

Black rhino in Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania.

C A Spinage

Run Rhino Run

Last year the World Wildlife Fund launched its Operation Rhino campaign in Africa. It was not a moment too soon, as the black rhino is faced with extinction in East Africa within two years unless poaching is stopped.

Despite Kenya's moves to give the black rhino special protection, and Zambia's total ban on rhino hunting, top officials in many African governments are thought to be masterminding the illegal trade in rhino horn which keeps the black markets of the east flourishing.

China, who until last year was responsible for half the world's trade in rhino horn, has now signed the Washington Convention against trade in endangered species and banned all rhino imports. Hong Kong has done the same.

Rhino horn found an insatiable market in the east as an aphrodisiac — which it is not — and as ornamental dagger handles for the tribesmen of North Yemen. Today rhino horn is on a par with gold and fetches between R500 and R750 an ounce.

In their bid to keep the eastern markets satisfied the rhino poachers have wiped out about 90 percent of central Africa's rhino population. In six years Kenya lost 10 000 rhino and there are now less than 1 500. Ironically during 1975/76 about 8 310 kg of rhino horn was exported to North Yemen from Kenya. That represents 500 more rhino than they have at present.

In Tanzania about 80 percent of the rhino population has been decimated, while in Zambia before the hunting ban

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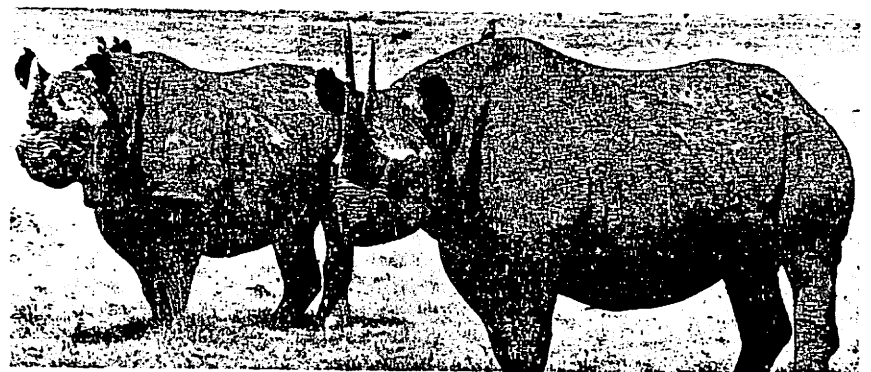
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Table Mountain is undoubtedly South Africa's most famous mountain, it is also probably the most threatened. At its feet lies a fast growing metropolis of more than a million people who look to the mountain for recreation. In his article on page 19 Dr AV Hall writes that 75 species of the Peninsula's flora are threatened with extinction. Apart from that whole sweeps of the mountain are now covered by alien vegetation which are eating into the delicate fynbos. The Hey Commission's report on Table Mountain is now 21-months old and little observable action has come from it, although legislation is now being prepared. But, says Dr Hall, the situation is urgent and heavy spending to save this area is more than justified.



The status of the black rhino in Africa is far from happy. Populations have been decimated in Tanzania and Kenya in the poachers' mad rush to secure as much rhino horn as possible. Despite bans on trade in rhino horn a lucrative black market flourishes in the east and horns now fetch between R500 and R750 an ounce. Last year the World Wildlife Fund launched a campaign to save the black rhino, and this year the campaign was taken up in South Africa by the Wildlife Society, SA Nature Foundation, and the Endangered Wildlife Trust.



Die IUCN het in Maart vanjaar sy internasionale strategie vir natuur-bewaring vrygestel. Dit het die knellendste strydpunte wat die wêreld onder die oë moet sien beklemtoon en by regerings aangedring dat nasionale bewaringsbeleidsake voorrang moet kry. Na maandelange harde werk het die Natuurlewevereniging 'n beleidstuk opgestel en 'n strategie vir omgewingsbewaring in Suid-Afrika uitgewerk. Die verslag het die toestand van ons omgewing deeglik onder die loop geneem. Dit spel die ramp waarop ons afstuur klinkklaar in een enkele woord uit: bevolkingsontploffing!



Frank Black

was imposed, statistics showed a rhino was killed daily and numbers dropped from 8 000 to 1 200.

The experts are pessimistic. "I believe that the price of rhino horn will continue to rise and provide yet greater incentive to hunt rhinos of all species for their horns," writes Dr Esmond Bradley Martin in *Oryx*. Dr Alison Hillman, head of the IUCN rhino research team, argues that the black rhino will become extinct in east Africa within two years unless the poachers are stopped.

The white rhino's predicament is equally disastrous. Only two survive in Uganda from the 1971 total of 500. Many were shot during the strife that toppled Idi Amin.

The five white rhino in Kenya's Meru National Park — all from South Africa —

have to be treated like cattle. They are locked up at night and herded out to graze in the morning under the vigilant eyes of armed guards. Despite requests, South Africa refuses to supply Kenya with more white rhinos because of the poaching risks.

The rhino situation in South Africa is a lot healthier. The local white Rhino populations are the most substantial in Africa, and although there are only 480 black rhino, work by the Natal Parks Board has ensured the animal's survival in this country.

According to mammalogist Dr Anthony Hall-Martin writing in *Oryx*, the black rhino was found throughout South Africa and SWA/Namibia — except on the highveld and arid Kalahari regions. By the 19th century it had been

exterminated over most of its southern African range. The black rhino became extinct in the Free State in 1842; the last Cape Province rhino was shot near Addo in 1853; and about a century later they were extinct in the Transvaal. In Natal small populations survived in Umfolozi, Hluhluwe and Mkuzi game reserves but even then they numbered a mere 100 in 1930. It was from these that the present population was built up and the animal reinstated in Addo Elephant Park and Kruger Park.

In SWA/Namibia the situation is still precarious. Poaching has knocked back numbers in Kaokoland and Damaraland to about 29 and some conservationists put it at even less. Unless adequate protection is given to the remaining few, they will go the same way as those in East Africa.



Prof. Jackson

"Now you tell me it's an endangered species!"



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