

AFRICAN INDABA

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Dedicated to the People and Wildlife of Africa

Finally a Book on the Selous

Gerhard R Damm

The Selous in Tanzania is a game reserve of many superlatives: it is the world's largest hunting reserve, Africa's oldest protected area, the home range of more than 70,000 elephants and 120,000 buffaloes and so on. Amazingly, not a single authoritative book has been written about this fabulous land of dreams for hunters and nature lovers.

Finally, this has changed. South Africa based Rowland Ward Publishers (Pty) Ltd (www.rowlandward.com) will release a 300 page volume which unites 20 knowledgeable authors. In total these authors spent over a century working in the Selous as wardens, managers, scientists or hunters. I am not exaggerating that this wealth of experience is difficult to top.

Rolf Baldus, the editor, who worked under German Government development programs 13 years in the Selous and with the Tanzanian Wildlife Department, brought the authors together. Gerald Bigurube, now director of Tanzania's national parks, Richard Bonham, a well known guide, Benson Kibonde, Selous' chief warden of many years, Brian Nicholson, the last European warden and one of the "fathers of the Selous", the late Rolf Rohwer, an outstanding professional hunter, Ludwig Siege, a long time German advisor to the warden, and Erasmus Tarimo, now Tanzania's Director of Wildlife, to name only few. The Foreword is written by the late head of the Selous family, Commander Selous, and Dieter Schramm, President of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) has penned down the epilogue.

Over 400 photos, maps by Mike Shand from the University of Glasgow and paintings of Selous scenes of the contemporary German wildlife artist Bodo Meier pair up with deeply emotional classical art work of German wildlife painter Wilhelm Kuhnert who travelled and hunted the Selous area in 1905 to illustrate the voluminous piece of work. Topics range from history to conservation, from elephants to wild dogs to birds, from walking safaris to hunting and from poaching to community conservation. Those who know editor Rolf Baldus will know that not even the most sensitive or controversial topics remain untouched. The book contains an immense amount of primary research information on the area, but it is at the same time easy to read and entertaining.

The standard edition will sell at US\$65 and the collector's edition at US\$ 130. A full review of the book will appear in the next African Indaba.

We Are Still Around!

Editorial

You will have realized that African Indaba did not appear on your computer screen in January as usual. Well, the reason was not excessive celebration during the festive season, but just an overload of work with other conservation and hunting issues.

You may know that I have been appointed as chair of the newly formed Trophy Task Group of the CIC (International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation). In this capacity, I had to prepare for an important international symposium of that group at the University fuer Bodenkultur in Vienna which took place in February. The one man show of African Indaba therefore had to temporarily take the back seat.

Nevertheless, African Indaba is still around and here we are with the first double issue of 2009 - the seventh year of African Indaba's existence.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and find lots of good and interesting information.

Sincerely

Gerhard R Damm

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For hunter-conservationists and all people who are interested in the conservation, management and the sustainable use of Africa's wild natural resources.

The distribution of African Indaba is supported by the International Council for Wildlife Conservation CIC and Conservation Force

Rhino Wars in Southern Africa

By Gerhard R Damm

"Bloody assault against SA rhinos" was the title of an article published by The Pretoria News on January 10, 2009; and the author stated that "at least 76 white and black rhinos were killed by poachers in South Africa's reserves, national parks and on private land last year, illustrating the sudden bloody assault on the country's rhino populations for their valuable horns - but the figure may be much higher." The figure of 76 casualties came from a report released by Sonja Meintjes, deputy director of biodiversity compliance at the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). In 2007 the total loss - high enough in any case - stood at only 10 poached rhino. "The department cannot comment on the dramatic increase at the moment until investigations that are currently under way by the provincial conservation authorities and SANParks have been concluded." "The various conservation authorities affected are working with the police to investigate these incidents and hope to make a breakthrough soon," Meintjes added.

The article mentioned that unconfirmed reports suggest the number of rhinos killed in the past year is hovering around 100. Whether the figure is now 76 or a 100 - the situation has clearly gone out of hand! Dr Jacques Flamand, the project leader of the WWF/Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Black Rhino Range Expansion Project, said "there's definitely an onslaught on the rhino that has come up suddenly. I suspect the more affluent Chinese want it (rhino horn) in greater numbers. Those carrying out the attacks are locals most likely working for Chinese and Vietnamese agents."

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has imposed a moratorium, which came into effect in the meantime, is meant to discourage the poaching of rhino in SA and stem the trade in individual rhino horn to ensure provincial authorities and SANParks maintain consistent protocols for dealing with the trade in rhino horn.

The moratorium is a step into the right direction, but if falls short of the far more stringent measures proposed by the Professional Hunting Association of South Africa during the annual PHASA convention in the Eastern Cape in November of 2008. PHASA proposed *inter alia* that

- each hunting client who wishes to hunt a rhino produces a sworn affidavit that no part of the rhino be used for any commercial purposes,
- a PHASA member appointed by DEAT confirms in writing that proper procedures were followed during the hunt and all legal requirements were met
- the outfitter/professional hunter supply PHASA with a photograph of the hunted rhino together with the hunter
- no trophy or other parts of the rhino be exported without certification of PHASA
- that all control of rhino hunting be national and not provincial

Namibia's Elephants

Kai-Uwe Denker

Some thoughts of an experienced professional hunter

In the last two issues of African Indaba the so-called desert elephants of Namibia received some attention. Kai-Uwe Denker, Namibian outfitter and elephant expert wrote us that the desert is NOT the ideal habitat for elephants and under natural conditions elephant from the central highlands wandered into the desert - especially after good raining seasons - and returned to highlands during the dry season. The highlands are now managed for farming and agriculture and do not form part of the regular elephant habitat anymore. Consequently relatively high elephant concentrations are observed along the riverine gallery forests in the desert regions. The high elephant density leads to over use of limited fodder resources. The vegetation cannot recover, since seasonal elephant movements do not take place anymore; this situation is exacerbated by numerous artificial water holes created by conservation agencies - these waterholes lead to more permanent elephant concentration where they were at least seasonally absent in the past. Already now, an elephant over population along the seasonal river beds is observable. The more northerly elephant populations don't experience the pressures to such a grave extent, since they can move to Etosha with its relatively good fodder availability; the southern populations have to resort to large scale movements over great distances and avoid settled farmland at the same time. There is definitely a population exchange with Etosha elephant in the north, but those in the South, especially the Ugab elephant populations, have no room to migrate.

The EHRA rhetoric is incorrect, that the high elephant calf mortality is a consequence of in-breeding and a low number of bulls. High calf mortality and observable bone deformations are a consequence of scarce fodder availability, lack of minerals and other factors usually connected with what the elephants eat.

It is an entirely different question whether the hunting of elephant in desert regions poses a challenging hunt. In the opinion of Kai Uwe Denker this is not the case.

In conclusion - the problems of the desert elephants are to a not unimportant part to be traced back to the elephant over population in Etosha National Park. Elephants from there migrate, they need new territory. This new territory they encounter now only in desert regions with an unbalanced availability of vegetation suitable for elephant. The settlement of the areas outside these regions through man is effectively preventing the elephant migrations in the rainy and dry season to and from areas with a more balanced and better availability of food supply.

The public should try to understand the linkages between hunting and conservation and the hunters should recognize the necessity of fair, ethical and environmentally sound hunting practices.

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