are normally two or three km from the water. Then she comes down to drink alone. Once she has slaked her thirst she hurries back, picks up her baby, and off they go again into the night.

This nomadic pattern continues until the baby is some three months old – and by then very much bigger. It is also much stronger and it can keep up with its mother easily when it takes flight – running along strongly at her heels. It is about this time that the mother gradually returns to the living pattern of her former home range and there she will meet up again with her previous calf. After three months of living on its own, however, the previous calf is then conditioned to the solitary life that it is destined to live. Such family reunions, therefore, are short-lived.

Black rhino calves grow very quickly. At birth a black rhino calf is only 40 kg in weight and it can walk under its mother's belly. At 30 months of age, when it becomes independent, the young rhino is then 1,2 metres at the shoulder and probably 500 kg in weight. Its mother, by comparison, is 1,5 metres tall at the shoulder and she weighs nearly 1000 kg. Not surprisingly, the most rapid rate of growth occurs during the animal's first year of life when it is most susceptible to predation.

Black rhino cows never seem to

stop producing calves. Certainly, there are many authenticated black rhino cow deaths that could, and should, be attributed to the effects of old age – but these cows have either been pregnant or they have had a calf at foot, or both, when they died. Furthermore, looking at the breeding behaviour of black rhino cows, which is characterised by the mother chasing away her previous calf when the new one is born, it is clear that black rhino cows should ALWAYS have a calf at foot. The frequent occurrence of adult black rhino cows without calves, therefore, is a sure indication of heavy levels of calf predation –

probably by spotted hyenas.

A rhino cow that has lost a young calf may, immediately thereafter, reform a permanent relationship with its previous calf. A rhino cow with a very large sub-adult in her company, therefore, may also be an indication that she has recently lost a new calf.

The predation of black rhino calves by spotted hyenas is often very heavy indeed – and it goes largely unnoticed today because few people nowadays have the practical hands-on experience to properly interpret the signs! The elimination of spotted hyenas in major black rhino sanctuaries





should, in my opinion, be a priority management objective under present day conditions.

Black rhino populations, under ideal conditions, have an annual incremental capability of about 12 percent per annum. This is not, however, a common occurrence today. Nevertheless, it is important to understand what this means in terms of black rhino 'conservation'. A 12 percent incremental rate means the population doubles its numbers every six years! So, no matter how depressed a black rhino population may be, given the right conditions, it has the ability to recover its former numbers relatively quickly.

The Rhino Management Group (RMG) - which is a body of scientific rhino management experts that oversees the black rhino recovery programme in southern Africa - believes that 5 percent is the minimum acceptable incremental rate. A 5 percent growth rate, however, only gives a population doubling time of fourteen-and-a-half years. Currently, of the 23 black rhino populations being monitored in southern Africa, the average incremental rate is 7.53 percent (doubling time 9.6 years). On the other hand, nine of these populations have an incremental rate below 5 percent.

A number of factors influence the rate of increase of black rhino populations. One is nutrition. In habitats providing good nutrition incremental rates are high - because good nutrition promotes the growth of calves, advances the time of puberty, shortens the interval between oestrus cycles, improves conception, and enhances the survival of calves.

There are other factors, too. A surprising one is the ratio between males and females in the population. Those populations with a preponderance of males show poor breeding performance in the

females. This breeding performance improves, however, as the male ratio declines. This reality, of course, is valid only up to a certain point. Nevertheless, populations with 1.5 females (and more) to each male record better breeding performances from the females than do populations with a more equal male-to-female sex ratio. The optimum has not yet been determined.

It would appear that competition between the males is disruptive of female breeding potentials. Black rhino males are notoriously aggressive towards each other. This is especially so between bulls of higher rank (the main breeders). The senior ranking bulls' constant preoccupation with maintaining, or with achieving, dominant social status seems to interfere with their attention to females in oestrus.

There is yet another factor to consider. Bulls that live in populations with the correct low-male to high-female sex ratio may stay dominant long after they have reached their prime. Such bulls will either push too many of their own genes back into the population - thus weakening the gene pool - or the rate of conception resultant from their mating with receptive cows will deteriorate as the bull gets older. Either way, both of these probabilities represent good management reasons for removing such bulls from breeding populations.

The effect of inbreeding in today's currently closed populations is an overall general cause for concern. On the face of it this would seem an easy problem to solve since exchanges of bulls between the different populations would correct any possible deterioration in the gene pools. In practice it is not quite so easy.

Some ten years ago this problem was addressed with respect to one particular population. The population was successful insofar as calves were being recruited on a regular basis and predation was effectively zero. The original animals, however, had been introduced some ten years earlier from one population and it was deemed desirable to introduce new blood.

Two young cow rhinos and three young bulls were introduced to this population. The young bulls had been independent of their mothers for some time but they had attained no rank status within their parental group. It was concluded, therefore, that they would represent no challenge to the dominant and other high-ranking bulls in the recipient population. Nevertheless, within one week of their release two of the young bulls were found dead. They had been repeatedly and fatally gored by one, or more, of the resident bulls. Three months later the carcass of the third young bull was also found. It, too, had been severely and fatally gored. All three young bulls, therefore, had been killed within one week of their release!

The two young cows, on the other hand, were assimilated into the population without any problem. They are still alive and they are producing calves on a regular basis. It would seem, therefore, that the best way to exchange genes between black rhino populations is by way of exchanging cows.

The proportion of males to females at birth varies greatly between populations. It also varies greatly between individuals within a given population. Some cows, for example, consistently produce male calves; others produce just females. This phenomenon has been examined - but without conclusion. When one looks at the male-to-female ratio across the board (throughout ALL populations), however, it would appear that the overall ratio is what would be expected - 50:50.

Overall, therefore, we can presume with some degree of confidence that there is a general excess of males in protected black rhino populations throughout Africa. Small populations, in more confined areas, are especially susceptible to the 'surplus male' syndrome. Populations that live in more expansive sanctuaries, or those which are numerically well below the ecological carrying capacity of their habitats, however, are better off because competition for territorial space is thus reduced. This suggests that the maintenance of black rhinos in large sanctuaries is the route that we should be following.

The cost of maintaining black rhino populations in large sanctuaries, however, represents another problem. The annual cost of properly protecting black rhinos from commercial poachers is cur-



rently considered to be US \$ 1200 per square km. It may, therefore, be better for the rhinos that they be maintained in big sanctuaries, but the bigger the sanctuary the greater is the cost of each rhino's security - and the cost factor cannot be ignored.

One solution to the surplus male problem has been to establish unwanted males in all-male populations. These excess males, however, represent a 'dead gene pool' since they cannot be introduced into existing populations. All they are good for - in terms of black rhino 'conservation' - is the donation of sperm for a black rhino sperm bank. The principal problem with creating all-male populations, however, lies in the fact that they represent a blue-print for disaster. All male populations will inevitably result in very high stress levels amongst all individuals and unacceptable rates of wasteful mortality.

There is another option. The surplus bulls could be shot as trophies by high-fee-paying hunters. This has been seriously considered by the RMG who sent out a questionnaire to everyone that they believed represented an interested party. These included:

- South African state 'conservation' authorities - who are currently responsible for 95 percent of South Africa's black rhino populations and 38 percent of the continent's black rhinos.
- Non-governmental 'conservation' organisations - animal rights and animal welfare organisations world-wide.
- Private organisations world-wide - representing the wildlife industry, including hunting.
- Rhino experts - from both the private and public sectors world-wide.

The conclusion reached was that, at this time, hunting is not an acceptable management option - although there was considerable (but not enough) support for the idea.

The fact that the RMG asked animal rights groups for their opinion, and that they clearly allowed this opinion to influence their conclusion, however, worries me very much. It certainly demonstrates



the naivety of these scientists regarding the aims and objectives of the animal rights movement.

Nevertheless, there are several options other than hunting, too. The maintenance of surplus bulls in zoos - to educate the world's public regarding the plight of the black rhino - is an 'acceptable' alternative. The use of excess bulls in captive breeding and artificial insemination experiments is another plausibly acceptable 'use'.

After all these alternative 'uses' for surplus black rhino bulls have been satisfied, however, there will still remain extra black rhino bulls that cannot be 'used' responsibly in any way other than by hunting them. Or else they must be wastefully allowed to die!

Consider, for example, the circumstances pertaining to one particular individual. His name was *or continues on page 72*

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photo: R. Thomson

Kubea. Kubea was one of a number of black rhino that were used to establish a new population in a South African game reserve. He was captured as a young adult in Umfolosi (1983) and at the time of his death (1999) he was considered to be about 24 years old. From the time he arrived in his new home Kubea adopted the role of a dominant bull and he sired many calves. In April 1998, however, he was injured in a fight with a younger bull and he was deposed of his lordly status. Thereafter his decline in health began. At first his loss of weight was subtle but it slowly gathered momentum. Over the next eighteen months he was repeatedly seen with fresh wounds from fighting with other bulls. Then, in November 1999, he was discovered lying dead in a waterhole.

Kubea could have lived to a much riper old age had he not been constantly attacked by other bulls after his ousting. Two other animals in this same game reserve are known to have lived (in the wild) until they were thirty-seven and forty years old – when the population density was considerably lower. Once Kubea was deposed, however, under the pressures exerted by the growing population in which he lived, he stood no chance.

Kubea was beyond his prime and so, once he was deposed, he would have been of no use in a reintroduction programme. He would also not have been suitable for translocation to an all-bull pop-

ulation. He would have been no good for a captive breeding programme either, and his life expectancy in a zoo would have been minimal. The most productive thing that could have been done with Kubea – to help the cause of rhino ‘conservation’ – was that he be shot by a very-high-fee-paying hunter. And the money derived from his sale could have been ploughed back into the very expensive costs of preserving the living population that he had helped to foster.

The most opportune time to have made the decision to offer Kubea to the safari industry was immediately after his down-grading. At that time he was still fit and he would have represented a very worthy quarry. Once his health had deteriorated to the extent that he was feeble, however, it would have been unethical to hunt him. In my opinion, therefore, the wildlife authority that had been responsible for Kubea’s management should have had the right, at the appropriate time, to make the decision to have him hunted. Instead, an appeal (a recommendation) was made to the RMG to allow him to be hunted – and it was turned down because the RMG committee that assessed the request considered the public was not yet ready for such an eventuality. So Kubea became an opportunity lost!

The revenue that Kubea could have earned for ‘the cause’ of black rhino ‘conservation’ was considerable. There are a handful of hunters in the world today who would have been prepared to pay upwards of US\$ 100 000 for the privilege of hunting such a black rhino bull. The potential contribution to black rhino ‘conservation’ as a whole, that would flow from a general policy to allow the hunting of such surplus black rhino bulls, therefore, is something that society cannot, and should not, ignore. It is probable, for example, that the protected black rhino populations of southern Africa could very safely offer up to ten surplus black rhino bulls to the hunting safari industry every year.

One must look at the issue of ‘hunting’ these surplus black rhino bulls in an enlightened frame of mind. Rather than thinking that one more rhino has been killed ‘by a hunter’, remember that that particular rhino is no longer going to contribute to the ‘conservation’ of its species and that it is very soon going to die of natural causes anyway. Only by its sacrifice to the hunter can such a rhino help those that remain alive after it has gone. A dead black rhino bull in a water-

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hole, by comparison, contributes nothing at all to black rhino conservation.

There is another way to look at this issue. The fact that a black rhino bull can be offered for hunting – without detriment to the black rhino as a species – tells us that our black rhino managers are succeeding in their endeavours to 'save' the species.

There is an exact parallel in the white rhino story. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century there were less than 30 white rhinos in existence. One hundred years later there are 8500 and some 50 white rhino bulls are now shot by hunters annually. Indeed, because the white rhino is now worth US\$ 30 000 on the hunting market many farmers in southern Africa have given up conventional agriculture and have converted their farms to game ranches which they have stocked with a variety of huntable game animals including white rhinos. And a white rhino cow purchased for breeding purposes currently costs the South African farmer over US\$ 50 000! As a consequence of these realities, the wildlife industry in South Africa is a thriving entity that now controls three times as much land under wildlife than does the government in its national parks and state game reserves combined.

What is required to 'save' the black rhino, therefore, is not dogmatic preservation. A little more pragmatism in the ultimate 'wise use' management of our black rhino populations, and the exercise of a lot more understanding and acceptance of controversial black rhino management decisions, by the general public, will help the black rhino much more. Above all common sense must prevail. Certainly, southern Africa's black rhino populations are in good and capable hands. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that the maintenance of currently 'safe' populations will continue and that the recovery of presently threatened (or 'unsafe') populations to 'safe' status can, and will, be achieved. And the hunting of surplus bulls will help 'the cause' of Africa's black rhino recovery programme!

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## HATARI NEWS

**M**ichel Mantheakis of Miombo Safaris/Tanzania has exciting news on his new concession in the Lukwika-Lumesule Game Reserve south of the Selous Game Reserve adjacent to the border with Mozambique. The concession borders the Rovouma river which is the border to Mozambique and the famous Njasa Game Reserve on the Mozambiquan side, which has a very high density of elephant. There seems to be a seasonal movement of bull elephant up north across the Rovouma into Michel's new hunting block. Maybe a new hot-spot for big tuskers. In 12 days of walking he counted 58 different bulls moving through his new area in November. A nice 72 pounder with magnificent long tusks was taken.

Meet Michel at the SCI Convention in Las Vegas booth # 2033/2035.



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*Safari down South*