

A legend in Laikipia

Save the Rhino Patron Martina Navratilova has been an active supporter since 2000 when she nominated SRI to receive her winnings of \$125,000 from *Who wants to be a celebrity millionaire?* In 2009 she again showed enormous generosity and nominated us as the beneficiary from her participation in *I'm a celebrity, get me out of here!* We figured it was high time to show her how some of the money we raise is spent so, at the end of November 2010, when Martina was on her way to climb Kilimanjaro, off we went to see some of the projects we support in Kenya.

Cathy Dean | Director

With the support of some fantastic project staff, over the course of four and a half days, we were able to give Martina an excellent introduction to rhino conservation issues, and show her how effective environmental education and community conservation programmes can be.

Our visit began at Ol Pejeta Conservancy (OPC) where we met four of the last surviving eight Northern white rhinos which were transferred back to Africa from Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic in December 2009. These rhinos are just starting to show mating behaviour so it's an exciting time. There were also, just as impressive, black and Southern white rhinos to see and some wonderful rangers to meet. We talked extensively with them about their daily responsibilities as well as the Africa-wide poaching problem. We also saw the progress of the new Capture and Translocation Facility which SRI obtained funding from USFWS for and you can read more on page 24.

Whilst at OPC, we also spent half a day with Ephantus Mugo, the Laikipia Wildlife Forum's (LWF) Environmental Education Officer. We collected a class of children from Thingithu School in Nanyuki, and took them on a game drive through OPC before visiting the Morani Education Centre, where they had lessons on conservation issues. Ephantus is an inspirational teacher and Martina and I were as enthralled as the children were!

The remainder of our trip was spent visiting various community projects supported by the LWF. A meeting with Laikipia's Water Resource Users Associations caught Martina's interest in particular and we were able to see the new laundry facility they have built near Likii River, and then visited a farm to see how drip-irrigation techniques dramatically reduce the amount of water needed compared to conventional sprinkler systems. We also joined a quarterly meeting held by the Central Unit to discuss a range of issues from problem elephant control to conservation enterprise initiatives, including the LWF's non-profit company, Desert Edge, which markets honey,

aloe and medicinal plant products. Finally, we visited a nursery that demonstrates how to grow plants used for traditional medicine.

In an interview with *The Times* journalist Simon Barnes (another of our wonderful Patrons), Martina said: 'I've learnt so much about the way the community works together. It's not only about rhinos; it's a holistic approach, making a whole area work for people and for rhinos. I've met the community leaders and visited the farming projects and I am so impressed'. Coming from a legend like Martina, that's high praise.

Save the Rhino promo video

Cathy and Martina were accompanied on their trip by Gordon Main of Curlyman Productions who has since produced Save the Rhino's very own promotional video which was launched at the Ninth Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture. Narrated by lovely patron Mark Carwardine, we hope you'll agree that the video gives a great overview of the work we're doing.

Check out the video at:

www.vimeo.com/21634720

Thanks

Our grateful thanks to Anthony King and the LWF team for hosting us and arranging all the logistics, and to British Airways Community and Conservation for providing my flights. We would also like to wish Ephantus Mugo all the best for his new role as Education Officer at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.



Martina meets Baraka (top); Ephantus, LWF's Environmental Education Officer (middle); and some local school children (bottom)

ALL IMAGES SAVE THE RHINO