

# Black rhinos: Chester Zoo

The North of England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo, has housed three species of rhinoceros in its history, but has recently focused its efforts on the critically endangered black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis michaeli*).

Black rhinos are an important part of our collection and Chester Zoo is an active member of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP).

Black rhinos are a challenge to manage in captivity. The reasons for their sub-optimal reproduction and high mortality are being researched extensively, and the findings of these studies have enabled us to provide better environments for captive black rhinos. Under appropriate conditions, captive populations can show reproductive rates equivalent to those shown by wild rhinos, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Chester Zoo has a good record of breeding black rhinos, with our first birth in 1967. We decided to expand our group and produce a facility that would address all of the animals' needs, as well as offering an exciting visitor experience and increasing public awareness of the huge problems facing rhinos in the wild. Before starting work, we had to relocate and build new homes for the displaced American bison, reindeer, tapirs, capybara, prairie marmots and meerkats.

"Tsavo - the black rhino experience" is themed on Tsavo National Park, where Chester Zoo has long been involved. The main building is a circular African mud hut containing two large pens for public viewing and an off-show pen for veterinary use. Spacious paddocks are interconnected so that the rhinos can be moved around. As in the wild, there is a certain amount of overlap between territories. This first phase is now complete. Phase two, which we hope to start in the next few years,



includes more paddock space, a change of visitor access and another off-show facility.

We currently hold two males and four females at Chester. Our males are Katakata, born in 1990 at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, and Sammy, a new arrival from Osaka, Japan (born 1999). Sammy is extremely important to the European population, as he is unrelated to any other animal. Our females are Pangani (born 1992, Zurich), and her daughter Kitani, born in 1997 at Chester (see picture). Also born at Chester in 1998 is Manyara, and finally we have Rosie (1988, London Zoo).

Chester Zoo's partnership with Save the Rhino began in 1994, when the Zoo made a three-year commitment to fund guards protecting the northern white rhinos in



Garamba, DRC. In 1999, again with SRI, Chester Zoo gave substantial financial support to the KWS enabling the translocation of 20 black rhinos from other reserves to Tsavo East. Chester has helped fund the maintenance of patrol vehicles and, this year, the Zoo and SRI have committed funds to buy and maintain a further 4WD vehicle for the anti-poaching team in Tsavo. Additionally, Chester Zoo is providing financial support to the black rhino reintroduction programme in Mkomazi, Tanzania and, through Manchester Metropolitan University, is funding a major research initiative on black rhinos in Kenyan enclosed reserves.

**Ruth O'Hare, Chester Zoo**



## Save the Rhino Events Schedule:



Club Night - "My Nose is Killing Me"  
Art Exhibition - "Paper Rhinos"  
Rhino Climb Kilimanjaro  
DAFT Lecture - by Richard Dawkins  
In Memory of Douglas Adams  
Marathon des Sables  
London Marathon  
Rhino Mayday  
Edinburgh Marathon  
Rhino Cycle UK  
Brighton Triathlon  
Kenya Cycle Safari  
Rhino Climb Kilimanjaro  
New York Marathon

Thursday 5 Dec 2002  
10 - 14 Dec 2002  
14 - 24 Feb 2003  
Tuesday 11 March 2003  
  
6 - 12 April 2003  
Sunday 13 April 2003  
22 May 2003  
15 June 2003  
July 2003 (Date TBC)  
Aug/Sep 2003 (Date TBC)  
Sep 2003 (Date TBC)  
Oct 2003 (Date TBC)  
Sunday 2 Nov 2003