

Poaching Figures for South Africa's Rhinos

In South Africa between 1990 and late 1995, six black rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*) and 27 white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*) were lost to poachers in areas managed by the Natal Parks Board. Of the 66 horns to be accounted for (two per animal), a total of 26 were either recovered, had not been removed from the animals or had been lost by natural causes. Estimating an average weight of 3,5 kg per horn, some 140 kg of rhino horn remain unaccounted for. In a few of the poaching incidents, small pieces of skin had been removed from the dead animals.

A total of 32 rhinos were poached during the same period in Kruger National Park, and 13 in the Transvaal region. This represents a total of 71 white rhinos and seven black rhinos. South Africa has not conducted a programme of dehorning its rhino population.

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Black Rhino Breeding Success for Australia

The Black Rhino Conservation Programme at Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, received huge encouragement on 25 May with the first successful birth of a rhino calf.

Kalungwizi - one of the female black rhinos transferred from Zimbabwe to Western Plains Zoo in February 1993 - gave birth to a male calf after a pregnancy lasting 15 months. The calf was sired by Siabuwe, the breeding-age male imported from Fossil Rim Wildlife Centre, Texas, in December 1994.

The calf's birth represents significant progress in international efforts to reverse the decline of the critically endangered black rhino. The establishment in 1993 of a conservation programme at Western Plains Zoo ensured Australia would play a vital role in this world conservation initiative. The programme is conducted in collaboration with the International Rhinoceros Foundation, the Zimbabwe government and complementary captive breeding programmes in the USA.

The African black rhino population has declined from 65 000 to 2 500 over the past 25 years. The animals are highly sought after for their horn which is sold for medicinal purposes in Asia or used as dagger handles in Middle Eastern countries.

(See Page 6)

NPB Head Receives Major Award

The Chief Executive of the Natal Parks Board, Dr George Hughes, was presented with the prestigious SATOUR Chairman's Award at a function in Durban on 7 May 1996.

The award recognises that under the leadership of Dr Hughes the Natal Parks Board has become one of South Africa's leading eco-tourism components and that although he has engendered a strong team spirit at all levels of the organisation, Dr Hughes insists that the Board's achievements are the result of the combined efforts of his staff.

The Natal Parks Board has a string of major conservation success to its credit. Although it is famous for saving the white rhino, the Board also conducts one of the longest running sea-turtle conservation programmes in the world; its rhino and

game capture units are amongst the best in the world and it operates one of the largest community outreach programmes in Africa.

Dr Hughes also led the team which produced the Board's arguments to counter the dune-mining proposal for the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia.

He rates this particular victory as the realisation of a dream in that for the first time, the state allowed nature conservation and eco-tourism to take their rightful place in the eyes of the world.

During 1995 the Natal Parks Board received 10 national and international awards for its facilities and conservation work and is also acknowledged by IUCN (the World Conservation Union) to be one of the leading nature conservation agencies in the world.

This is a fitting tribute to Dr Hughes, his philosophy of service through excellence and, in keeping with his own insistence, the efforts of his dedicated staff.