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11



From the  
**REF DESK**

**Rhino & Elephant Foundation**

**Newsletter No 23 July 1999**

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*Edited by Dr Kees Rookmaaker*

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## Message from the Director

The last quarter has seen a concerted effort from the Foundation to facilitate solutions to some real problems, and to raise much-needed funds.

On the former, we have had some considerable successes. For example, we assisted in the relocation of a group of elephants from KwaZulu-Natal to Karongwe. Details of this operation are included for your interest in this newsletter. This kind of operation, whilst it does serve to relieve problems and create additional elephant populations, is neither simple nor cheap. However, for as long as we can find alternatives to culling, we must continue to do so.

An important element of this operation was that the overpopulation of elephants on the Natal reserve was an assessment based on the management objectives of the reserve owners. This issue was raised in a debate with FALCON (the Front for the Liberation and Conservation of Nature) on BBC world radio, in which I participated. In that case the comment pertained to the Kruger National Park, and the problem inherent therein is that such management decisions are branded as unacceptable by the anti-culling lobby. There should, so the argument goes, be solid scientific grounds for all elephant management procedures.

The point is, there is no purely scientific method of determining elephant population levels. In constrained populations, the numbers must ultimately be determined by the park's management needs and objectives. For an outside institution or lobby to insist that the objectives, and therefore their implementation thereof, are not acceptable is interference of a dangerous sort. To accede to demands for a scientifically robust justification for a population level is heading for disaster. By the time elephants start to die of

starvation (the point at which no-one can deny that the population is too high), the damage to the ecosystem will be enormous.

To get a personal perspective on this matter, how many elephants would you like in your garden? And if you happened to have just one elephant and were not allowed to remove it despite the (considerable) damage it caused, how would you feel? This comes down to the issue of custodianship and who is ultimately responsible for taking care of the precious few conserved areas that remain in Africa.

The Foundation is also involved in assisting with problem elephant break-outs, and in attempting to move more elephants from over-populated areas. More on these projects as they develop.

Our Wildlife Welfare Specialist, Dr Hym Ebedes, has been very active, and there are further details in this newsletter. Some of the work which he has been doing is the subject of a film which will be screened on the SABC programme *50/50* sometime during July. Keep an eye out for this programme – it promises to be very revealing.

The Foundation launched a major fund-raising appeal in South Africa during the last quarter. We sincerely appreciate the support we have received, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all our new members. We depend very much on people who understand the intricacies of managing and caring for African wildlife, and in this respect were disappointed that we did not gain much-needed support from individuals and companies who are using


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## Message from the Director

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wildlife to create wealth – game ranchers and eco-tourism companies. Perhaps it is a reflection of the times, but unless we (that is, the Foundation and its members) can convince people of the importance of supporting true conservation efforts, then all may come to naught. I would like to appeal to you, as a valued member, in this regard. Please spread the word – we need all the help we can get.

Just last week I was approached by a reserve with an elephant population problem. They asked me what we thought of capturing some of the younger elephants and selling them to safari parks. It is time to reiterate: the Foundation does NOT condone the capture of young elephants from herds. And it never has. We became involved in the Tuli elephant saga once the elephants had already been brought into captivity, and the issue was whether or not they should be returned whence they came. Again for the sake of the elephants, we opposed this proposal – we know that this misguided gesture would have resulted in the deaths of all those elephants. And that was not acceptable to us.

It seems that the work continues – to offer support and assistance wherever possible, but to remain firm on the principle that while African wildlife does need to be managed (a concept which is foreign to overseas activists) it may not be done in flagrant violation of the norms of care and compassion which these animals deserve. 

Yours in conservation,  
DR ANDREW MCKENZIE

### NEWS FLASH

#### USA passes Rhino-Tiger Act amendment

President Clinton on 30 October 1998 signed an amendment of the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994, which now prohibits the import, export, and sale of any product containing, or said to contain any substance derived from any species of rhino or tiger. Each violation carries a penalty of up to six months in prison or fine up to US\$12 000 (R75 000). Finally, it provides for the development and implementation of an educational outreach programme in the USA for the conservation of rhinos and tigers. This important step forward by the USA could be an example for other countries to follow.

(Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service press release, reported in *Traffic North America*.)

## New membership rates

From January 1999, a new membership structure has been put in place.

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Member	R90
Donor	R500
Sponsor	R1 500

### CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES


Silver	R5 000
Gold	R25 000
Platinum	R70 000

Please help us to build on our membership by canvassing new members to enable the REF to make the difference. In Africa, for Africa!

## National White Rhino policy

### Report of a meeting by Dr Kees Rookmaaker

The Rhino Management Group (RMG) facilitated a meeting of governmental and private stakeholders, held at Itala Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal on 23 and 24 March 1999, to discuss a South African White Rhino Policy. The meeting was chaired by Dr P M Brooks, chairman of both the RMG and the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group. The participants of the meeting worked harmoniously towards a common goal and produced a draft document entitled *Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wild Populations of Southern White Rhino in South Africa*.

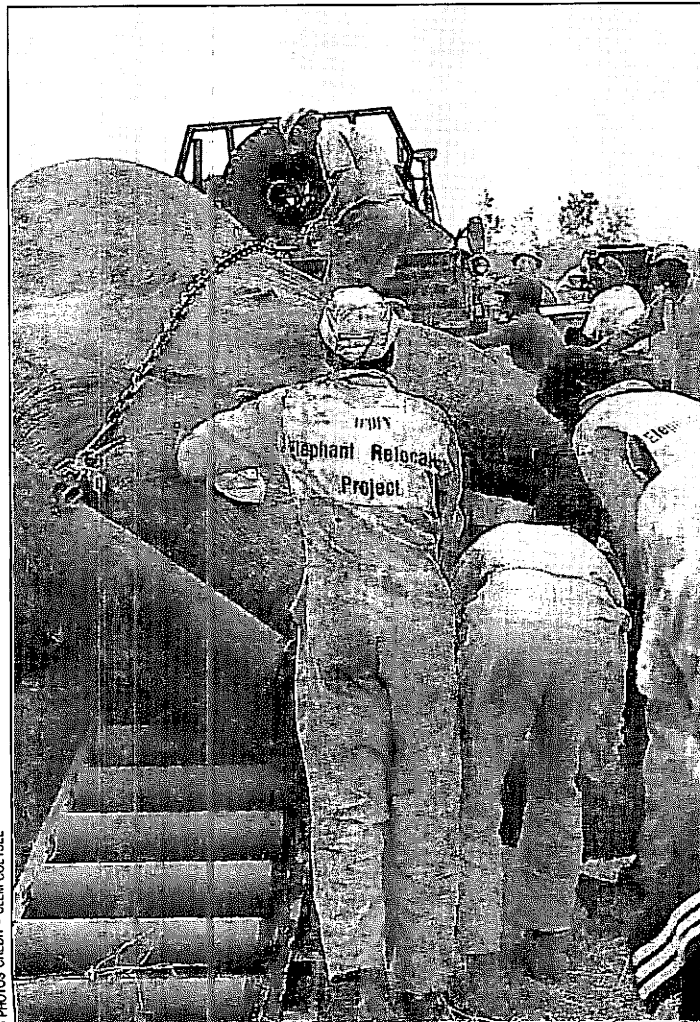
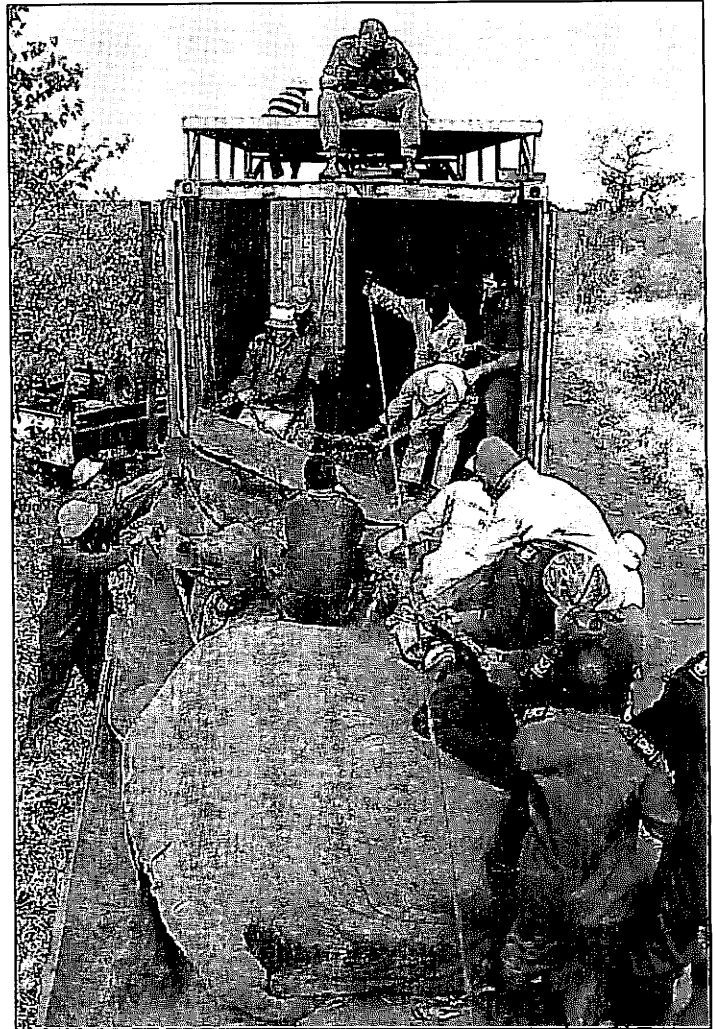
Dr Kees Rookmaaker attended on behalf of REF, while Mr Clive Walker and Mr Daan Buijs represented AROA. The conservation of white rhino has been very successful during the past years, with numbers increasing both in the national parks and in private hands. The formulation of this policy is necessary, first because the Southern White Rhinoceros is rated as “conservation dependent” on the IUCN’s Red List, which means that it can become endangered again if current conservation measures would be withdrawn. Secondly, because the international animal rights movement is attempting to prevent all forms of sustainable use of wild animals, which has proven the backbone of white rhino increase. Thirdly, the draft should give a clear framework to guide white rhino managers, and finally international initiatives such as proposals to CITES need to be supported by national “policy” statements. The draft will certainly fulfill all these areas. 

# REF co-ordinates elephant introduction into Karongwe Conservancy

by Chris Styles - Deputy Director

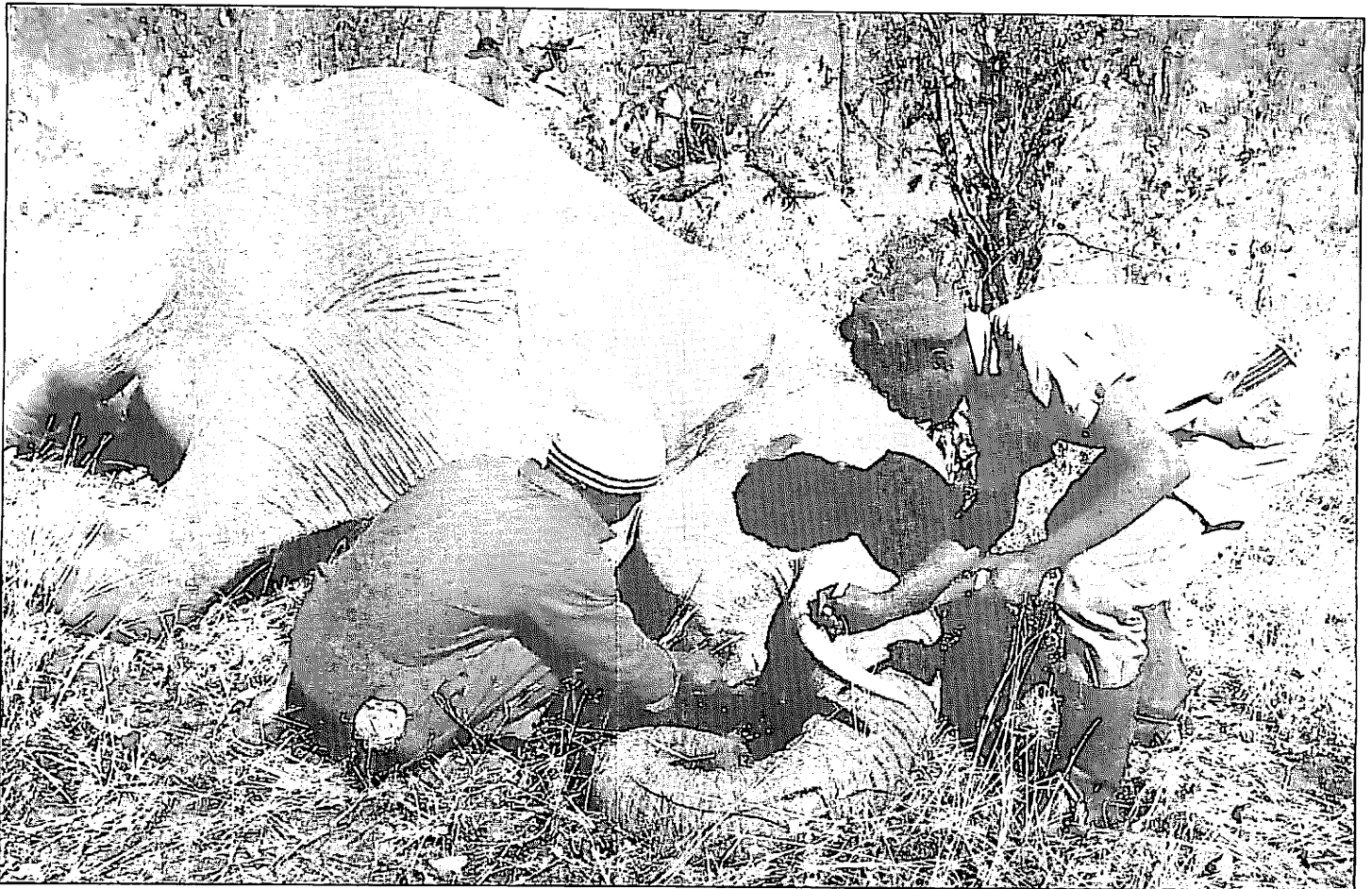
**D**uring the month of May, REF, with the help of Dr Kobus du Toit and Chrissie Mostert, co-ordinated the translocation of an elephant family unit from Magudu Game Reserve, Pongola (KwaZulu-Natal) to the Karongwe Conservancy, located outside of Hoedspruit on the road to Tzaneen.

The family unit chosen for relocation consisted of four cows and a young bull which is already showing signs of being a magnificent tusker. The capture took place in difficult terrain, thick bush and deep cuttings making it all the more difficult for the capture team. At first light the elephants were located by helicopter but only once the ground crew had been mobilised and a suitable loading site determined, did the operation begin in earnest. We first sighted the



family unit being herded towards the “ground station” at around 09h00. By 16h00 that afternoon, the last elephant had been loaded and everyone heaved a huge sigh of relief – the difficult nature of the terrain had made this capture everything but a textbook case. The truck used to carry the elephants left Magudu after dark and stopped briefly in Pongola to fill with diesel. The elephants’ trunks, which would probe the night air through the ventilation slats at the top of the trailer, were a source of much amusement for petrol attendants. This left one wondering what it is about elephants that fascinates people so? Moreover, isn’t it incredible that a family of wild elephants can be safely contained in a trailer in a cosmopolitan environment? Hats off to the pioneers of elephant translocation!

• continued on page 4




## REF co-ordinates elephant introduction into Karongwe Conservancy

• continued from page 3

Just after first light on Sunday, the truck finally rolled up to the release boma in Karongwe. Everyone stood looking on apprehensively. The doors finally opened and it seemed like an eternity before the first great grey bulk appeared. As the cow took off into her new surrounds, closely followed by two others, the delight on everyone's faces said it all – elephants, the architects of the veld, those mysterious animals with whom we share so many similarities, had finally arrived in Karongwe. Then came the young bull and finally the matriarch. She raced off only a short distance and then turned and defiantly faced the hessian barrier behind which lurked all the onlookers. It was one of those moments – electric in the extreme. Ears spread, she trumpeted in annoyance at those who had subjected her family to this uncomfortable episode and then, turning in a cloud of dust, she moved off to join the others.

For this matriarch and her family, this was their second translocation. As elephant numbers on private land increase, in order to keep the balance, more space will be needed. Where is all this headed one wonders? No-one wants to see elephants culled but if one has to think about translocating elephants, you are simply buying them time as once in their new home they will breed up again and the original reason for their being translocated, that being an over-population,

will again raise its ugly head. Why will some people not come to terms with the fact that Southern Africa has too many elephants and that the populations have to be managed in the interests of maintaining biodiversity? So, whilst animal rightists/activists whip up emotions over elephants, their sacred cash-cows, REF continues to work towards implementing pragmatic African-based solutions to elephant management problems in Southern Africa. Unlike them, REF's focus does not lie with glitzy, yet costly, public relations exercises and the front-page exposure that goes along with this "wise-use" of public money, we simply want to find solutions to problems. REF. in Africa, for Africa! 





# REF's wildlife welfare activities



A report by Dr Hym Ebedes – *Wildlife Welfare Specialist*

## 1. Code of Practice – the translocation of wildlife

In spite of an abundance of published information on the capture and transport of wild animals, there are few regulations and standards implemented in southern Africa. A special subcommittee of seven people comprising animal welfarists, conservationists and veterinarians have completed a *Code of Practice for the Translocation of Wild Animals* which is in its final stages of approval and will be published by the South African Bureau of Standards. This Code deals with important aspects for the humane handling during the translocation of wild animals and is a guideline to minimize stress, injury and death during the various translocation procedures. The main aim of the code is to ensure the well-being and welfare of the animals at all times. The Code deals with the capture, transport, temporary confinement such as at game auctions and quarantine, and finally release of wildlife at new destinations. Special attention is given to the care of immobilized animals, guidelines for mass and individual crates, transporting different types of wildlife, tranquillizers for transporting wild animals, holding pens at game auctions, veterinary inspection of animals at game auctions, quarantine pens, release of wild animals into a new habitat and off-loading into new habitats.

Because of the technical nature of capture, holding, and transportation, the Code recommends that only experienced competent capture teams should be used for all translocation procedures. The Code consists of two sections. The first is prescriptive and the second is informative. Some of the prescriptive guidelines include the following:

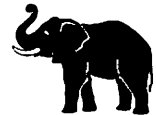
1. Not to capture heavily pregnant animals and females with unweaned young.
2. Not to capture when ambient temperatures are above 25°C.



The Code emphasises that the welfare and well-being of the animals should be considered at all times and cruel or inhumane handling during all the stages of the translocation process should be avoided.

It has been noted over the years that animals are often released in unsuitable habitats. This is often the case with some of the rarer species such as roan and sable antelopes. Because the type of habitat to which the animals are translocated is important for their welfare, the advice of an experienced ecologist should be sought.

The Code has been reviewed enthusiastically by all the conservation and environment authorities as well as the Wildlife Translocation Association of South Africa. It can be used as regulations in the various conservation ordinances. The final meeting of the special sub-committee will be held during July 1999 after which the Code will be published by SABS.



## 2. Game auctions

The number of game auctions held annually has more than doubled over the past five years indicating the profitability of game ranching. This has unfortunately opened a field which has been found to be poorly regulated and supervised and detrimental to the welfare of the animals captured and sold at these auctions. Three of four white rhinos sold at an auction died after the auction. Several auction pens and the management of the animals in the pens have been found to be inappropriate. In some cases the mating season, gestation, births and weaning ages of the animals were not considered and capture and transport take place throughout the year. This is in spite of the accepted norm that the capture and transport should not be undertaken immediately before, during or immediately after the lambing, calving or foaling season.

The transportation of animals from the auctions to game ranches was found to be inappropriate in many cases and uncontrolled by any official conservation or agriculture authority. More attention will be given to rectify this in future by consultation with the relevant authorities.

A problem experienced at auctions has been defining the "owner" who is responsible for the well-being of the animals and who could be prosecuted for irregularities. According to the Animal Protection Act (Act 71 of 1962) an "owner" includes any person having the possession, charge, custody or control of an animal. The views of REF members on this aspect would be appreciated.

## 3. Export of wild animals by sea



On 18 February 1999 a cargo vessel left Durban harbour with a consignment of wild animals and ostriches destined for Dubai in the Persian Gulf. On 21 February 1999 the *Sunday Tribune* had the following headline on the front page "NOAH'S ARK OUTRAGE" and the *Sunday Independent*

• continued on page 6

## REF's wildlife welfare activities



• continued from page 5

anticipated high mortalities. The value of the animals was stated to be in the region of R1 800 000 and included sable antelope, nyala, giraffe, kudu, springbok, impala and ostriches. Several allegations were made and because the Rhino & Elephant Foundation was concerned that the welfare of the animals could be at risk if some of the allegations were correct, and because of cyclonic and hot, humid weather conditions at this time of the year, it was decided that I should visit Dubai to investigate the shipment. The investigation had the following result:

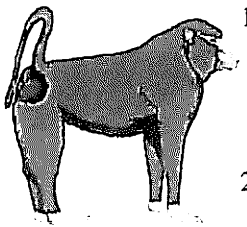
There are no official specifications for crates for exporting wild animals and ostriches or for the transportation of domestic or wild animals by sea. At present "anything" is acceptable. There also are no official requirements for pre-shipment inspections of animals or crates before any animals are transported by sea. This matter was discussed with the National Department of Agriculture so that guidelines can be formulated. In spite of the negative reports in the media and the predictions of high mortalities, the shipment was successful because none of the wild animals died and only one of 155 ostriches died.

Recommendations were made that guidelines and regulations for the sea transportation of animals be formulated as a matter of urgency by the National Department of Agriculture, the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (LWCC) and the SA Bureau of Standards.

### 4. Baboon Abattoir

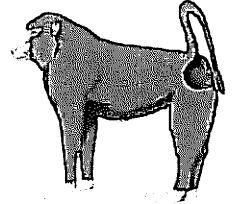
During May 1999 information was received that an abattoir was to be built near Warmbaths for the slaughter and export of baboon meat. Baboons are regarded as a pest on some farms in the Northern Province and the possibility was seen to export the meat to Central Africa and Eastern Europe. Because the proposed abattoir would be built on a game ranch outside Warmbaths it would not need the approval of the Warmbaths municipal authority.

At a special meeting organized by the Warmbaths Publicity and Tourist Association I emphasized the following:



1. The difficulties and cruelty involved in capturing, transporting, keeping and humanely slaughtering baboons in an abattoir.
2. That the abattoir would never become economically sustainable.
3. That the agriculture and conservation authorities would not grant permits for the transport of baboons for this purpose even if they are considered as "vermin" in the Northern Province.


4. Plans for the abattoir were never approved by the Provincial or National Department of Veterinary Public Health.
5. Baboons are not approved for slaughter in an abattoir or for export by the Department of Agriculture.
6. There are no protocols for the inspection of baboon carcasses.
7. There are no protocols for the transport of live or dead baboons.
8. It is unlikely that CITES Appendix 2 permits would ever be issued for capture, slaughter and export of baboons.
9. There was no prior consultation about the abattoir with any animal welfare organization or the LWCC.



The above was reported in the Media. Several members supported the initiative that was taken by REF.



### 5. Representation of REF on LWCC

The Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (LWCC) represents 24 organizations directly involved with the welfare of domesticated animals. The welfare of wild animals on private land and especially on game ranches will now be addressed by REF's participation on this committee. At a recent meeting with the National Department of Agriculture, concerns were expressed as to who officially controls the game ranching industry and whether game ranching is a conservation or agricultural activity? In past years conservation departments were involved with the provision and relocation of most animal species. This function has to a large extent been taken over by the private sector and utilization through conservation has become the credo. 

## NEWS FLASH

### Tswalu Desert Reserve changes hands

This reserve north-west of Kuruman in the Northern Cape was the vision of the late Stephen Boler, who in the space of three years established the 90 000 ha reserve and introduced over 6 000 head of game, including disease-free buffalo and the rare desert black rhinoceros. Mr Nicky Oppenheimer announced that the Oppenheimer family in a major commitment to wildlife conservation and eco-tourism purchased the reserve. The family will thus ensure the future of a precious part of the Northern Cape. (Media Release)

# Tembe Elephant Park *Report by Chris Styles – Deputy Director*

Public meeting held on April 21 at Queen Elizabeth Park, KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Services

## Introduction

Dr George Hughes opened the public meeting. He emphasized that KZNNCS is firmly committed to the principle of sustainable utilization of natural resources, and has been, since the 1960's. This management philosophy has seen white rhino populations grow from a few in the 1960's to around 200 today. As wildlife populations increase, hunting of selected individuals as a revenue generating practice is to be expected and KZNNCS is supportive of such developments as long as they contribute positively to the maintenance of conservation-related activities in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa as a whole. Dr Hughes stressed that the removal of elephants from the Tembe Elephant Park in 1998 was an experiment and the purpose of the public meeting was to report back on this and source opinions widely.

## Ecology and History

Tembe Elephant Park is characterized by pans, sandforests and the Muzi Swamp. Water is seasonal, the only permanent water occurring in the northern section of the Muzi Swamp. Soils are poor for cultivation. In an effort to protect the lives and crops of villagers from marauding elephants, Tembe Elephant Park was proclaimed in October 1983. The "proclamation agreement" between the conservation authority and the Tembe tribal authority was structured such that the community would have access to resources in the Reserve and ecotourism partnerships.

Tembe lies within an area comprising a portion of northern KwaZulu-Natal and a portion of southern Mozambique, whose floristic diversity is recognised by the IUCN's International Center of Plant Diversity. High levels of endemism and biodiversity occur in this region.

In 1983 the southern, western and eastern borders of Tembe were fenced with electrified, game proof fences. This left the northern border open and elephants, mostly bulls, still moved (though infrequently) through this "corridor" between South Africa and Mozambique. In 1989, due to heavy poaching in Mozambique, the decision had to be taken to fence this northern border. That resulted in the elephants in Tembe now being confined to the ecological constraints of the conservancy and owing to Tembe's high levels of endemism, their management now became an issue.

Moreover, the elephant population fenced in, showed an extremely skewed dynamic. In Tembe, male herds comprise around 70% of the population whilst in other "natural" areas like Kruger, they comprise around 15%. According to KZNNCS conservators, this skewness is responsible for


stress in the population which has manifested itself in the form of serious, sometimes lethal, encounters between bulls. Given this, KZNNCS have suggested that instead of bulls killing each other "unnecessarily" as is currently happening, that "loss" could be turned into "profit". This could be achieved through making some individuals available for hunting, thereby utilising the bull population for conservation purposes, in that the income derived, would be ploughed back into studying the Tembe elephant issue. This suggestion has met with mixed reactions.

## Animal Rights – their viewpoint

Mr Steve Smit of FALCON (Front for Animal Liberation and Conservation), a Durban-based animal-rights organization made it abundantly clear that they were vehemently opposed to suggestions made by KZNNCS that excess bulls in Tembe could be hunted to generate much-needed revenue for research into how best to manage Tembe's severely skewed elephant population. This resistance to an attempt by KZNNCS to address a serious problem, typifies the entire animal-rights movement, one whose militant and irrational approach to wildlife-related issues is now well documented in South Africa of-late. Lest we forget, the suggestions animal rights groups make are almost always structured to buy time and throw decision-makers off-course. **Beware!**

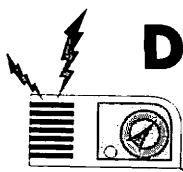
FALCON indicated that the elephants in Tembe should be viewed as a shared resource between South Africa and Mozambique and that concerns around the population structure should be addressed by again allowing the free movement of elephants between the two countries. KZNNCS replied to this by stating that they encourage the establishment of trans-border parks but that Mozambique has not yet committed itself to a Peace Park and the capacity for the implementation of effective conservation in Mozambique, has to be seriously questioned.

## Conclusion

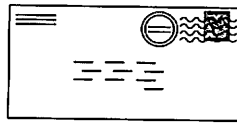
The KZNNCS believes in the principle of sustainable use of natural resources and as such will implement this principle whether the elephants are confined in Tembe, as is currently the situation, or a bigger area, a Peace Park. The ESPU's Operation Jumbo, funded by IFAW, showed how external funds from "welfare groups" can influence studies negatively – even to the detriment of our country. Given this, the REF is supportive of the attempts being made by KZNNCS to investigate methods of utilizing "their" excess elephants to generate income for research in Tembe, and applauds the transparency and public involvement encouraged by KZNNCS around a very sensitive issue. 

# Debate on BBC World Service 30 March 1999

*Takes the form of letters read by the authors*



## ■ First Letter



Dear Dr McKenzie,

I am shocked by the proposal by the National Parks Board to resume elephant culling in the Kruger National Park.

Elephants are highly intelligent, long-lived animals with a complicated social life, close family bonds and are capable of great love and affection towards their family and relatives. To cull or orphan them as if they are an expendable commodity is an injustice as much as it is cruel. How can any civilised society condone or ethically justify such behaviour? Most of those involved in wildlife management believe that animals do not have rights and exist primarily to serve the interests of humans. How else can one explain the arbitrary fashion in which humans decide which animals shall live and which shall die? The individual's right to life is dismissed out of hand.

The currently popular buzzword in orthodox conservation circles is "sustainable use". The belief is that just as we manage stocks of domestic animals so that we can kill and eat them then there is nothing wrong with applying the same principles to wild animals – as long as the species survives. This is wishful thinking and "sustainable utilisation" is the most insidiously dangerous and animal-unfriendly concept to arise in the history of formal conservation. It relegates animals to the status of commodities which exist by the sole grace of humans.

Is there any ecological data that could possibly justify such a policy?

Looking forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

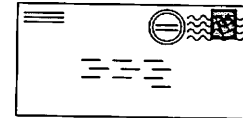
STEVE SMIT  
Durban, South Africa

## NEWS FLASH

### REF successful in helping to save 50/50

In March, the SABC planned phasing out the well-known weekly environmental television magazine programme 50/50. This programme helps us to continue to be aware of our responsibilities for the environment and for their fellow human beings. In an attempt to save 50/50, REF launched an appeal and the office was inundated by messages from a cross-section of the public. We are delighted to report that our campaign was successful and 50/50 will remain on air.

## ■ First Reply



Dear Mr Smit,

I think you know as well as I that the new elephant management proposal makes full allowance for every possibility of removing the elephants alive. To express your horror and to imply that this is a bloodthirsty decision hell-bent on "utilising" the Kruger elephants as a commodity is typical of the rhetoric you and your kind use to inflame the emotions of people who care for elephants. How do you justify manipulating peoples' emotions like this? Or is it all just about fund-raising?

You ask how anyone can condone the culling of elephants? The biggest problem with your argument that this is against the rights of animals is that letting elephant populations expand unchecked can result in the death and extinction of many other species. I love elephants. I have cried for them on many occasions. But I cannot subscribe to the hypocrisy that you espouse – let the elephants live at the expense of other species – tree squirrels, geckos, birds of prey, dassies, habitat-sensitive antelope, black rhinos... the list goes on! How do you live with yourself knowing that all those other animals and birds are going to die?

Culling is sensitively applied by people who have dedicated their lives to conservation – there is nothing arbitrary about it. They understand that the whole ecosystem is a living unit. They understand that we play God when we fence off an area of land. And they understand that we cannot stop there – we cannot play half-God: we have to take the custodianship for spaceship Earth very seriously indeed.

You ask for ecological data to justify culling. I would be the first to admit that no absolute data could justify culling – it comes down to a value judgement. If species richness (number and abundance of species) is of paramount importance, then you should have no elephants (even small numbers of elephants can eliminate whole tree species). If maintaining ecosystem process is important to you, then you should have some elephants. And if you want to produce ivory then you should have as many elephants as the vegetation can support.

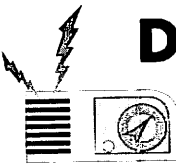
The interim moratorium on culling in Kruger, and the carefully thought-out management plan that has now emerged were largely the result of your input at the Great Elephant Debate held under the auspices of the Rhino and Elephant Foundation in Johannesburg in 1995. Are you not satisfied with the powerful and significant influence that you have had? Is the only answer for you that there should be absolutely no culling at all? The Park management has given a lot in allowing populations to build up unchecked in parts of the Park; what are you prepared to concede in return?

Yours sincerely,

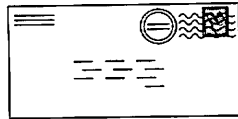
ANDREW MCKENZIE  
Johannesburg, South Africa



*continued*



## ■ **Second Letter**



Dear Dr McKenzie,

The insulting and patronising tone of your letter is precisely the response I expected from you. As the self-proclaimed champion of wildlife exploitation, it stands to reason that you would not tolerate a viewpoint which highlights the immorality of what you embrace.

You say you have cried for the elephants. I trust you cried also for the Tuli elephant mothers whose calves were stolen from them to be sold into lifelong imprisonment in exile. You call me a hypocrite. I would suggest that yours is the worse kind of hypocrisy.

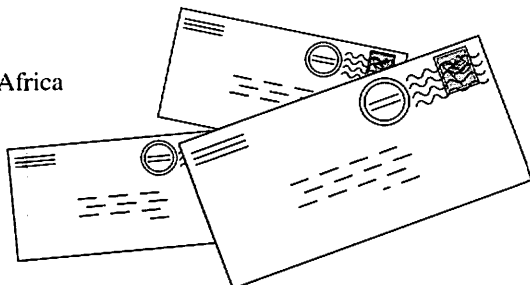
Concerning the issue of elephant culling in the Kruger National Park, let us not lose sight of the fact that South Africa is one of the countries vying to have its elephant population downlisted from CITES Appendix 1 to Appendix II for the purpose of trading its ivory and elephant hide on the international market. If elephant culling goes ahead in the Kruger Park, and the Park's new management plan will ensure that culling becomes a permanent annual event in the Park, this will result in a growing stockpile of ivory and elephant hide which will in turn strengthen South Africa's case for the desired downlisting at the next CITES conference.

In stating that I would see elephants saved at the expense of other animals' lives, you expose your total and deliberate ignorance of the animal rights philosophy. You then "admit" that there is no ecological data to back claims that elephants must be culled in order to save the other species you profess to care about. Precisely my point!

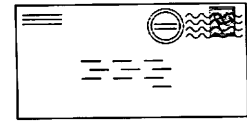
I remain convinced that culling is not a practical, nor is it a humane, method of managing the elephant population in the Kruger National Park. I believe that, given time, the elephant population in the Park will stabilise at a sustainable level without causing the local extinction of any species. For this reason I have appealed to the Park authorities to consider a further ten year moratorium on elephant culling.

Yours faithfully,

STEVE SMIT  
Durban, South Africa



## ■ **Second Reply**



Dear Mr Smit,

It is a great pity that you become so defensive when someone questions your point of view. Perhaps it is because you cannot base it on anything other than emotion.

With regard to the Tuli elephant mothers, yes, indeed I did cry for them – more than you will ever know. I happen to know many of them personally. I never condoned or supported the action to capture the youngsters in Tuli. In fact, I had heard of the intention and had voiced my concern beforehand – to no avail. All you recall of the event is when I became involved in the debate as to what should be done with them when they were already in captivity and semi-trained. You were among those calling for them to be re-united with their mothers. A marvellous rallying cry for fund-raising, even the script for a hastily funded film – but you know as well as I that it would have meant a certain, most horrible death for the youngsters. Hypocrisy is not the word for it. Cold-blooded money-grabbing is more like it! Where have all those dollars gone, I wonder? It certainly wasn't on elephants!

Your proposal that a self-regulating, sustainable elephant population will be reached in Kruger without causing any extinctions simply exposes your utter ignorance of elephant biology (and of biology in general). Is your call for a moratorium the same as your last one – so that when it has been acceded to you will demand yet another? Why not be honest and call for a total and permanent cessation? Or do you need the debate to stay alive for your fundraising?

You did not answer my question regarding what you are prepared to concede. It is obviously absolutely nothing, so I don't blame conservationists for not taking you seriously any more. No, Mr Smit, your arguments have had their day.

There are stark realities facing conservation in Africa, and the sooner people are enabled to understand these issues, instead of having their emotions and their purses manipulated, the better. Your philosophy and methods thrived when people did not have access to the truth. Now, in the global village, they are able to comprehend, share and help solve the problems faced by their neighbours – not simply threaten and boycott them as you would like to see happen. Don't treat your audience like imbeciles, Mr Smit – it will backfire on you badly!

Yours in pragmatic African conservation,

ANDREW MCKENZIE  
Johannesburg, South Africa



# Update!

## Tuli Elephants

The Rhino and Elephant Foundation (REF) wishes to express its outrage at the abuse and cruelty to the Tuli elephants at African Game Services (AGS) near Brits, as depicted on the M-Net television programme *Carte Blanche* (4 July, 1999). After viewing the programme and its contents, the Foundation felt it had no alternative but to strongly condemn the activities of African Game Services and to request that African Game Services suspend the perpetrators of the abuse until a disciplinary hearing is held (the Foundation feels that until such time as a disciplinary hearing is held, these persons should not even be allowed on the premises).

The Foundation is firmly of the opinion that the situation needs to be resolved as rapidly as possible, and that the elephants must be removed from the African Game Services property. To this end it will be working closely with all parties, including the NSPCA, to decide on a nationally accepted destination for the elephants. In the interim, the Foundation will, with the resources at its disposal, regularly inspect and constructively criticise the circumstances at African Game Services until a more suitable arrangement is put in place. The Foundation has also offered its services to a committee which is being formed under the auspices of the South African Veterinary Association, to advise on the welfare needs of the Tuli elephants.

“We would like to emphasise the need for a speedy resolution to this situation”, said the Director of the Foundation, Dr Andrew McKenzie. “It is important that there is not a factional approach to what will be the best solution for the elephants. Proposals made in public will become political footballs, further exacerbating and polarising the situation. Competent and affected parties should be locked up in a room and told by the rest of South Africa not to come out until they have come up with a resolution to which they all subscribe. If they emerge from that room still fighting, then South Africa is doomed.”


### NEWS FLASH

#### REF workshops

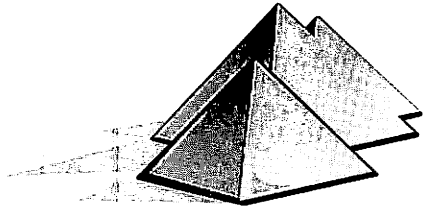
While we have circulated the possibility of holding workshops on a number of important conservation issues, we are at present constrained in their implementation. Therefore, these workshops are put on hold indefinitely, but the ideas are not forgotten.

As a South African institution, the Foundation tenders its unequivocal apology on behalf of the country to the elephants and to the rest of the world for what has happened. The Foundation makes itself available to participate in what must be a nationally representative move to take accountability for the situation at African Game Services. The Foundation furthermore, would be very willing to participate in any process by the appropriate authorities towards addressing existing legislation, in an attempt to prevent this type of immensely damaging occurrence from ever recurring.

There has been much negative publicity surrounding the Tuli Elephants and suffice it to say, the Foundation's good reputation has been tarnished in the process with many of our members becoming confused at what has been thrown at them through the media. We wish to categorically confirm the following:

1. REF became involved in the Tuli Elephant Saga, only after they arrived at the African Game Services premises in Brits. We were not involved in any way in the sale of these animals from Botswana and are on record for having stated that we were opposed to the snatching of juvenile elephants out of a family herd.
2. The sole reason for REF becoming involved with the elephants at Brits, was to address the welfare issue of those elephants being held and this we endeavoured to do, with limited resources at our disposal.
3. The REFs role in any decision making process, was wholly influenced by expert advice gained through the constituted Committee for the Training and Welfare of Elephants formed specifically towards the latter half of 1998, to address all aspects of the holding of the Tuli Elephants at Brits. This committee of elephant specialists, veterinarians and behavioural scientists, included our Wildlife Welfare Specialist, Dr Hym Ebedes.
4. Arising from the ruling of the Supreme Court last year when the NSPCA were granted custodianship of the Tuli Elephants being held at Brits, the REF played a far lesser role in the ongoing process, satisfied that the situation was being closely monitored by those inspectors placed on the premises at Brits.
5. We wish to reiterate to all our members that our concern has always been that of the welfare of the elephants and we are ready and willing to cooperate with all parties concerned, to bring about a speedy resolution to the issue, which will be in the very best long-term interests of the elephants at Brits. 

## NEWS FLASH



### Ivory freely on sale in Egypt

Dr Esmond Bradley Martin of Kenya conducted a survey at the end of 1998 in shops in the major centres of Egypt. He found that at least 142 shops openly sold ivory trinkets, at least about 21 000 items were seen on sale. There was an upsurge in elephant poaching in central parts of Africa, certainly in the Congo, mainly led by Sudanese traders. The shopkeepers in Egypt stated that the majority of their customers are tourists, often from Europe or from Latin America. The import, export and sale of ivory are strictly forbidden in Egypt, as it is against CITES international agreements. CITES officials have told Egypt that it must enforce the ivory ban by the autumn or face international sanctions that would halt trade in all its legal wildlife products, including items such as crocodile skin.



## NEWS FLASH

### Welgevonden ranger training centre

Poaching will always remain a threat to wildlife in South Africa. This newly established staff training centre, situated in the Welgevonden private nature reserve near Vaalwater in the Northern Province aims to counter this threat, clearly stated in their motto: "To upgrade the security of protected wildlife areas to acceptable standards and to improve the capabilities of ground cover units on these protected areas". The training team under the leadership of Jack Greeff boasts a total of 40 years experience in wildlife law enforcement training and operations. A variety of courses is offered to rangers and managers alike. The training takes the participants "back to the bush" in the 40 000 ha Welgevonden Game Reserve. For more information, contact Jack Greeff at 0147552, ask for Bulgerivier 2112, or write to PO Box 2, Bulgerivier 0531.

# STOP PRESS

## Dr McKenzie resigns as director after launching initiatives

Today (14 July 1999), the Director of the Rhino and Elephant Foundation, Dr Andrew McKenzie, resigned from his position at the Foundation with immediate effect. In announcing his resignation, Dr McKenzie listed three initiatives which he had personally facilitated in the five days following the airing of the *Carte Blanche* television documentary depicting unacceptable abuse of elephants at African Game Services:

1. A proposal to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism to constitute a representative South African forum to decide on the future destination of the elephants.
2. An offer to fund the purchase and relocation of the elephants by Vodacom, which he re-directed to WWF-South Africa.
3. The formation of an Elephant Welfare Committee and Elephant Welfare Fund, constituted under the auspices of the South African Veterinary Association. The first resolution of this committee was to second elephant handlers from the Johannesburg Zoo to African Game Services.

To its detriment, the Foundation could not announce any of these initiatives at the time because of the sensitive and highly polarised nature of the Tuli Elephant Saga. It furthermore had decided to place these initiatives with third parties in order to prevent them from becoming politicised and thereby threatened. This resulted in the former Director's stance in a televised debate focussing only on the Foundation's concerns with the conduct of the NSPCA, and thereby appearing unconstructive.

The Foundation regrets, under the circumstances, to having to accept Dr McKenzie's resignation, but will proceed with his wildlife welfare initiatives in the capable hands of Acting Director, Chris Styles, a former Director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and its Wildlife Welfare specialist, Dr Hymn Ebedes.

The full text of Dr McKenzie's resignation address may be found on the Foundation's website at [www.ref.org.za](http://www.ref.org.za).

## COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of the Ingwe Game Lodge Competition, which was run from the REF's stand at the recent Kyalami Outdoor Exhibition Show:

- 1st Prize** Ms Vanessa Gallie  
**2nd Prize** Ms Marie Novy Fraser  
**3rd Prize** Mr Frans Steenkamp

Well done and enjoy your time at Ingwe Game Lodge, located near Hoedspruit. Call their reservations office for more information (013) 752-6572.

# A big "Thank You" for donations

We have received many donations both from the general public and from various business enterprises. Thank you one and all!

## REF thanks corporate donations in kind

The Mazda Wildlife Fund through the office of Humphrey LeGrice once again assisted our curator, Dr Kees Rookmaaker, with the use of a vehicle helping with much-needed transport. Murray & Roberts donated a computer and printer for use in our Johannesburg office. Elliott International, the Removal Company – moving to save the black rhino – has moved Dr Kees and his family from Melkriver in the Northern Province to Johannesburg free of any charges. First National Bank sponsored the venue at the FNB Centre for Management Studies for REF media conferences. Nashua Ltd donated a Kodak digital camera kit, and Wildlife Broking Services, through Mr Brian Courtenay, helped with insurance for the museum centre.

## Corporate Donations

AGA Air Conditioning Systems; Delta Motor Corporation (Pty) Ltd; Elliott International; First National Bank; Jwala Syndicate; Mauricedale Game Ranch, Mr John Hume; Mazda Wildlife Fund; Murray & Roberts; Nashua Ltd; Ntoma Estates; The Podlashuk Charitable Foundation; Safmarine & Rennies Holdings Ltd; South African Breweries: Beer Division; South African Veterinary Association, Pretoria Branch; SYMCO 2000; Tauber Management Trust (Pty) Ltd; T W Industrial Valves CC; Wildlife Broking Services.

## Private Donations

R & R Bateman (Canada)  
*[includes purchase of floorboard]*

Mr Brian Mayfield-Smith  
(Australia)

Mr & Mrs A R Butcher

Mr Ken Coetzee

Mr Yusuf Desai

Lt Gen Denis J Earp

Mr Wayne Fyvie

Ms Jane A Garver (USA):

*in memory of Harold and Adaline Watson*

D A Hanson

Mr Guy Hardy

Mr and Mrs C Hausmann (USA)

Mr Bernard Herberg

Mr Nolan Kotting

Mr Charles F Lathrop

Miss Deirdre Lubbe

Mr Tilman Ludin

Mr Mike McGrath

Gill & Robin Merrifield  
(Canada)

R H Nielsen

Mrs B M Schroeder

Mr Angus Sholto-Douglas

Hein & Linda Snyman:

*one floorboard at Rhino*

*Museum in the name of*

*Dr Gerrie De Graaff*

Dr Quixi Sonntag

Mr Donald Sikhona Sosibo

Mr Tom Styles

Mr Sas du Toit

Dr J D Ward

Ms Trisch Zschenderlein

and Mr Derek Fullerton,

*in memory of Mrs Paddy Fullerton*

## NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome the following new members:

### New Corporate Members

Mabula Game Reserve

(Silver Lodge Corporate Membership)

SAPPI Ltd (Silver Corporate Membership)

Wildlife Broking Services  
(Silver Corporate Membership)

### New Sponsors

The Werdmuller von Elgg Family

### New Donors

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Ms Marie Brink

Dr Tanya D Burrows

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Mr Ken Coetzee

Mr Yusuf Desai

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Mr A M Meylahm

Mr P N Mountain

Ms Fredagh Podlashuk

Mr C J Roux

Mr Gerrit Scheepers Jr

Mr Michael Schneider

Mr Angus Sholto-Douglas

Mr J G Smalberger

Mr Lucas Smith

Dr Quixi Sonntag

Mr Donald Sikhona Sosibo

Ms Mary Stuart

Ms Uta Tegeder

Dr Wynand von Tonder


Mr Neels Volschenk

Mr Jan van der Walt

Dr F A Weber

Mr Frank Venter

Dr P P van Zyl

We would also like to thank all those members who have supported the REF by upgrading their membership. 

Do not forget to visit REF's

exciting internet site at:

<http://www.ref.org.za>

and e-mail us your comments at:

[boma@ref.org.za](mailto:boma@ref.org.za)

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