

TOUCAN TALK

A TRIP TO THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU!



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TO SEE THE FUTURE

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by Steve Walker

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BLACK RHINOS AT METROZOO

By Martha Thaden

Quarantine Supervisor

Almost everyone knows that the black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis*, is an endangered species, but I wonder if everyone knows what "endangered" really means. It means that the black rhino is on the very brink of extinction. And the reasons are simple. They are being killed for the assumed medicinal powers of their horns and they also are losing their habitat in the wild.

In the 1970s, there were an estimated 65,000 black rhinos living in the wild. By 1984, only 8,000 were left. As of 1990, fewer than 3,500. In Kenya alone, there were fewer than 400, a loss of 98 percent in less than 17 years. In a few years, chances are there will be no black rhinos left living in the wild.

The numbers are staggering. However, there still is hope for the rhino. There are many dedicated persons and organizations fighting the impending extinction of this wonderful creature. At Metrozoo, we have made tremendous efforts to breed rhinos. We hope that, someday, when governments are stable and poaching has been eliminated, the rhino, through captive breeding programs, may once again be able to safely roam the wild ranges that have been home for thousands, and perhaps millions of years.

Our successes began at Crandon Park Zoo with the purchase of a 1-1/2-year old female named "Cora." Her mother presumably was killed by poachers when she was an infant, and she ended up being hand-raised in a lodge in Kenya. She was moved to the Mombasa, Kenya quarantine station when her natural rhino personality began taking its toll on the contents of the home lodge.

Cora came to Crandon Park in 1973. The following year, a 2-year old male from Kenya named "Studley" was purchased, and in 1978 they produced a calf named

"Amani." Unfortunately Studley died of a blood disorder shortly after he and Cora were moved to the brand new Metrozoo.

In early 1983, 12-year old "Lulu" came to us from Franklin Park Zoo, and later that same year we bought a 7-year old, captive born male called "Toshi" from Asa Zoological Park in Hiroshima, Japan.

In the ensuing years, between the two of them, Cora and Lulu produced five calves by Toshi. Another is expected during spring. In 1985, we received an aging male named "Watu" who never had reproduced. Fortunately, he and Cora had a male calf, "Tatu," in 1988, only months before Watu died of old age.

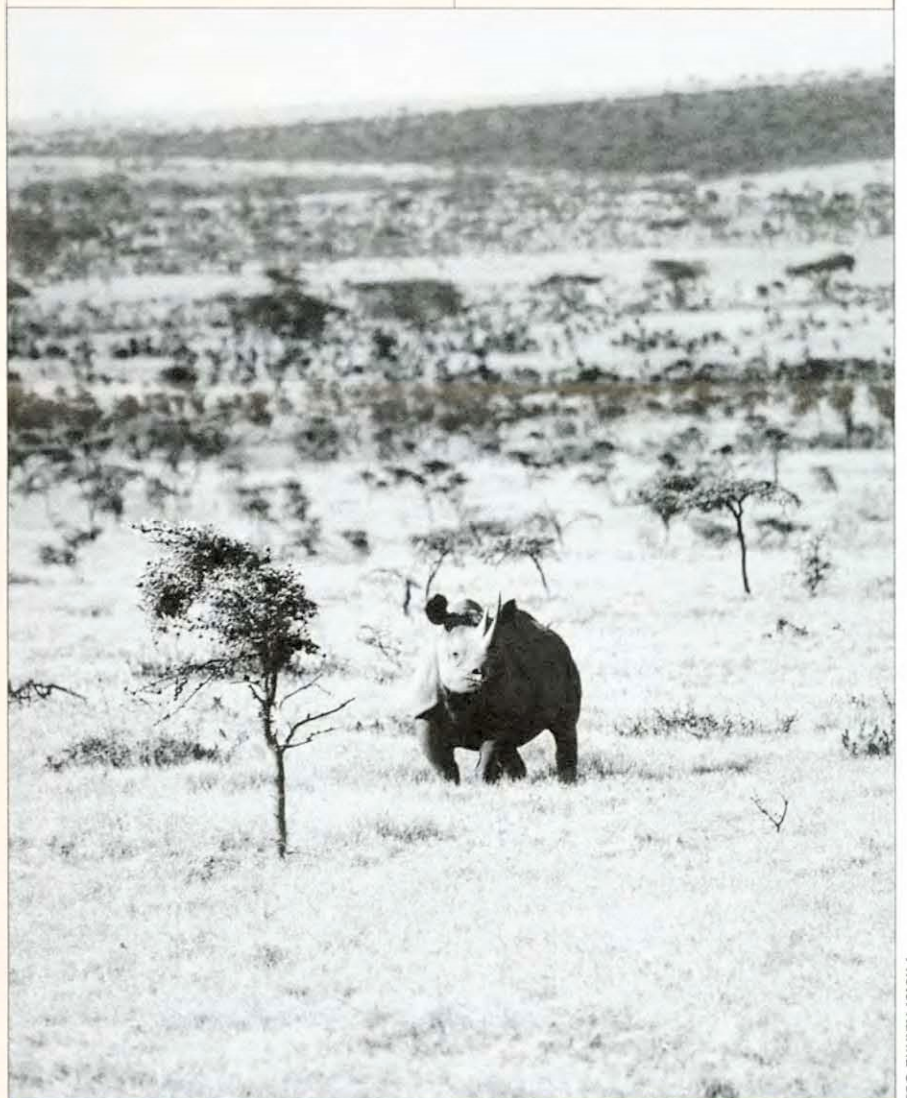
With the exception of Tatu, all other offspring have been sent to other zoos and breeding facilities in the United States and as far away as

Japan. So far, three of our rhinos have become grandparents.

Tatu (which means number three in Swahili, and was named as such for being Cora's third offspring) can be seen at the black rhino exhibit with a female companion from Los Angeles named "Moonstone." They also are expecting a calf this spring. Cora, Lulu and Toshi can be viewed in the Quarantine Area by taking the Zoo's Tram Tour.

Black rhinos have a 16-month gestation period and the calves are not weaned until they are 1-1/2 to 2 years old. Therefore, breeding and reproducing the rhino can be time consuming, but the long wait is always worth it. When you see the first baby rhino, you'll know what I mean.

In the meantime, we will continue our dedicated efforts to breed these magnificent animals and do our part to try to save the rhino from extinction.



Wild rhinos are protected from poachers at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya.