





T H E

RHINO WARS

ZIMBABWE IS SHOOTING
POACHERS WHO MENACE
THE RARE BLACK RHINO

BY MARYANNE VOLLERS

LAST DECEMBER WAS AN EVENTFUL MONTH IN ZIMBABWE'S ZAMBEZI VALLEY. First, there was a shoot-out between park rangers and poachers. This was followed by a lion attack on a group of canoeists from the Dutch Reformed Church. Then a nearly naked Zambian fisherman who knew nothing about fish was chomped by a crocodile and landed in the hospital and ultimately jail. Along the way there were the usual floods and washouts that come with the onset of the rainy season. There were also three separate incidents for armed gangs of poachers bent on plundering the Zambezi Valley's rarest treasure—the last great wild herd of black rhinos on earth.

THE VALLEY is quiet in the last brittle days of the long dry season. But on the first Sunday in December, brass-black clouds whip over the Zambian escarpment, bringing the first wallowing down-



TATHAM DISPLAYS A .375 RIFLE TAKEN OFF A ZAMBIAN POACHER

pours of the rainy season. The sun-baked pans and streambeds fill with water and slip their banks, washing over most of the bridges and roads that have been built in a feeble attempt to knit together the various wild regions of the more than 3,800 square miles of this valley.

When the rains come, life is renewed: Pink-white storm lilies burst into bloom on the barren sand flats, which are suddenly crawling with bright red Christmas spiders and newly revived insects. Lions climb trees to stay dry. Thousands of other game animals—kudu, zebras, elephants and rhinos—wander away from the floodplain toward the inland tangle of scrub, known as jomo bush, which suddenly explodes into leaf.

And throughout the soaking valley small bands of rangers and scouts from the overextended, underequipped Zimbabwe Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management brace themselves for the onslaught of poachers who will follow the rain. Hordes of them will cross the river from the neighboring country of Zambia in darkness, secure in the knowledge that they can now trail the rhino deep into the forests of Zimbabwe and that their tracks will be washed away in the flood.

On Tuesday, Dec. 9, a five-man anti-poaching team patrolling the hilly woodlands near Karibu Gorge spots four men walking down a distant ridge. One has an AK-47 assault rifle slung over his shoulder. Without warning, the patrol opens fire, taking the shepherd grass with

bullets. The poachers dive for cover. The man with the AK sprays a few bursts out of the grass in the direction of the rangers. Everyone seems ready to dig in for a fight. The shoot-out ends when the clouds open and drop a solid wall of water between the ridges.

Later, the government patrol finds the body of a slender young man wear-



ing a Zambian army-issue webbing belt. He had been shot through the back as he tried to crawl to safety. He is the 19th man to die in the Zambezi Valley for the crime of hunting rhino.

"We've made the first contact of the season," Glenn Tatham declares later that day as he strides into his office at provincial parks headquarters in Chinboyi, a tiny farm town in Zimbabwe's northern highlands. "The game is on!"

Tatham is the 40-year-old newly appointed chief warden of Zimbabwe's national parks and the driving force behind the highly controversial anti-poaching Operation Stronghold. This is the code name for Zimbabwe's shoot-first, sort-'em-out-later war against rhino poachers.

Tatham is a tall man with an abrupt, military manner that has earned him the nickname General Patton. As he talks, his expression changes like the African weather—stone-serious one moment, then brightening suddenly as a smile appears out of nowhere.

Tatham has since moved to the capital from Chinboyi, where his office was sparsely furnished, the only decorative touches being a ghostly elephant-foot trunk basket by his desk and a child's crayon drawing of a rhino pinned to the wall. If the office had an unusual feel to it, it's because Tatham was rarely there, spending most of his time in the field.

Saving rhinos is a time-consuming business that eats up Tatham's every waking moment. Along with coordinating Operation Stronghold, Tatham has become the main spokesman for the campaign. He doesn't waste words in that role: "Desperate situations require desperate measures," he says. "We knew we had to take these guys on and fight fire with fire. Our objective is to save animals, it's not to kill people. But we cannot afford the possible loss of life among our men by letting them walk into gangs of armed criminals without having the option of shooting first."

THE PATROLS SEARCH FOR THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY THE RHINO





He is tough and direct, and he sounds dead certain of his argument. "It's a controversial issue, killing a man to save an animal," he says. "But what happens in New York City when a man tries to rob a bank? Do you just let him go? Here we're fighting organized crime dealing in a commodity that is a very special natural resource."

FIFTEEN YEARS ago there were some 65,000 black rhinos scattered through the rough bush country of east, central and southern Africa. Since then, despite the millions of dollars that conservation groups have poured into their protection, more than 90% of the rhinos have been killed by poachers.

In some countries, such as Uganda, Chad and the Sudan, the rhino is virtually extinct. Only 400 out of some 20,000 rhinos have escaped the slaughter in

HORNS OF SLAUGHTERED RHINOS ARE CATALOGED IN A WAREHOUSE.

Kenya. Most of these survivors are destined to live out their lives behind electric fences—glorified zoo animals with round-the-clock guards to protect them.

Nearly half of Africa's remaining black rhinos, including the precious herd of 600 in the Zambezi Valley, live in the wilderness reserves of Zimbabwe, a Montana-sized nation in southern Africa once known to the world as Rhodesia. Zimbabwe is one of the relatively prosperous African countries. It managed to survive the bloody civil war that resulted in black independence in 1980. Its roads and factories remained intact, and its farmlands are still abundantly productive.

But north, across the Zambezi River, lies the sprawling, destitute nation of Zambia. There, the fall in the price of copper and disastrous economic conditions have brought the country close to bankruptcy. The currency is almost worthless. During the past 10 years, Tatham and his colleagues in Zimbabwe have watched with growing alarm as, one by one, the wildlife sanctuaries of



EDWARDS EXAMINED SOME NEW FOOTPRINTS DURING A MANHUNT.

Zambia were decimated in a frenzy of poaching. Almost the entire population of roughly 4,000 black rhinos and perhaps 50,000 elephants had been slaughtered just across the border: from the Zambezi wilderness areas.

By 1984, with their own herds dead or depleted, Zambian poachers had set their sights on the territory to the south, and more than 200 rhinos have been



killed in the Zambezi Valley since then. Poachers crossed the river in gangs of up to 16. Many were armed with Kalashnikovs, or AK-47s, and powerful .375 hunting rifles, which can drop an elephant with one shot.

In Zimbabwe, parks rangers, like other law officers, have always had the legal right to use firearms to make an arrest. But parks officials hesitated to use their authority without political backing. "We wanted assurance from the highest level of government that we could use extreme force, not just to effect an arrest but to literally take these guys on," says Tatham.

In 1983, prime minister Robert Mugabe's office quietly granted its approval, and Zimbabwean government patrols were given authority to shoot poachers on sight. Reinforcements were sent in from the national police department. (The official count is now 21 poachers dead and 20 captured.)

Later that year, prime minister Mugabe made a powerful statement defending Operation Stronghold. "Let me warn these elements [poachers]," he said, "that my government... will take even sterner measures than in the past to bring them to book. The forces of law and order, including our Department of Parks and Wild Life Management, have definite instructions to apprehend these elements or, if the situation warrants it, to account for them in other ways.... Let those who may be inclined to think of Zimbabwe as their El Dorado for rhino horn... take note that they run a very high risk indeed."

When it became clear that the Zimbabwean rangers were openly killing Zimbabwe men to save the lives of rhinos, there was a furious reaction across the border. Angry speeches were made in Zambia's parliament. Politicians condemned the "murder" of Zambian nationals and called for diplomatic retaliation. Things quieted down quickly, however, when Zambia's president, Kenneth Kaunda, flatly refused to condemn Operation Stronghold. The poachers' only motive is money—big money. Rhino horn is black gold in this impoverished continent. Not actually

horn, but keratin, a protein found in hair, it is worth about \$300 per pound wholesale to the syndicate that smuggles it to the Middle East and Eastern Asia. The biggest market for African rhino horn is the tiny Arab state of North Yemen, where it is the proudest mark of manhood to possess a decorative dagger with a carved rhino-horn handle. Since the oil boom there of the 1970s, even an ordinary Yemeni is able to afford a cov-

eted ajwamba, though it costs from \$500 to \$12,000.

the World Wildlife Fund, studying the market and lobbying for laws that would shut down the rhino-horn business. North Yemen banned the import of horn, though not its export, in 1982. By 1986 all trade in rhino horn was banned in the most important Far Eastern markets. But the problem is getting countries to enforce their laws.

According to Martin, most of Zimbabwe's horn is smuggled out of Zambia to



TATHAM USED THIS RHINO SKULL AS EVIDENCE AGAINST A POACHER

into traditional medicines that supposedly cure headaches and heart trouble and cleanse the pancreas and liver; in pharmacies there, African rhino horn retails for \$4,500 per pound. (Horn from the rarer Asian species sells for \$9,500 per pound.) Despite persistent myths that rhino horn is an aphrodisiac, this application accounts for only 1% of the total world market.

Essened Bradley Martin is a Kenya-based American conservationist who has become the leading expert on the rhino trade. Since 1978, he has traveled through Asia and the Middle East for

the tiny central African nation of Burundi and then flows to the Middle East. "One trader in North Yemen deals in 70 percent of the rhino horn there," he says. "There are just a handful of traders handling rhino horn in Zambia. The trader has the expertise. The poacher wouldn't know what to do with the horn. You're not going to knock out rhino poaching with more anti-poaching units. You have to go after the middleman."

Tatham knows this, too. "Operation Stronghold is only one dimension of the



war out here," he says. "We need to battle the syndicate, the African mafia. The man who trades in horn as a commodity should be dealt with even more ruthlessly than the man we are shooting in the field."

Yet, even as high-level meetings go on between Zimbabwean and Zambian authorities, the poachers keep coming. Each day a gang is in the country, another rhino dies. All Tatham and his men can do is try to make poachers think twice before they cross the border.

"The next few months will be crucial," says Tatham. "And we're going to make it as gruesome and frightening for them as possible."

As soon as the weather lifts, Tatham climbs into his red-and-white Maule single-engine airplane and takes off for the war zone. When he spots some suspicious fishing boats on an island on the Zambezi River, he swoops down like a kingfisher for a closer look. Poaching gangs often hire Zambian fishermen to ferry them across to Zimbabwe. Today there are no signs of poachers, just a few guilty-looking natives who dive into the water as the plane passes over.

Tatham heads the plane toward a dirt airstrip at Mena Pools National Park. Because of its central location along the 120-mile stretch of river that runs from Lake Kariba to the Mozambique border, Mena Pools serves as field headquarters for Operation Stronghold. Tatham is meeting today with Andy Cousins, 34, the lanky, bearded warden at Mena Pools, and Steve Edwards, 32, the warden of distant Matosadona National Park, here on temporary "call-up" to help coordinate Stronghold activity.

With the sun now burning holes in the clouds, the three men settle into chairs under a huge mahogany tree in front of Cousins's house overlooking the river. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the needs and strategies of the anti-poaching operation. But before there is talk, there must be tea.

"Oh, job, job!" Edwards yelps. "Pongojuice!"

This requires translation. Warden Edwards is saying, "Oh good! Tea!" in

the local slang, a dialect so twisted and colorful it makes one yearn for subtitles. In Zimbabwe, crocodiles are known as flaidogs, lions are shambas, a confrontation with poachers is a scene, women are honest, blakes who bake (kill) poachers are double-cugged and tea is pongo juice.

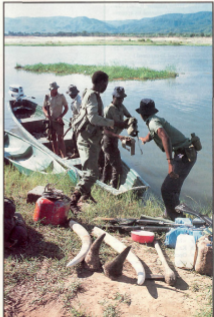
So the pongo juice is poured and the meeting opens with a lively rundown of Tuesday night's lion attack. A group of rain-drenched canoeists who were on a Dutch Reformed Church outing had taken shelter in some empty tourist cabins at Rukoneschi, 15 miles upstream. In the middle of the night, a lioness crushed

through the wire-mesh window of one of the cabins, pounced on a sleeping canoeist and pinned him to the floor.

"He tried to gouge her eye out with his finger, but that just made her mad," says Cousins. "So he called to his mates, who were scrambling around the room wondering what to do. He asked them to pass him his hunting knife. Can you believe it?"



BOOTY WAS DISCOVERED AFTER A POACHER'S CRAFT HAD CAPSIZED



The carolers stabbed the lioness in the back, but this only made her angrier. She bit him in the face. Somehow he worked the knife up under her and stabbed her in the heart. "He gave it a good twist," Cousins says. "She died right on top of him."

The injured lion-killer was flown to a hospital in the capital, where he was recovering nicely.

Now the meeting gets to the serious business at hand. "We've got to move, move, move if we want to win this war!" Tatham says.

"We're —," says Cousins darkly. "The roads are a washout. If we get a scene today we'll have to wade out of here."

Tatham sits ramrod straight, the stringy muscles around his jawbone jumping furiously as he weighs his options. How can you attack poachers when you can't even get out of base camp?

Nevertheless, Operation Stronghold is in far better shape than it was two months ago. Then there were only five park vehicles in the whole valley, one portable radio set and not a single back-pack among the 100 or so rangers and scouts available for antipoacher patrol.

Since those lean times, Operation Stronghold has been shored up by donations from abroad. Among them is a \$350,000 grant from an American agency, U.S.A.I.D., to buy boat engines and Land-Rovers and to build houses for the scouts. Also, a U.S.-based conservation group called SAVE (Wildlife) has collected another \$250,000 in cash and equipment for the cause. Still, Operation Stronghold needs more of just about everything. What Tatham wants most of all is a full-time helicopter to ferry reinforcements into the bush. Until he gets one, all he can do is watch the sky and wait.

From a distance, muffled by dew-dampened foliage of jesse bush, the burst of fire from an AK-47 assault rifle



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sounds oddly harmless, like corn popping over a flame. It is 6:45 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 14, and the leader of Papa One-Two, radio slang for Patrol 12, a five-man anti-poaching team patrolling Maza Pools, immediately radios base camp to report the gaffee and to tell other patrols exactly where near the Mbera River they are located.

Papa One-Two races in the direction of the gaffee and finds three sets of human footprints on the forest floor. Suddenly to the south a single shot rings out. This one is much closer than the automatic-weapons fire and the patrol members rush toward the sound. They spot a

power struggle between the white-minority government and the disenfranchised blacks that lasted from the late 1960s until 1979. The Zambezi Valley was a major battleground then, with black guerrillas slipping across the river from their sanctuary in Zambia, mining the roads and ambushing the parks rangers and army troops defending the border. The white Rhodesians tracked the guerrillas down in the same way the poachers are now being hunted.

It's a strange twist of fate that men who would have shot each other on sight less than 10 years ago should now find themselves battling side by side to save

are usually made up of one hunter and three or four porters, sent out on four- or five-day sorties for a fixed rate of pay. A hunter earns about 4,000 Zambian kwacha, which is about \$445—a fortune in Zambia—with a bonus for every rhino he kills. Porters might make 400 kwacha for the trip, an enormous sum for men who are rarely employed at all.

AS THE SUN drops behind a red wash of cirrus clouds in the western sky, Edwards and Cousins drive their Land-Rover to a darkening airstrip. No sign of the poachers has been found during the day, and Tatham, who had been off calling elephants, returns and wants to fly around the area to see if he can pick up the glow of their campfire. The little Maule slices off to the east, with a huge orange full moon breaking. An elephant snorts beyond the clearing, and a flock of crested guinea fowl clamors in alarm as Tatham flies over. He circles the moonlit folds of the valley, spotting a flicker of light then losing it under the shroud of branches. At last he banks slowly homeward.

Driving back to base camp, Cousins says to Edwards, "I reckon that hunter deceived our guys and got them chasing in the wrong direction. Then he probably dogged back to his porters to carry on hunting."

Edwards chuckled. "If he did, hopefully he'll run right into Ian. Then he'll get a third eye for sure."



THIS RHINO CARCASS, SANS HORNS, IS A POACHER'S GRIM HANDIWORK.

black male in cutoff khaki pants carrying a folding-stock AK-47. All five of them—four policemen and a parks scout—open fire at 300 yards. They miss the poacher. He scrambles into the undergrowth and vanishes. By midday three additional parks patrols are scouring the bush for the poachers' spoor, while four other groups take up positions at likely crossings along the Zambezi.

All of this military maneuvering holds an eerie resonance of *déjà vu* for the National Parks personnel who fought in the Rhodesian war—a bloody

rhino. Indeed, some former black guerrillas have been specially recruited for the operation, which is largely directed by white parks officers. One senior ranger was astonished to learn around a campfire one night that one of his scouts had, during the Rhodesian war, attacked a barracks where the ranger had been stationed—while he was in it.

Later, wardens Cousins and Edwards meet back at headquarters to mull over their next move. They figure the poaching gang entered the park a day earlier, after the rains tailed off. Intelligence gleaned from captured poachers and sympathetic sources in Zambia has informed them that the gangs have gotten smaller and more sophisticated. They

ton center is a 26-year-old senior ranger with a scruffy beard and short brown hair he covers with a floppy green bush hat that matches his faded fatigues. A wad of cotton protrudes from his left ear, which he whacks with his fist as he talks. Just now, when he should be tuned in to the sounds of the bush, he can't hear properly because some revolting mite burrowed into his ear and the bite has gone septic. He should probably be seeing a doctor instead of humping an assault rifle down elephant trails looking to shoot somebody.

But when there's a scene on, every available ranger has to go. And Gibson admits that he loves it out here in the



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sweating ballards, propelled by the adrenaline rush of the marzban.

Gibson and his scouts are finishing their dinner of dried fish, tinned meat and *madra*, a thick maize porridge, when they hear the hum of Tatham's plane passing overhead. After it is gone, Gibson rolls out his sleeping bag in a small clearing. He lies awake as long as he can, listening for the sound of gunfire, then he drops into deep sleep.

Suddenly, he bolts awake. There is a crash in the bushes. His scouts leap out of their sleeping bags, rifles ready at their shoulders. They find themselves facing an astounded bull elephant who trumpets a halfhearted warning and then charges off into the silent forest. Everyone goes back to bed.

By the next day it has dawned on the wardens that Page One-Two had been lost when it heard the gunfire. Confined by the thick bush that blocks the telling angle of the sun, the patrol leader had radioed the wrong coordinates of his position when his men fired at the poacher. Now the other patrols are going to have to be picked up and pointed in the right direction.

Cousins wrestles a Land-Rover over a brutal sand river crossing. Frustration is beginning to bite into his sunny disposition. "Operation Stronghold is starting to feel like Operation Weak Grasp," he says.

Suddenly, just ahead, a massive black rhino blazes out of the bushes. Cousins slams on the brakes. The behemoth hurtles across the road and disappears into the forest. The warden is smiling now. This, after all, is what the game is all about.

NO MATTER how many rhinos you see, each one is a marvel—startling in its weirdness. The shape is an outrage to the laws of symmetry: the low-slung loaf of a head with its impossible, jutting horns, the massive neck, shoulders and gut, all perched on stumpy legs and daintily tapered hoofs. The rhino is born old, carrying 60 million years of genetic memory in its simple brain. It is a creature of routine, wandering in circles through its home range, drifting with

unkindly grace from shrub to shrub, lifting huge hooked lips to pluck a tiny leaf and savor it. As it chews, it moves like a sleepwalker from another age. Its tiny, ancient eyes give away nothing.

But it can be a dangerous animal. The rhino has weak eyesight and an unerring ask-questions-later policy of charging any intruders who happen to enter its turf. Still, for all its ferocious ways, the rhino is an easy animal to kill. A gut-shot elephant can run a mile before it collapses and a wounded buffalo will hide in ambush to stomp its tormentor.



THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE RHINOS DRAWS SUPPORTERS OF ALL AGES

But a single shot in the lungs can drop a rhino in its tracks. It will die without a fight. Then it's only a 10-minute job for the poacher to hack off the knobby attached horns and set off to kill his next rhino.

If a poacher has trouble finding a rhino, he needs only to arrange for the rhino to find him. It is simple: The sound of a cow calling her calf is a whining-puppy noise easily imitated by humans. It will attract any rhino in earshot. Sometimes inquisitive rhinos will hound a campsite, attracted by the fire and strange cooking smells.

"During the day, rhinos are stupid," says Gibson. "But at night they're pathetic. They won't leave you alone, even if you throw sticks to try to drive them off."

This sort of behavior sties a paternal instinct in some people, an urge to protect the helpless. One man thus written by the innocence of these ugly beasts is

Lovemore Mangwasha, 28, by all accounts one of the best and toughest rangers in the valley.

"Rhinos are lovely creatures, like little children," says Mangwasha. "When a rhino charges, it is like a child throwing down a cup in anger."

Last October, Mangwasha and his sergeant shot and killed two members of the notorious Mamberera Gang, a nine-man killing team that once slaughtered 22 rhinos in a month.

In the field, with a full beard and dusty fringes, laden with arms and ammo, Mangwasha looks from a distance like a vision from *Apocalypse Now*. But closer inspection of his eyes reveals the deep, steady gaze of an unshaken animal lover—a man who will often sit motionless for hours watching dappled bush-backs graze.

On Tuesday morning, after two lackluster days of poacher hunting along the Chiruse River, Mangwasha and his patrol are called back to Mambo Pools base camp by Cousins and Edwards, to wait for the next development. Revived by a meal and a good cup of ponga juice, Mangwasha ponders the ethics of shooting poachers on sight. "I feel bad about killing people," he says. "But it's got to the point now where it's necessary. It's the only language the poachers understand."

Before the shoot-to-kill policy went into effect, catching poachers was like trying to put gnu-like warthogs in leg irons. "It was so frustrating," Mangwasha recalls. "Once, back in 1984, we approached a group of poachers while they were eating lunch. We shouted at them, 'You're under arrest!' but they just ran off with everything they had. My men were asking why we bothered to send them out on patrols if all we could do about poachers was shoot."

Mangwasha says Operation Stronghold has popular support in Zimbabwe. "A lot of people are aware we have to save these rhinos at all costs," he says. "It's been explained to them that having a viable rhino population means tourists



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will be coming with foreign currency to see them. They know this country needs foreign exchange."

IN THE END, even if the poachers are annihilated and the smuggling network is shut down, the survival of the rhino will have to depend on the cooperation and support of the people who live here. With populations in Africa mushrooming, there is the inevitable fierce pres-

surement and private landowners. Ranchers are encouraged to allow limited, high-priced hunting on their land. They are also encouraged to raise antelope instead of livestock for meat as a way to insure the survival of game animals outside protected areas.

Zimbabwe has often stood alone in Africa. As the white man's Rhodesia it was isolated from most of the world, much as South Africa is now. As a new,

broad-minded, 69 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, a chunk of anesthetized, two small elephant tusks and the horns of one rhino.

The poachers, it seems, had tried to escape across the river sometime in the night. Something had gone very wrong.

Later that same day a local sport fisherman discovers a bleeding, nearly naked Zimbabwean man on the bank upstream. The fisherman drives the Zimbabwean to a police station. The man tells the police that a crocodile had clamped its jaws onto his leg after his boat capsized. He said he had fought it off with his knife and swam to shore.

"That's gotta be one mad flailing in the river with a knife stuck in him," says Gibson as he and Cousins race to the hospital to question the man further.

"Two animal stabbings in one month," says Cousins. "This is getting bloody ridiculous."

A police guard is stationed outside the ward when Cousins and Gibson arrive at the bedside of the skinny, sullen-eyed young man with bloody bandages on his left leg and right hand. He does not seem particularly pleased to be alive.

He insists he is a fisherman. But when questioned about his profession, he is unable to tell them the price of fish and he doesn't know the cost of a fishing net. It is his habit, he says, to poach fish in Zimbabwean waters in broad daylight wearing only his underwear.

He is placed under arrest. Later, after his wounds have healed, park officials say he admits he was one of the rhino poachers. He is tried in Zimbabwe where he is sentenced to spend six years and two months in prison.

FAIR WEATHER holds through most of December, and the valley is quiet. Then, just after Christmas, heavy black clouds rumble in from the north. On Monday, Dec. 28, rangers patrolling the Chewore Safari Area, some 40 miles east of Mana Pools National Park, radio base camp to report that they have found the blood-spattered tracks of a black rhinoceros. They say there are human footprints along the animal's trail. Once more the game is on.



THE ANTIPOACHING CAMPAIGN WAS TOO LATE FOR SOME VICTIMS

sure to settle the regions that had always been the domain of wild animals. Zimbabwe has a wildlife management policy unique in black Africa: Make the animals sure their survival by putting money in the pockets of those who would otherwise kill them or drive them away.

For now, the black rhino is too rare to earn its keep as anything other than a tourist attraction. But other, more profitable species such as elephants, lions, buffalo and antelope are being "fattened" as game hunters' prey by both the govern-

ment and private landowners. Ranchers are encouraged to allow limited, high-priced hunting on their land. They are also encouraged to raise antelope instead of livestock for meat as a way to insure the survival of game animals outside protected areas.

On Wednesday morning, a group of policemen camped near the mouth of the Rukomeschi River notices two strange packages drifting down the main channel of the Zambezi. Their boat engine isn't working, but they manage to retrieve one of the parcels, which is wrapped in a waterproof blue tarp. In it they find shirts, trousers, shoes, a hunting knife, a box of Zambian Mellin-