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REF NEWS

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FROM THE REF DESK

REF Chairman Clive Walker recently attended the Eco World '96 Congress & Exhibition held at Gallagher Estate in Midrand, in September. The environmental and conservation congress attracted over 60 local and international speakers from more than 20 countries.

The Chairman's paper focused on sustainable use options for rhino management, and also provided an overview of management and security on private land. The following is an extract from that paper.

White Rhino

Results of the 1996 survey conducted by the African Rhino Owners Association (AROA) indicate that numbers of southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) on private land in South Africa have continued to increase by almost seven per cent per year since 1994. South Africa is by far the most important range state, conserving 94 per cent - almost 7 100 in 1995, of southern white rhinos in the wild.

Black Rhino

Numbers of black rhino have remained stable at around 2 410 (excluding speculative guesstimates) since 1992. This is largely due to a combined 23 per cent increase in numbers of South African and Namibian black rhinos, which has cancelled out declines in a number of other range states. South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Zimbabwe are the major black rhino range states.

Numbers of the arid-adapted south-western *Diceros bicornis bicornis* continue to increase under protection. There are currently about 625. Namibia is the major range state, conserving just over 95 per cent of the animals, with a small number occurring in South Africa.

(Continued on Page 2)

MOVE TO LIFT BAN ON RHINO HORN TRADE

A draft proposal from the Department of Environment and Tourism aims to eventually legalise the export of South African white rhino horn to China and other countries where the material is believed to have powerful medicinal properties.

The proposal will form part of the government's submission to the conference of parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which takes place in Harare in June next year.

Under South Africa's proposal, CITES members would be asked to end the overall ban on trade in horn and other products of the southern white rhino and to set a "zero quota" on trade pending the outcome of an enquiry into the possibility of establishing trade in these products with appropriate controls that will prevent laundering of illegal products.

Tom Milliken, Director of TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa said the proposal was a

"sincere attempt to be provocative" and that it would be irresponsible to dismiss it out of hand. He questioned whether it would ever be possible to stamp out poaching and smuggling while traditions dating back thousands of years continued to create strong demand for rhino horn and other body parts, particularly in the Far East. It made sense at least to think about ways of supplying that demand in a manner that enhanced the chances of the species' survival by knocking out the profits to be made from illegal trade while generating funds for conservation. "The key to conservation is finance ... and the private sector moving in and making lots of areas available," Milliken said, adding that the Natal Parks Board had made more than R1 million from selling live rhinos to zoos and private reserves after trade restrictions were modified at the last CITES meeting. The board was sitting on "a ton of horn" it could not sell to generate even more funds. He was, however, not prepared to endorse the proposal and doubted that it would become part of South Africa's final submission to CITES.

Simon Barber, The Star

(From Page 1)

South Africa and Zimbabwe are the major range states of the southern central *D. b. minor*, conserving 98 per cent of the remaining 1 300 known rhino. It is, however, hoped that more *D. b. minor* remain in Tanzania's Selous Game Reserve, but no reliable population estimates are available.

Private landowners conserve 20 per cent of the white rhino population in South Africa and 16 per cent of the remaining black rhinos. Live sales of black and white rhinos to the private sector have generated much-needed revenue for the country's conservation departments.

In November 1995, REF and AROA held a workshop entitled "Sustainable Use Options for Rhino Management" chaired by Mike t'Sas Rolfes, an economist with wide experience in issues relating to trade in ivory and rhino horn. All the principal state organisations with rhino populations attended the meeting, as did a number of prominent non-governmental conservation organisations, and a general consensus was reached with regards to sustainable use options for future rhino management.

While this discussion is a sensitive one, certain questions have to be asked. To conserve Africa's remaining rhino populations will cost a considerable amount of money. Where will it come from? In South Africa, the bulk of government funding is understandably going towards social upliftment, which leaves very little for rhino conservation.

It has been impossible to enforce the ban on trade in rhino horn, and one has to ask whether a trade in legal rhino horn could not provide much-needed funds for rhino conservation.

Will it ever be possible to sweep aside a two-thousand year old eastern belief that rhino horn is an essential medicine? Could a regular supply of rhino horn to south-east Asia halt or at least slow down the killing of rhinos? Rhinos are killed in fights or die of old age, and vast stocks of rhino horn presently lie gathering dust. Farming rhino horn is also a possibility - the animal does not have to be killed for its horn which grows back at between seven and eight centimetres per year.

May we not be permitted to think that releasing rhino horn stocks onto a controlled market could have the effect of:

- providing much-needed funds for the effective protection of rhino populations
- eliminating or seriously reducing the activities of the middle-man
- discouraging poachers

- reducing the cost and process of law enforcement
- placing an increased value of the sustainable use of rhinos
- slowing down the killing of rhinos

The alternatives are less funding for conservation and an escalation of organised crime.

If AROA can set high standards for rhino management and security in the private sector and maintain accountability amongst its members, then it is safe to argue that it will become the single most important player in any future potential legal trade in rhinoceros parts. AROA must strive to consolidate its leadership role over the vast majority of private rhino owners; at the same time, government stakeholders should buttress AROA's efforts and work towards the development of a rhino ownership policy which limits future public rhino sales exclusively to AROA members. If such an aim could be achieved, it would serve to demonstrate national resolve towards ensuring credibility and accountability in the affairs of South African rhino conservation.

Survey Results Available

Results of the survey of white rhinos on private land conducted by the African Rhino Owners Association (AROA) indicate that numbers of southern white rhino on private land in South Africa have continued to increase by almost seven per cent per year since 1994. South Africa is by far the most important range state, currently conserving 94 per cent - almost 7 100 in 1995 - of southern white rhinos in the wild. Of this number 20 per cent live on private land.

Bound copies of the findings of the survey *White Rhinos on Private Land in South Africa* by Daan Bujs and Theo Papenfus are available from the Rhino & Elephant Foundation for R10-00 (Please note that this is charged purely to cover the costs of copying and binding). ☎ (011) 453-9829

Elephant History

Did you know that the earliest elephant ancestor was the moeritherium, a pig-like animal with a tapir-like snout, found in Upper Eocene deposits (about 60 million years old) in Africa.

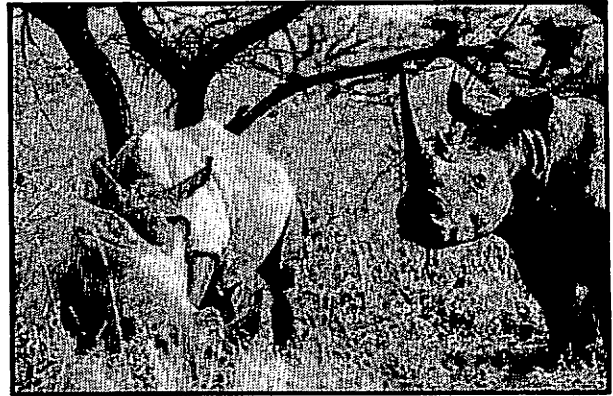
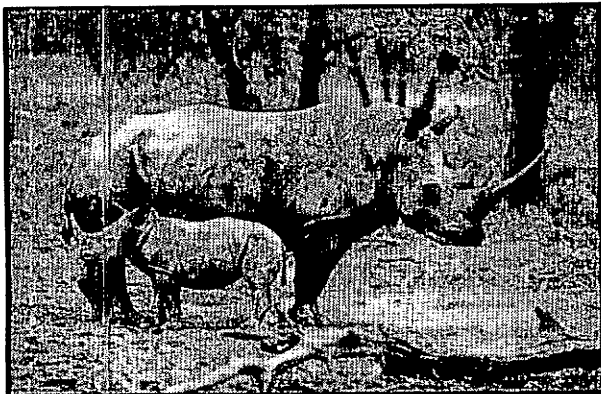
Present day elephants can be traced to two families in the Pleistocene epoch: the mastodons, which became extinct, and the elephants, which included the mammoths. Of the elephants, only the African and Indian species remain. They are of relatively recent origin, no fossils having been found in the late Pliocene, about 12 million to two million years ago.

Monitoring The Movements of Umfolozi's White Rhinos

Adrian M Shrader

In 1897, the last few white rhinos in Africa were discovered living between the white and black Umfolozi Rivers, in what is now the Umfolozi Game Reserve. In an attempt to save these last few individuals, the area was made into one of Africa's first game reserves and today, an estimated 2 000 white rhinos live in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park.

White rhinos can have a massive impact on their environment through overgrazing. It is thus imperative that the rhino population be kept at a level where they will not have a detrimental impact on the reserve. In 1986 the Natal Parks Board implemented a management policy to deal with the rapidly increasing white rhino population. This policy, called the sink management policy, utilizes the white rhinos' natural tendency to disperse from areas of high rhino density to areas of low rhino density. Areas of low rhino density, known as sinks, were established in the outer sections of the reserve by removing white rhinos from these areas and selling them to other reserves and zoos. A central source area, which contains large numbers of rhinos, was left untouched - rhinos are able to move freely between this source and the surrounding sinks. Rhinos that have moved from the source into any of the sink areas are removed and sold in the annual auction, in order to keep the population size constant.



The management staff of Umfolozi need to know how the white rhinos are using the sinks and where they are moving in the reserve. This knowledge is important in allowing the staff to evaluate the management plan. In order to answer these questions, a study on the white rhinos of Umfolozi has been established. The movement patterns of the rhinos in the sinks and the influence that different densities have on these movements are being monitored in study areas each measuring 55 square kilometres that are located in two of the sinks. In one study area, the white rhino density was reduced to less than one rhino per square kilometre while the other was left with a density higher than one rhino per square kilometre. Transects were established in both areas and are walked throughout the year to monitor any changes in the density of the white rhino population. The rhinos' use of the sink areas is being related to both the habitat quality and annual changes in habitat quality of the study areas.

The Rhino & Elephant Foundation's support has been extremely helpful in covering many of the financial requirements of this project. The processing of photographs used for the identification of individual rhinos, and travel expenses, are just two things that the contribution made by the Foundation to this project is helping to cover.

The information gathered in this study will help us to understand the rhinos' movement patterns in the sinks, and the factors that are influencing these movements. The results of this study will help the staff of Umfolozi and the Natal Parks Board to make confident management decisions for the continued preservation of the white rhino. Without the support of organisations like the Rhino & Elephant Foundation, research projects such as this one could not be conducted.

Rural Community Project Masebe Game Reserve

Chairman Clive Walker, representing Region A of the Environmental Advisory Forum and the Rhino & Elephant Foundation, has been instrumental in taking forward a proposal - together with the Northern Province government - to introduce rhino into Masebe Game Reserve, a 4 500 ha reserve situated in the Bakenburg District of Region A of the Northern Province. The proposal aims to introduce four white rhinos (two males and two females) into the north-western sector of the reserve, with the costs for translocation being borne by REF and Save the Rhino International. The reserve is already established and falls under the administrative management and direction of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

The presence of rhinos in this area would not only afford an added dimension to Masebe's tourism potential, but would also contribute significantly to environmental education. Most importantly, ownership of the rhinos will be vested within the community, and future offspring or utilisation of the species would benefit the community as a whole.

It is hoped that the project, which is still under discussion, will be successfully launched within the near future.



Two Firsts For Khama Rhino Sanctuary

Field staff at Khama Rhino Sanctuary, 30 kilometres north of Serowe in Botswana, are pleased to confirm the birth of two white rhino calves. One of the calves was born in late July and the second cow gave birth approximately two weeks later. Although both calves have been spotted on separate occasions and appear to be in a healthy condition, their sexes have not as yet been established.

These welcome new additions bring the total rhino population at the sanctuary into double figures - 11 in all. This is a major achievement for the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, as one of their primary objectives is to preserve and propagate Botswana's remaining rhino population. Other objectives include environmental education and community development through the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Khama Rhino Sanctuary encourages and welcomes the public to visit and support the Sanctuary to ensure the future success of this unique community-based rhino and wildlife reserve.

The Sanctuary is also home to prolific birdlife, as well as zebra, many antelope, brown hyaena, aardwolf, leopard, bat-eared fox and jackal. With the relocation of giraffe in early September, the Sanctuary is well on its way to being a "must visit" for any wildlife enthusiast.

Further information on the Sanctuary may be obtained from: Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, P O Box 10, Serowe, BOTSWANA. Tel: 09267 430713

thank you!

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welcome

to our new individual members ...

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and to our new corporate members ...

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