

AFRICAN INDABA

Volume 7, Issue No 6

eNewsletter

November/December 2009

Dedicated to the People and Wildlife of Africa

Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize: Encouragement for CBNRM

Gerhard R Damm

The award of the Nobel Prize in economics to Elinor Ostrom is a great choice. Ostrom's economics are based on time-consuming field work examining the institutional structures that humans build to solve their own real-world problems. Ms. Ostrom gathers much of her rich data outside the field of economics from case studies of common-property resources and her work shows that voluntary associations work.

"Our findings are that some local people who have had long-term assurances of harvesting rights are able to manage forests more effectively than people who do not have the same assurances. The lessons are that when regulation comes from a distant authority and is uniform for a very large region, it is not likely to succeed."

Elinor Ostrom

Most economists are familiar with the late Garrett Hardin's classic article, "The Tragedy of the Commons." His idea was that when no one owns a resource, it is overused because no one can control its usage and each person has an incentive to use it before others do. This insight has helped us understand much human behavior and has led people to advocate either having the resource privately owned or having it controlled by government.

Elinor Ostrom has put her entire lifetime's effort in the researches on outlying and underdeveloped communities, living over a very long period of time with their impoverished residents. Not so fast, said Ms. Ostrom consequently with respect to Hardin's conclusions.. Examining dozens of case studies, she found cases of communal ownership that worked—that is, that didn't lead to the tragic outcomes envisioned by Hardin—as well as ones that didn't. Were there systematic differences? Yes, and interestingly the ones that worked did have a kind of property rights system, just not private ownership.

Through her study of the way that natural resources have been managed around the world, Ms. Ostrom has found that, left to manage resources on their own and given the right support, local people often develop the most effective methods

of sustainable development. Based on this, she proposed several rules for managing common-pool resources, which the Nobel committee highlights. Among them are: rules clearly define who gets what, good conflict resolution methods are in place, people's duty to maintain the resource is proportional to their benefits, monitoring and punishing is done by the users or someone accountable to the users, and users are allowed to participate in setting and modifying the rules. You will notice the absence of top-down government solutions. In her work on development economics, Ms. Ostrom concludes that top-down solutions don't help poor countries. Are you listening, SADC governments?

In a 2006 article with Harini Nagendra, Ms. Ostrom wrote: *"We conclude that simple formulas focusing on formal ownership, particularly one based solely on public [government] ownership of forest lands, will not solve the problem of resource use."* Garth Owen-Smith, who helped solve the common-resource problem of elephants in Namibia by ensuring that local residents shared in the financial benefits from tourism and trophy hunting, drew explicitly on Ms. Ostrom's work. If locals benefit from having a resident population of elephants, they are much less likely to poach and more likely to stop other poachers.

Economists talking about real humans and not mathematical abstractions and winning the Nobel Prize for it? Good on ya, Nobel committee!

Ostrom's set of eight "design principles" include: clearly defined boundaries, monitoring who are either resource users or accountable to them, graduated sanctions, and mechanisms dominated by the users themselves to resolve conflicts and to alter the rules. The challenge, she observes, is to foster contingent self-commitment among the members: *"I will commit myself to follow the set of rules we have devised in all instances except dire emergencies if the rest of those affected make a similar commitment and act accordingly."*

Author's Note: I used fragments of an article by David R Henderson, a research fellow with the Hoover Institution and economics professor at the Naval Postgraduate School for the composition of this article. For further facts and guidelines about Community Based Natural Resource Management read also the articles on page 2 and 3 and other information in this issue of African Indaba.

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

Black Rhino Forge New Territory

WWF-Press Release

The critically endangered black rhino continued to forge new territory when a founder population of 14 animals was released on to a new home in northern KwaZulu-Natal in October. The animals form the fifth founder population created through the WWF/ Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Black Rhino Range Expansion Project. "The Project has shown how one species can help many," says WWF project leader Dr Jacques Flamand. "Black rhino range in KwaZulu-Natal has increased by more than 25% (approximately 90 000 hectares) over the last six years. That is excellent for black rhino, but also for many other species that live alongside them. This includes cheetah, wild dog, vultures, elephants and many of the lesser known species that also need large areas of undisturbed wild land."

The Black Rhino Range Expansion Project has shown that partnerships between landowners and formal conservation organizations make otherwise unattainable goals possible. Under the custodianship agreements, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife retain ownership of the founder populations and ownership of their progeny is shared. A variety of business models have been created to suit the circumstances of different sites. "The hope is that our experiences can inspire others to replicate what we have done," said Dr Flamand. "Something this ambitious is not without its challenges, but we have shown that it is possible to drop fences and create large, ecologically viable areas of land that are good for black rhino, for other species, for biodiversity and for landowners. We have been extremely lucky to work with courageous, visionary people who are driven by a passion for wildlife, as well as having sound business heads."

South Africa has had an unprecedented wave of rhino poaching. Just fewer than 100 rhino were poached in 2008, of which 15 were in KwaZulu-Natal. The trend has continued this year. "Fortunately, none have been poached on our Project sites, perhaps partly because good security systems are in place. But no one can afford to be complacent and perhaps we have just been lucky, so all security personnel are on their guard to protect the black rhino under their care," said Dr Flamand.

The Black Rhino Range Expansion Project concept is now being expanded beyond the borders of KZN into other regions of South Africa and possibly beyond. Dr Flamand has also visited Malaysia in order to advise about conservation of the Sumatran rhino (which is critically endangered). He was able to share experiences from KZN, and suggest techniques for release and monitoring of Sumatran rhinos, as well as training of guards and opportunities for scientific research.

The Black Rhino Range Expansion Project is a partnership between WWF and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, and is supported by the Mazda Wildlife Fund.

Fact File

- The WWF/ Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Black Rhino Range Expansion Project aims to increase land available for black rhino conservation, thereby increasing numbers of this criti-

cally endangered species. This is done by forming partnerships with landowners with large areas of black rhino habitat. Usually several landowners agree to remove internal fences in order to create large enough areas to hold a significant population of black rhino.

- The inclusion of community-managed game reserves represents a new conservation model. 44% of the range area of Black Rhino Range Expansion Project sites is community-owned.
- Removing black rhino from existing populations to new homes creates new populations and also stimulates population growth on the existing populations. If animals are not removed, the existing populations can suffer from high density and range competition.
- Black rhino are critically endangered. There are currently approximately 4000 black rhino in the wild. This represents an increase from the lowest point of just over 2000 early in the 1990s after a wave of poaching decimated almost the entire population of black rhino in Africa. However there is no room for complacency and the recent surge in poaching shows how committed and vigilant rhino conservationists need to be.
- There are two kinds of rhino in Africa – black rhino and white rhino.
- Black rhino have an undeserved reputation of being bad-tempered. In fact, they are just shy and nervous of strangers, and new research suggests they have social structures that were previously not recognized.

Opportunistic Wildlife Trade in Yemen

David B. Stanton

In conservation circles, Yemen is notorious as one of the world's top two markets for rhino horn, and by some estimates the Yemeni trade in illegal horn for *jambiyah* (traditional dagger) handles caused a 96% decline in East Africa's Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) population between 1970 and 1992. Yemen is also the main source for CITES-protected Arabian Leopards (*Panthera pardus nimr*) and other endangered wildlife. Endemic species including Socotra's "Blue Baboon Spider" (*Monocentropus balfouri*) and the Yemen Veiled Chameleon (*Chamaeleo calyptratus*) are popular in the pet trade and are smuggled to Europe and North America where they command impressive prices. In addition to this lucrative international trade in wildlife and wildlife products, Yemen traffics a significant number of wild birds, mammals, and reptiles domestically. This trade is largely opportunistic as evidenced by the variety of wildlife that is offered for sale at roadsides and intersections. While there has been little, if any, formal study of this traffic, recent tallies of the animals that pass through the *Nuqum* animal *suq* in Sana'a

Continued on Page 17

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