

The home of rhino conservation

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) is the flagship park of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Wildlife and, through efforts both past and present, it has brought the white rhino population in Southern Africa back from the brink of extinction. **Every single Southern white rhino population in the world has its genetic origin in the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park.** The organisation is currently trying to do for the black rhino what it did for the white rhino and to achieve this HiP is playing an important role in the ongoing WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project.

Jeff Gaisford | Media Liaison Officer, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
Dirk Swart | Section Ranger: Manzibomvu, Hluhluwe Game Reserve

Within the last few years syndicated rhino poaching, as opposed to sporadic poaching, has become a potential threat to the rhinos in KZN, and throughout Southern Africa. Because of its preference for browse and deep thickets, the black rhino is more difficult to hunt than the white but its scarcity makes the species susceptible to localised extinction because of poaching. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife staff work very hard to protect their stocks and have managed to keep rhino poaching to a minimum so far, but it is not an easy task given the size of HiP Park (96,000ha), the extent of its fence-line and the nature of the terrain.

It has long been recognised that conservation efforts need the active support of the communities neighbouring protected areas. Accordingly, Ezemvelo KZN began its Community Conservation Programme. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife has undertaken many projects amongst local communities including the building of: classrooms, water reticulation systems, livestock enclosures and community-based business opportunities. Communities are also encouraged to visit our parks and learn more about their wildlife heritage. The 2010 FIFA World Cup provided a wonderful opportunity for Park staff to challenge teams from neighbouring communities and cement relationships. These projects

are funded through a levy on park entry fees and tourist accommodation in our protected areas.

Biodiversity Management at Park level also has a positive future. The Zululand Invasive Alien Species Project (ZIASP) has for a number of years controlled the spread of invasive alien weed species, mainly *Chromolaena odorata*. Large areas have been cleared of this weed allowing more niche areas for black and white rhinos. HiP also has a disease-monitoring programme, which has seen a drastic decrease in the prevalence of bovine tuberculosis amongst buffalo and which can be carried by other animals.

HiP is lucky to have an eco-advice department to assist managers on activities such as controlled veld-burning programmes, animal censuses, biological monitoring, environmental impact assessments and the processing of raw data. Their analyses, coupled with input from management staff, provide a scientific evaluation of rhino populations and the environmental influences affecting their future which influences management decisions with respect to rhino numbers. The population of white rhinos in the HiP is deliberately kept slightly below the maximum capacity (2,000) to stimulate breeding. Accurate monitoring allows management to establish numbers for removals to other parks or on offer on our



annual game sale. Similarly, monitoring of black rhinos informs management of the black rhino population in the Park. It is a management goal to create a dossier on each black rhino through photographs and a unique ear-notching record.

We remain positive about the future of rhinos in this country in spite of the ever-present threat from poaching. With help from our global supporters there is no reason why we cannot ride the present storm and come out the other side successfully.



Rhinos roll in mud as a means of thermo-regulation, to improve skin condition, to remove ectoparasites and to make a really big mess!

Grants

We would like to thank Colchester Zoo's Action for the Wild fund, for its grant of £4,779 towards HiP, handed over at a talk given by SRI Director Cathy Dean on 4 September. Thanks also to Safari Club International's London Chapter for its continuing support of HiP. Save the Rhino gave a grant of £5,000 to HiP from the funds raised by the Comrades runners. Finally, we will give a minimum of £2,500 from the proceeds of Rhino Trek South Africa