

# REALLY, RHINOS!



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## AND THE JOURNEY BEGINS...

27, 1995. 2:45 Texas time. I arrived at Fossil Rim after a pleasant, speedy drive from the Dallas-Worth airport. Excellent directions. Warmer than I thought but still cooler than Tucson. Nice drive. Actually crossed over some water (Lake Tawakoni) and saw a real river - Trinity River. (that's the water in the river red). Dashed into the gift shop expecting a mother lode but only got notes, postcards and a ceramic rhino. While waiting for my tour guide to come, I visited the bathroom where I experienced my first toilet that flushes while you stand!

Adam Eyres drove up in a red pick up truck (with "RHINOS" for a license plate). Adam was formerly the head of Defiant Zoo in Tacoma, Washington, working with the red wolf program. He has been at Fossil Rim for seven years.

When we drove off, I was expecting a short, cursory tour (and over here we have...) but it turned into a full-on mystical tour. I got to see and touch all the blacks and whites at Fossil Rim (19, I counted 'em). I got to feed some rhinos and Adam was generous enough to invite me to his house (on the grounds of Fossil Rim) to see his rhino collection and his iguana which is for sale. (Any buyers?) It just kept getting better as I met his roommate who offered to put together my 5,000 piece rhino puzzle that has been in his box since 1982.

Here's the news from rhino land. Forgive me if some of this is not right. It is hard to write when you're bouncing around on unpaved road! :=) Pokey is a three year old Southern white born on November 6th. It's nickname is "Laptop" because her father was Mac and the mother was Tasha. (How hard did it take you to get the joke?) Henrietta was born in 1973. Pokey and Macite are whites too. Pokey is a male and he stays outside much of the time. These rhinos actually belong to Zimbabwe. Fossil Rim is used as a "safety net" if the poaching gets too bad. (Remember the evacuation of children during the London Blitz?)

On to the blacks. Named after a chief of a tribe in the area near where she was captured, Sinampande is a black rhino. There is also Charere and Gota Gota. Did you know that black rhinos (at least at Fossil Rim) like to listen to heavy metal music?

A very important part of the tour was the main gift shop. Here I did serious damage to my credit card. They had the most unusual rhinos I have ever seen in a gift shop. Bravo to the manager! I think her name is Judy. Call her and order some wonderful rhinabilia.

Of course Fossil Rim has other animals. I even saw an ostrich and an armadillo (for the first time). But that's now why I schlepped 1,000 miles and drove for 2 hours in a strange land. I was so encouraged to see the rhinos roaming free (within their pastures), their comfortable barns, kindly vet and expert love and care of Adam and his colleagues. Sure, we want the rhinos to live in their natural habitats, but when the profound becomes profane, we seek alternatives. Fossil Rim is such a place and I am grateful for its existence which needs your help. Fossil Rim started out as a private venture. It is now seeking outside funding. One way you can support it is to sign up for "Ride the Rim" which is a mountain bike tour of the Rim which Adam runs. Fossil Rim also provides overnight safaris with a variety of accommodations. You can have a true adventure at a reasonable cost and help support your favorite animal.

Plan a visit to Fossil Rim during 1996. Route 1, Box 210, Glen Rose, TX 76043. (817) 897-2960 X27. Contact Adam Eyres: (817) 897-3666, and tell him the rhino lady says hello.



**Day two.** I leave Stephenville where I spent the night and blast off to Waco. Wouldn't you know that the exact street I need to turn on has the homecoming parade for Baylor University and I have to find an alternate route. Thank goodness for convenience stores! I got directions and found my way to Cameron Park. A small but lovely zoo. Weather was perfect. Here I saw two whites lounging in the morning sun. The enclosure seemed small (well anything would compared to Fossil Rim!) but they seemed content. The zoo has excellent signs and of course, a great gift shop. While the staff watched "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" on television, I did a clean sweep of their rhino stock. There is a rhino on the zoo's logo and if there is no parade, it is easy to find. After going to Fossil Rim, be sure to visit Cameron Park, 1701 N. 4th Street, Waco, TX 76707. (817) 750-8400.

**Day two, still.** I zip up the interstate to the Fort Worth Zoo. I meet Chris Couch at the information booth who is kind enough to contact the rhino zoo keeper for me. In a few minutes Natalie Mashburn meets me and takes me on a magic carpet ride directly to the many rhinos at the zoo. There are three blacks: Harry (who belched on my shirt), Mtoto (f) who has a frostbitten right ear, and Chula (f) means "pretty" in Spanish although her mom was imported from Zimbabwe. Mtoto's father is Macho, a well-proven breeder. He came from the Bass Ranch. Ben and Sue, the two whites, are from the Little Rock Zoo. They are in their early twenties and have mated but so far no hits.

A real treat was to get up close and personal with the Indian rhino. There are 1.1 (one male/one female) Indians, a gift from the then king of Nepal. Arun is the male and Arati is a six year old female. When they came from Nepal in 1989 they were still on bottles! They are now considered adolescents. And are they huge!! It was a joy to cuddle up with Arati. She had that same herding instinct as my Airedale.

Natalie hails from Cincinnati and has been at the zoo since 1991. She is responsible for the rhinos, wart hogs, bongo, cheetah and giraffe. Although the public may see one side of the rhinos (fat, ugly, lazy, etc.) we know that is inaccurate. Natalie mentioned how cute she thought Harry was. She enjoyed it when the rhinos showed another side to the keepers. We knew that. Natalie was very gra-

acious to spend a chunk of time with me and get behind the scenes especially since it's my birthday! (October 28). Ft. Worth Zoo, 1900 National Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76110 (817) 750-8400. A bit tricky to find, but definitely worth it!

**Day three.** My time is running out. I won't make it to Caldwell Zoo in Tyler. I do make it to the Fort Worth Zoo where Lisa Fitzgerald is waiting for me. She has been at the zoo for six years. She was at the San Antonio Zoo and also at the Arden Zoo in the Bahamas. She is involved with Rhinoceros Relief 2000 and also assists with rhino research. She says, "The rhino is a very special highly intelligent animal in dire need of assistance. I feel pretty good about working with them."

Nyakasikana, "Niki" is a black male named after a base camp in Mana Pools National Park in the Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe and still owned by the park in Zimbabwe. He was between 5-7 years old when he arrived. Zambezi (f) was born on 2/28/90 and Niki and Zambezi will breed. Independence is a black male born on 7/3/94. Mabanzo is the mother of Indy and Zambezi. Indy weighed 100 pounds at birth - very low birth weight. He was a preemie. He eats very well now and should be up to 700-800 pounds. He will be going someplace else; they like to ship rhinos when they are between two years old. Indy is Niki's first offspring. When mentioned the keepers noticed differences in personalities. Niki is gentle but not trusting. He was caught in the wild. Mabanzo is also not trusting. Zambezi and Indy are more calm around people because they grew up without much fear because they were part of their daily routine.

Dallas has a strict policy about letting visitors behind the scenes but I got a treat anyway! I was fortunate to witness the operant conditioning of a rhino. Twice a day a keeper spends time with Indy by sitting on a lid and reinforcing the rhino when it comes close to the keeper. This is done to give the rhino care, conditioning Indy to go into a crate for shipping and allows keepers and vets to get closer at harder to see parts (daily maintenance). I was arranged for another zoo keeper who is doing research to spend some time with me. This is the research technician who works with the rhinos. He explained that the International Rhinoceros Conservation Conference at Fort Worth looked at rhinos

is among captive blacks which translated to non breeding or substandard captive collections. The 2nd generation of whites are not breeding either. Lisa's project involves tracking the hormone profile of the female (Zambezi) to find out when she is estrus. Fecal matter is checked daily and goes to Deaconess Lab in Montana for analysis. The whole point is to increase the chances of successful breeding. If she is more receptive at night, the zoo may have to change the time the pair are put together. Rhinos communicate with infrasound. The exhibit is near a noisy freeway. They may have a range where the rhinos are housed.

Lisa and John left, and knowing I wasn't going to make it to Tyler, I treated myself to just sitting on a bench opposite the rhinos and watched them for an hour! It was blissful. I'm no Paul Gauguin, but here are my observations.

She is sitting under a shade tree. There was a slight breeze and a partly cloudy day made the weather perfect. I couldn't help but anthropomorphize the mating scenario. She wants it but she doesn't. She's playful and yet keeps him at horn's length. He comes closer. They lock horns. He cuddles and rubs against her. She gives him the cold shoulder. He backs patiently "7 steps behind" for her to make the move. He snuggles up from the back. She backs patiently very still. He starts to mount her. Her legs go up then 4 legs dart away. That's close to what she implied! Round 2. They meet. She backs under his neck. An occasional horn prod. She pushes forward. He trots off. Okay, so he backs. Gotta admire his persistence. He approaches yet again. She backs slightly into the wall. They assume the rhino face lock position once again. Bingo. He's off again. He's back. He sprays. (I wish he didn't leave the seat up.) Now she backs and goes over to check out his pad. He quickly backs. Is she admiring his etchings perhaps? Fantasy breeds contempt. At least there's something going on! He stays in his space. She hangs out by hers. Maybe later they'll reconnoiter. For now she checks out the action down yonder where the Macho man is back. Here we go again. As the strings of quality take time to create. In their lifetime it shall come to pass. We hope.

One thing rhinos do not have is a lot of time. Whether in situ or captive, their numbers are dwindle-

ing. What man has cast asunder may not be retrievable. Before it is too late. Before another rhino disappears. Before the species is extinct. Please raise money AND consciousness for this intelligent, playful, pulchritudinous pachyderm. It is not only their future which is at stake but ours as well.

Remember, 60,000,000 years in the making ain't a fluke. Rhinos forever!

Update: I just spoke to Lisa and she said tomorrow (12/2) the zoo was offering a new series for volunteers. Guess which animal they chose? Yup! Volunteers will learn about rhino taxonomy, ecology, behavior, vet care and conservation. Please visit the Dallas Zoo, 621 E. Clarendon Drive, Dallas, TX 75203-2996. (214) 670-5656.

Many thanks to all the zoo keepers who donated their valuable time and were so friendly and patient with the crazy rhino lady.

## *Oh no, not again!*

(This is an excerpt that appeared in a local paper back in September)

Poachers hunting rhinos to sell their horns as an aphrodisiac in Southeast Asia have turned their attention from the African savannah to zoos and safari parks in Europe. An anonymous tip to the Frankfurt zoo warning that its three black rhinos were in danger prompted Interpol to issue a Europe wide alert. At the Berlin zoo, veterinarian Reinhard Goeltinbott, who coordinated a warning to all European zoos after Frankfurt received the tip, said: "It is difficult to know whether the threat was serious, but I can well believe that something like this might happen." The tip coincided with reports reaching Berlin police of plans to sedate rhinos held in captivity and remove their horns. The West Midland Safari Park in Bowdley, England is taking the threat seriously. A 24-hour guard has been posted on its six white rhinos. Police patrols at the safari park have been stepped up, and wardens equipped with two-way radios are taking turns spending the night on an old couch in a barn built for the rhinos. "We'll carry on sleeping here indefinitely, or at least until the police tell us that the threat is diminished," said the chief warden Bob Lawrence. "Nothing is going to stop us having rhinos here. Ten percent of the world's rhino population is in captivity and we have an obligation to breed more, even if we release them into the wild later on."

## ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES. NOT!

According to Esmond Bradley Martin, Yemen is finally starting to substitute agate and other stones in its dagger handles. The quarried agate, found locally, is both beautiful and durable. It helps when the head of the country endorses it. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who received his dagger, was delighted with it as were the Yemeni ministers who also received them. The manufacturer of the agate handles, Ahmed al-Wazir, made 35 daggers with stone handles including some jasper which was readily accepted by Yemen's elite possibly due to the fact that they are not made from artificial stones or materials newly introduced to Yemen. Now al-Wazir wants to manufacture the daggers completely from stone at a retail price of @ \$1700 which is slightly higher than the price of the best new daggers with rhino horn handles. The timing could not be better. At least 70 kg of raw rhino horn was smuggled into Yemen last year which represents the death of a minimum of 24 rhinos. The horns were imported illegally from Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia via Djibouti and Oman, by boat and overland. Close to 175 daggers were made from the 70 kg of horn. With Africa's black rhino population of 2500 now stable for the first time in decades and the 6800 white rhinos slightly increasing in number, any upsurge in the demand for rhino horn in Yemen would turn the tide again. The most effective way to quell the demand for illegal rhino horn would be to encourage the richer Yemenis to buy stone-handled daggers instead of those made with rhino horn.

Remember this photograph?



The Associated Press

## For Bonnie and Shorty, it was rhino love

Justice of the Peace Mike Nelson performs a wedding ceremony for Bonnie, center, and Shorty, a pair of 17-year-old southern white

rhinoceroses living in Bayou Wildlife Park in Dickinson, Texas. Dozens of spectators attended the fete southeast of Houston.

Bonnie is pregnant, due in February, the Bayou Wildlife Park thought it would be a good idea for her and Shorty to get married. Judge Nelson, JP Court Pct. 4 Galveston County performed the ceremony as close to being the same as a people's ceremony as possible. The main barn and corral were decorated and there was an organist present. The ceremony was held at 10:30 sharp on Saturday, October 7, 1995. Reception followed immediately after the ceremony in the main barn with free cake, sandwiches and punch. It was a double ring wedding in which Bonnie wore a veil and Shorty wore a hat. Pee-wee and Poncho, the other 2 male rhinos at the park were the best men but attended from a distance as they did not approve of this wedding. Bonnie and Shorty each are 17 years old and weigh between 6,000 and 7,000 pounds. they are registered in the Stud Book in Berlin which shows there are 683 rhinos in captivity in the world. Below is JP's speech.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here at Bayou Wildlife Park in the face of this community to join together this male white rhino and this female white rhino in holy matrimony. If any one can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak or let it be here after forever hold his peace.

Shorty, wilt thou have this cow to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in grass and hay and in health, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her as long as ye both shall live? (The piano player said, I will".)

Bonnie, wilt thou have this bull to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in grass and feed and in health and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live? (The piano player said, I will".)

Who giveth this cow to be married to this bull? The Wolston said "I do".

Shorty: I, Shorty take thee Bonnie to be my wedded wife to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to love and to cherish, till death us do part according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth. (Piano player repeats this while Shorty munches a snack).

Bonnie: I, Bonnie take thee Shorty to be my wedded wife to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to love and to cherish, till death us do part according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth. (A woman repeats this while Bonnie munches a snack).

Shorty: With this ring I thee wed; in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Piano player answered)

Bonnie: With this ring I thee wed; in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (woman answered)

JP: For as much as Bonnie and Shorty have consented together in holy wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other and have declared the same by giving and receiving a ring, and by standing next to each other, I pronounce that they are husband and wife. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Many thanks to Clint for sending me one of the wedding bands. Does that mean I get to "pledge my trough" too?

Bayou Wildlife Park, Rt. 6, Box 808, Alvin, TX 77511. (713) 337-6376.



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Cameron Park Zoo  
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**February 29, 1996 is  
Save The Rhino Day.**



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**Remember.**

**Rhinos and poachers don't mix in '96**

*Judyth*

A one year subscription to *Really, Rhinos!* is \$15 (\$20 foreign) for four issues. 100% of each subscription is donated to rhino conservation projects. Send feedback or rhino citations to: Judyth Le... Editor, *Really, Rhinos!*, PO Box 40503, Tucson, AZ 85717-0503. Phone (520) 327-9048. e-MAIL: rinophyl@rtd.com.

If you find errors, please know they are printed for those who always look for them. We try to print something...

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**Peace to all the rhinos and to those that love and protect them.**