

Eyes in the skies

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park has recently acquired a microlight plane in order to fight the current upsurge in poaching. The Bantam Light Aircraft was used for the first time operationally two days after arriving at Hluhluwe in May. On this occasion, it was flown to the airstrip at Masinda, where a member of the Executive had the opportunity to accompany pilot Section Ranger, Lawrence Munro. After the flight, he had only positive things to say about the plane and its potential.

Dirk Swart | Section Ranger – Manzibomvu, Hluhluwe Game Reserve

The Bantam is capable of flying very low, near hills and along the fenceline. On the first day, we observed community members hunting with dogs outside and adjacent to the Reserve. The microlight made it incredibly easy to maintain surveillance and keep an eye on their activities. These few early flights in the south also sounded a warning to potential poachers that they would now have to keep an eye on the sky. On another occasion, I was requested to patrol the southern hotspots during staff meetings and on the 'staff shopping day', which acted as a deterrent to any would-be poacher who wished to use traditional downtime days for poaching.

A particularly significant call-out was in response to gunshots heard at Ophathe Game Reserve, about 30km outside the western boundary of iMfolozi Game Reserve. I flew to Ophathe to help check the area for rhino carcasses, intruders etc. We quickly planned strategic fuel dumps at the Masinda Airstrip in iMfolozi and Ulundi and I rushed to the plane. After collecting more fuel and the Officer-in-charge of Ophathe, I proceeded to fly directly to the Reserve where for an hour and a half we circled and covered every inch of the area. During the surveillance, we observed a few white rhino in a healthy condition but, thankfully, found no carcasses.

During the first week of July, the Bantam was called out for surveillance action as a pride of lions had broken out and killed a bull in the neighbouring community. After reaching the area in question, a small pride of about four lions were detected and reported to field rangers on the ground. It appeared these lions were back in the Reserve, along the iMfolozi River but close to the vicinity of incident. The ground teams of field rangers then observed these lions and concluded that it was highly likely that these were the culprits. Further action by foot and lion call up would be taken to ensure that this was the case.

Once the Officer-in-charge was satisfied that we had covered everything possible from the air, we landed at Ulundi airport, where we met up with the Conservation Manager of iMfolozi and other SAPF members. All were impressed with the little plane and a vote of thanks was given for the effort of reacting and assisting in an uncertain operation that may have cost thousands of rand if a helicopter had been used.

The Bantam had its 50-hour service around mid-July and the opportunity was taken to sort out a few teething problems. The plane had then completed its run-in period and no longer required AvGas and could instead use the standard unleaded MoGas or petrol that standard modern cars use, which is far easier to obtain.

The uses of the plane are becoming more evident as time passes. Rhino poaching in the Park has slowed down and I believe this is, in part, due to the activities of the plane.



Above: Lawrence Munro and Dirk Swart with the new Bantam

Below: The perfect hiding place for iMfolozi's rhinos



SRI

WICKY HUNT



Text RHINO1

You can now donate to Save the Rhino via text! Text **RHINO1** (that's a zero not the letter o) followed by a space, then the amount you'd like to donate (£1, £3, £5 or £10) to 70070. Thanks to the lovely people at JustTextGiving by Vodafone, absolutely all of your donation will go to helping Save the Rhino.

See www.justgiving.com/justtextgiving for more details.

Staff changes

As this issue goes to print, we bid a fond farewell to Adam, this year's Michael Hearn Intern, and Cath, Office and Communications Manager, and welcome Katherine Ellis and Francesca Shapland into these roles respectively.



JOHANIC NICHOLLS

Congratulations!

We're thrilled to announce that earlier this year Raoul du Toit, Director of the Lowveld Rhino Trust (LRT) in Zimbabwe, was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize. LRT will use the \$150,000 prize money to further develop its community programmes.

Project Rhino UK launched at Christie's auction

On **12 June**, Wildlands Conservation Trust (with a little help from SRI), ran an auction at Christie's in London to raise money for Project Rhino – an initiative to fit every rhino in South Africa with a GSM transmitter in their horn. Six lots were on sale, including a rhino-darting experience and a bespoke piece of jewellery from

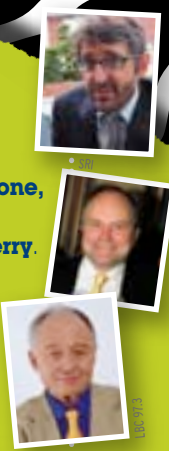
designer **Kirsten Goss** (pictured left), helping to raise over £74,000.



Wednesday 16 November

sees the third in our series of PechaKucha fundraising dinners, and this time it's going to be Wild! Already lined up to speak are **Clive Anderson, Louis Theroux** (filming permitting), **Ken Livingstone, Richard Bonham** and National Geographic presenter **Richard Terry**. Join us for Pecha Kucha Wild! at ZSL London Zoo.

Email jo@savetherhino.org for more details.



Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture 2012

We're working on a hush-hush, top secret, very special Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture in 2012. The 10th in our prestigious lecture series coincides with what would have been Douglas' 60th birthday, so we're throwing a party! Keep a look out on our website for details.

Rhino Trek South Africa

South Africa has the most beautiful reserves, the most stunning wildlife and the keenest trekkers (or at least they will do when you get there!). This is your chance to get away from normal life and experience sleeping under the stars, really earning your campfire meals.

In the heart of the Kingdom of the Zulu, at the foothills of the Lebombo Mountains, your journey will take your trekking group through some of South Africa's most stunning game reserves. As well as rhino, the reserves also host various other big game animals such as elephant, buffalo, giraffe and hippo, not to mention being a birding hotspot.

With five days of trekking through these reserves (an average of 18km per day), you can be assured of a true African experience. You will be able to get up-close-and-personal with some of the most amazing creatures to walk, swim and fly our planet.

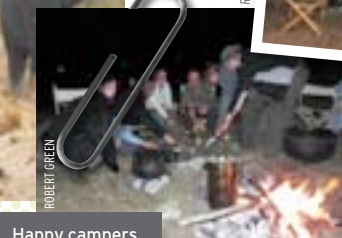
A few words from Rhino Trek South Africa's previous participants:

"Wildlife - Absolutely incredible! Nine rhino spottings on foot. This, with the impala, nyala, kudu, warthogs, duiker, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest and countless birds, was awesome. For the animals we didn't get to see on foot, we were lucky enough to see on the game drives in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park."

In 2012 we have a trekking opportunity available on 6-13 May (and possible dates in July). If you'd like more information, contact jo@savetherhino.org

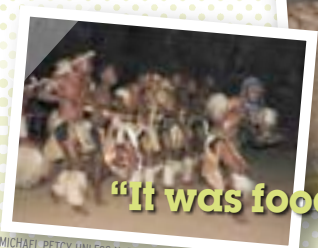


ROBERT GREEN



Happy campers enjoy a wealth of experiences

"It was the most amazing experience"



"It was food for my soul"

MICHAEL PETCY UNLESS NOTED