

Black Rhino gives birth at Lapalala Wilderness

Karen Trendler feeding Bwana aged 9-weeks -
- weight 62 kg.

On 11 July 1992, a female rhino named Makoko, (the revered one), purchased by Dale Parker on 15 June at the Natal Parks Board auction at Hluhluwe, gave birth to a 21 kilogram bull calf. This rhino was the first to be released from a batch of five translocated to Lapalala on 21 June, and which formed part of a group of ten rhinos that were captured in the Umfolozi wilderness area. This was carried out with the assistance of the South African Defence Force, using a Puma helicopter known as an Oryx, as a result of a conversion by the Defence Force, in a first ever airlift from the wilderness area. The area has no roads whatsoever and is generally only frequented by wilderness trailists under the guidance of trained field officers.

The rhino cow Makoko was the first to be released into the 10 000 hectare rhino sanctuary of Lapalala Wilderness, which has four resident rhinos introduced in 1990, as it was believed

that she was pregnant and close to giving birth, according to Dr Peter Rodgers, Veterinarian with the Natal Parks Board. The cow gave birth a little over a week after release and abandoned her calf, which was subsequently ascertained to be between 4 and 5 weeks premature.

At approximately 10.45 a.m. Rod Stoakes, Manager of the reserve's Kolobe Lodge, returning from a game drive with guests, found the tiny rhino on a steep ascent known as Breakfast Road, which comprises concrete strips down the side of the mountain. Frantic phone calls were made to Johannesburg to Clive Walker, who first ascertained that the mother was nowhere in the vicinity and after consulting Keith Meiklejohn of the Natal Parks Board, it was agreed to uplift the baby as quickly as possible, which was then taken to the Ranger, Clive Ravenhill's house.

Nearly three hours were spent on the telephone trying to obtain the advice of the Natal Parks Board vet and people who had experience of raising baby rhinos. A call through to Karen and Roy Trendler of the Animal Rehabilitation Centre (ARC), led to Roy Trendler driving out to Onderstepoort to meet Dr Kobus du Toit, who recommended to Clive Walker that unless the baby was to receive colostrum his chances of survival were probably nil.

Dr du Toit was able to track down the substance, frozen bovine colostrum, at Onderstepoort and made the suggestion that the rhino be brought through to Nylstroom by Lapalala staff and he would travel up with Roy and Karen Trendler in an emergency vehicle and meet them halfway. The subsequent transfer took place and the baby rhino was in the Onderstepoort Veterinary facility by 6.00 p.m. that same evening.

Possibly due to the premature birth, the umbilical cord was not properly severed and subsequently a bacterial infection developed which, during the course of the ensuing three weeks, nearly resulted in his death. Only



through the dedication of Karen Trendler and her team and the advice of Dr Kobus du Toit, Dr Richard Burroughs and Dr Peter Rodgers, were they successful in pulling him through.

Through information from Anna Merz at the Ngare Seroi rhino sanctuary in Kenya, who has raised a rhino from birth and Daphne Sheldrick at the Nairobi Animal Orphanage, together with various papers on the formula on rhino mother's the right formula was finally struck after numerous cases of diarrhoea and constipation. Nestlé, who support the Animal Rehabilitation Centre, very kindly offered to produce a formula which provided a feed that was as close to the natural mother's milk as possible.

The bacterial infection known as polyarthritis, attacked the joints, resulting in severe stiffness and pain and special drugs had to be given to the rhino, who has been named Bwana Tshiwana (Bwana meaning Mr in Swahili and Tshiwana is the name that the game scouts at Lapalala Wilderness gave him, which refers to orphan).

At five weeks, he weighed 37 kilograms and at nine weeks weighed 72 kgs and is improving daily. Little baby Bwana will have to remain under the care of Karen Trendler for many months to come and when it is felt that he is strong enough, he will return to Lapalala, when every effort will be made in time, to return him to a wild

environment where it is hoped, he will one day contribute to the Lapalala Wilderness breeding programme.

For the moment, he does not know his own kind and regards the humans who care for him as his adopted parents. Little Bwana is the first known black rhino to have survived in captivity thus far in South Africa and his survival will represent a landmark in the rearing of black rhino. Karen Trendler has kept meticulous records since she took care of him from the day after he was taken to Onderstepoort and there is no doubt that he owes his life to her and the dedicated team of veterinarians, who have provided so much time and effort in giving him a chance to survive. □



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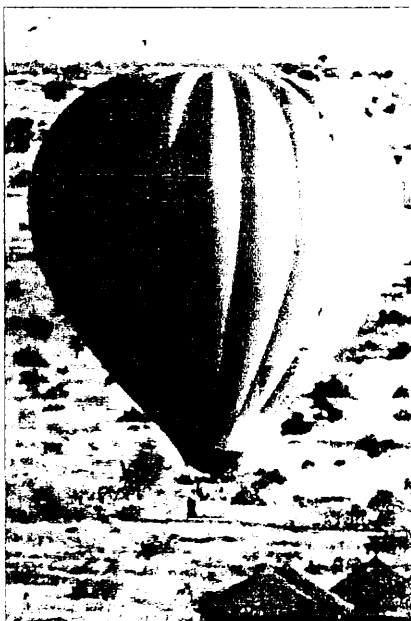


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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Balloon Safaris, Kenya

COVER STORY:
Balloon Safari

Camel, Train & Balloon Rides

With our economy in its present uncertain state, most people seem to be waiting until the last moment to make a decision on where to holiday.

There are still plenty of opportunities and destinations available – so join us once again visiting interesting venues around the world...

Our first stop is Kenya where we Safari with a difference – by balloon – drifting silently over the Masai Mara, watching herds of animals from this advantaged position, with Mount Kilimanjaro as the backdrop.

The unusually named Bom Bom Island is just off Africa's West Coast. This unspoilt island is one of the last virgin fishing areas in the world.

Then to Europe, fjord-cruising through the breathtaking scenery of Norway, where mountains and the blue-black mirrored waters create a perfect place to relax and breathe-in the scenery.

On the move again – to the Far East – stopping at the most exciting tropical island of Singapore, also one of the world's shopping paradises, where you will always be served by hospitable, friendly and charming people.

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If a more conventional way of travelling is preferred, then board the Union Train, today's version of the old steam train. This train has been restored to its former glory and allows you to settle back in the grand old style of rail travel.

A competition with a difference is included in this issue, offering you a chance to experience a camel safari. Also, not to forget the wonderful Phantom of the Opera competition – keep those entries rolling in!