

Kenya:

Poachers at large

Things don't get any easier in Tsavo East, despite the excellent work being done by Richard Kech and his team. Just when we thought we'd got poaching under control again, with the last recorded incident in August 2003, there was some bad news. Two rhinos were killed in May 2004, near to the Manyani field training centre. A search was mounted, but no one caught.

Cathy Dean, Director

It was a different story in August. As the East African Standard reported on 4 Aug:

"Two suspected poachers were shot dead yesterday morning by Kenya Wildlife Service personnel at the Tsavo East National Park. However, their accomplice escaped with multiple injuries. The armed suspects were gunned down at Thambanguchi area on the border of Taita Taveta and Kitui districts. Local District Commissioner Chege Mwangi confirmed the incident and said the KWS rangers recovered spent cartridges, bows and arrows, knives and cooking utensils. Mwangi said air and ground operations have been launched to track down the armed runaway suspect. The incident comes barely a month [actually two] after the carcass of two rhinos and an elephant were found in the area with missing horns. He said bodies of the poachers, who are of Somali origin, were taken to the Voi district hospital mortuary."

It's never good news when someone is killed, but we hope that the deaths act as a deterrent to future would-be poachers.

Save the Rhino and Chester Zoo are currently paying the salary of Richard Kech, head of the KWS rhino ranger team in Tsavo East, as well as fuel and maintenance costs for one of the patrol vehicles. Chester Zoo has just given a grant of £16,900 to buy a new Toyota Landcruiser pick-up for Tsavo East, and money raised from the October 2004 Rhino Climb Kilimanjaro challenge will provide further income for fuel etc.

