



Peter Hitchins (right) and Danie Pienaar – Rhino & Elephant Foundation researcher, examine the skull of the butchered four-year old black rhino cow discovered in Botswana's Chobe National Park; the first known black rhino to be poached in Botswana in living memory.

Peter Hitchins of the Rhino & Elephant Foundation first expressed concern about the status of both black and white rhinoceros in Botswana in 1989. Subsequently, the possibility of conducting a questionnaire survey and a follow-up aerial survey was discussed with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Botswana. If a viable number of widely dispersed rhino could be located, the logical outcome is to gather them together in a securely fenced area of suitable habitat.

Acting on a proposal by Peter Hitchins, the concept of a rhino breeding sanctuary was initiated by the Chobe Wildlife Trust in conjunction with the Rhino and Elephant Foundation. In October 1990, local members of the Kalahari Conservation Society in Serowe put forward a strong motivation for a site north-west of Serowe which is presently used as a cattle post. Peter Hitchins and Grahame Thomson of the Chobe Wildlife Trust inspected the area and found it to be ideal in virtually every aspect, particularly with regard to security, habitat and for the future development of a localised environmental education centre.

Lieutenant-General Ian Khama, head of the Botswana Defence Force and chief of the

Bangangwata tribe, has become personally involved by giving the project his full support and by allowing the use of his family name for this sanctuary. The Khama Rhino Sanctuary is intended for multi-faceted use. It is primarily a breeding sanctuary for Botswana's remaining black rhino, but also a possible protected habitat for other indigenous species and an area where profitable tourism and wildlife utilisation may be conducted.

The establishment of the sanctuary will require considerable funding for fencing, general infrastructure facilities, i.e. bomas and paddocks, and security. Once in place, the capture of the rhino in northern Botswana and translocation to Serowe will be a major project on its own, requiring a great deal of planning, logistics and funding. To start the sanctuary, the Namibian government has agreed to provide a female black rhino *Diceros bicornis chobiensis* – the capture was funded by the Rhino & Elephant Foundation.

Overall funding for the establishment of the sanctuary will be undertaken by the Chobe Wildlife Trust, the Kalahari Conservation Society and the Rhino & Elephant Foundation with the generous support of the Hong Kong campaign (refer to article on page 24). A major fundraising effort is soon to be initiated, and the support of everyone concerned with the survival of the black rhino will be greatly appreciated.

The establishment of the Khama Rhino Sanctuary will be unique in African conservation, for it will amount to a wildlife sanctuary established by tribal people for tribal people.

The urgency of establishing a safe sanctuary for the remaining black rhino in Botswana was dramatically highlighted on 13 May 1991 when poachers penetrated the Savuti region of Chobe National Park killing a four-year old black rhinoceros cow and escaping without detection. This incident vividly illustrates the urgency with which this project must be undertaken in order to have any hopeful outcome insofar as the survival of the subspecies *Diceros bicornis chobiensis* is concerned. Working closely with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, the project further illustrates the ability of non-governmental organisations to come together in a co-operative effort of this magnitude.

CO-ORDINATING RHINO CONSERVATION

During the course of 1990, under the chairmanship of Dr John Hanks of the Southern African Nature Foundation, two important meetings were held with representatives from the Endangered Wildlife Trust (Dr John Ledger), the Wildlife Society (Tony Ferrar) and the Rhino and Elephant Foundation (Clive Walker), which culminated in the formation of the Rhino Conservation Support Group (RCSG). Concern had been expressed by many leading conservationists over the problems of identifying who is involved in fundraising for rhino, confusion in the minds of both the public and the media, and fear of duplication taking place as regards funding rhino conservation programmes throughout Southern Africa. Resolutions adopted by the group were as follows:

- To form the Rhino Conservation Support Group with representatives from the above organisations; in consultation with the Rhino Management Group and government nature conservation agencies, RCSG will identify projects and establish priorities as a guide for fundraising purposes.
- To provide means to communicate among members and to co-ordinate programme development and fundraising among member organisations.



TRANSVAAL TO STIFFEN PENALTIES ON IVORY AND RHINO HORN

The Transvaal Executive Committee approved drastic measures last October to fight illegal trade and possession of ivory and rhino horn, Transvaal MEC for Health Services and Nature Conservation, Mr Fanie Ferreira, announced.

Reacting to public outrage about fines of R750 each, meted out to two middlemen involved in an illegal ivory and rhino horn racket, he said loopholes for offenders would be blocked as far as possible once the new measures took effect. Mr Ferreira said current punitive measures for such offences – a maximum fine of R1 500, 18 months imprisonment, or both – were too mild, considering the value of the products and the fact that rare animals were slaughtered for personal gain. The new measures, not yet enacted, prescribe a maximum fine of R100 000 (or 10 years' imprisonment, or both) as well as compulsory registration of all rhino horn in the Transvaal.

Mr Ferreira said although the accused had been indicted in terms of the Nature Conservation Ordinance, the case was not dealt with by the Chief Directorate of Nature and Environmental Conservation, but by a special unit of the South African Police. Comment on the number and content of the charges, the evidence given, and the court's judgement were inappropriate until full particulars of the case were available, he said.

The Transvaal Provincial Administration said the proposed legislation would soon be published for comment, after which it could be submitted to the Joint Committee of Parliament concerned with provincial affairs of the Transvaal. The new measures would take effect only after they have been approved by the Joint Committee.

Namibia is currently at the forefront as regards legislation governing possession of rhino horn, with fines of up to R200 000 or 20 years in jail.

