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- iii) a conference facility to provide much needed revenue as well as exposing delegates to nature conservation;
- iv) a series of short walks in the vicinity of the camp and a magnificent view site under large shade trees on the edge of the shelf on which the camp will stand.

Great care has been taken with the siting of each accommodation unit so that a natural setting adjacent to the large trees and rocks and with individual views is achieved. The attractive rock face brick buildings are set around a waterhole which will feature walkways and hides from which it will be possible to view birds and animals. In addition, certain of the units have been specially designed to cater for handicapped visitors.

For those warm summer days, visitors will be able to cool off in a large swimming pool set amid huge boulders, ideal for sunbathing.

The ultimate in luxury can be experienced in the Lodge with its own private swimming pool. The Lodge, which is situated outside the main area of the camp commands spectacular views across the reserve with the blue hills of the Transvaal and Swaziland in the distance.

Ntshondwe Camp, which will open during 1990, is destined to become a major bushveld venue. Here visitors will enjoy comfort in natural surroundings in a reserve which offers a large variety of game including black and white rhino, giraffe, wildebeeste, tsessebe, zebra, eland and cheetah. The reserve also offers spectacular scenery, ranging from sub-alpine meadows above the escarpment down to the thick bush of the Pongola River Valley where crocodiles laze on the sand banks. The distinctive cry of the Natal francolin and the flash of a shy bush buck under towering green tinged rocks will entice people back, again and again. 

EDITORIAL

Phil Evans

The Natal Parks Board, as the official Nature Conservation authority of Natal, is also responsible for providing visitors with facilities to enjoy the various resorts and reserves. Whilst these facilities have in the past been funded by the Natal Provincial Administration, the Board will in future be required to raise its own development funds.

The Ntshondwe hutt camp at Itala Game Reserve is the direct result of the Provincial Authorities granting permission for the Board to raise a loan for this exciting project. With this, its first venture into the commercial money market, the Board has broken a stranglehold which has previously prevented it from undertaking development projects other than on a very modest scale. A further innovation by the Board is the raising of capital funds involving its Joint Venture Scheme which, in return for a lump sum payment, entitles a donor to enjoy a specified amount of free accommodation per annum for a number of years. The proceeds from this scheme are placed in a capital development fund with the specific purpose of constructing more visitor accommodation.

In keeping with the principles and standards which it has established over the years, the Board will continue to expand and maintain its visitor facilities. However, they can no longer be subsidised by the tax payers and, whilst the Board is making every effort to reduce costs, the days of sub-economic tariffs will shortly be something of the past. 

CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK RHINO

Dr Martin Brooks

The black rhinoceros is still severely threatened by poaching throughout most of its range in Africa. Numbers have crashed from about 65 000 in 1970 to probably less than 3 500 today, and organised poaching has stretched southwards into Zimbabwe and SWA/Namibia, and is extending its grasp towards South Africa.

This relentless onslaught has highlighted both the importance and vulnerability of our populations. Vulnerable, because alone the black rhino has little defence against the poacher's snare and gun; and important because our region, including SWA/Namibia, now holds about 1 050 rhinos, or 30% of the world's population. We therefore need to ensure that our rhinos are well protected and well managed, and we are facing this challenge by pooling expertise and working together towards a common goal.

A major catalyst for this co-operative approach is the acceptance earlier this year by all the major conservation authorities in the region of the "Conservation Plan for

black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* in South Africa, the TBVC States and SWA/Namibia".

This is a particularly exciting initiative because it directs conservation efforts towards clear, achievable goals for each of the three subspecies represented in the region, and outlines the management programmes required to achieve these. Emphasis is placed on protection, the management of populations to maximise rates of increase, population monitoring and the selection of areas for re-establishment. These and other activities will be co-ordinated at the regional level by the proposed Rhino Management Group, made up from one representative from each authority managing black rhino populations, and selected rhino experts.

In the end, however, the fate of this most impressive, symbolic species rests with the people of this country and SWA/Namibia. With your support the black rhinoceros will continue to roam forever as a free spirit in the savannas of Africa. 

NATAL

NEWS FROM THE NATAL PARKS BOARD.

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NTSHONDWE - THE PRIDE OF NORTHERN NATAL

Ron Physick and Dave Hibbs

Set high in a bush-filled valley against the main escarpment overlooking Itala Game Reserve the Natal Parks Board's newest hatted camp is nearing completion. Ntshondwe Camp will offer visitors luxurious thatched cottages nestling among natural vegetation, characterized by giant euphorbias and the distinctive erythrina which blossoms brilliant red in winter.

The word Ntshondwo, from which the camp gets its name means a pointed object and refers to the prominent peak above the camp. The large boulders at the base of this peak form caves in which can be seen evidence of habitation by people who sought refuge here during the Zulu wars.

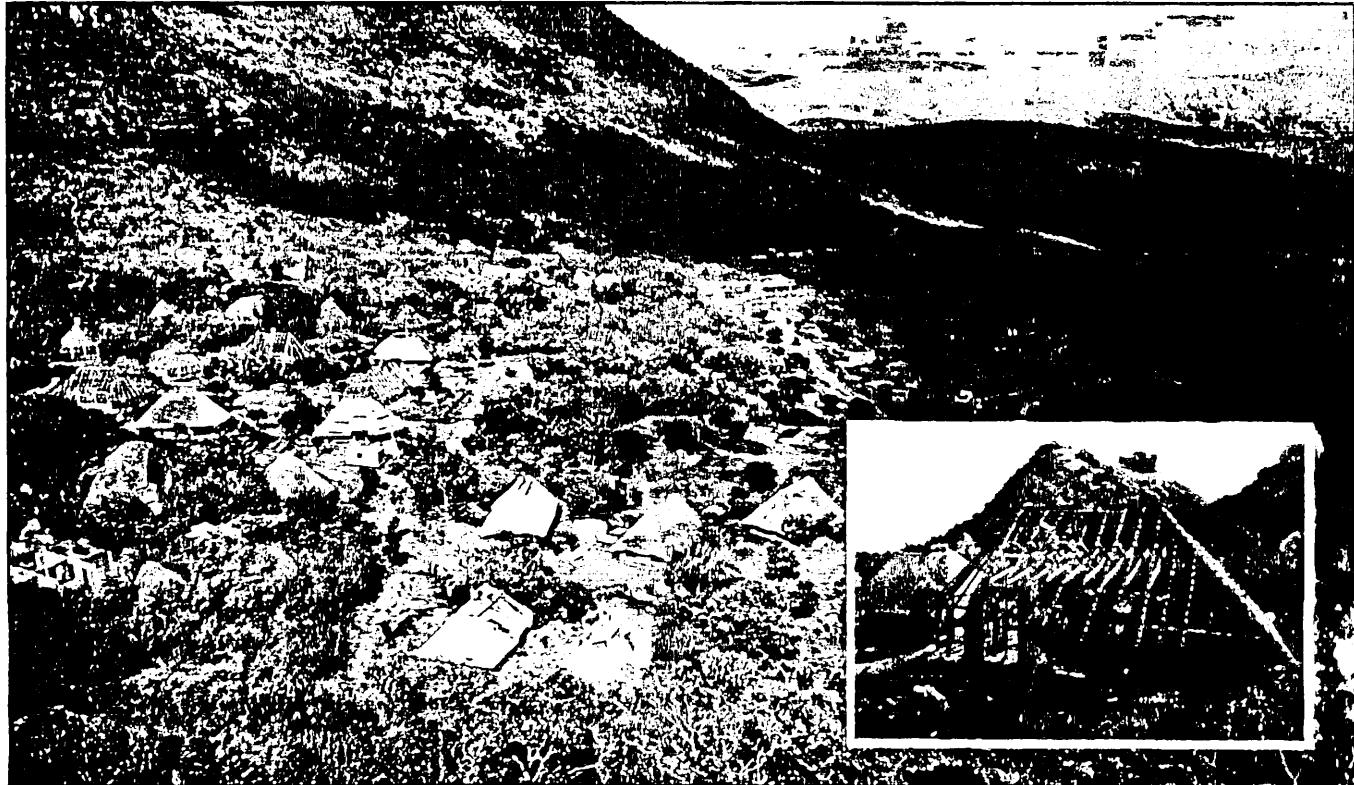
Itala Game Reserve is located immediately to the north of Louwsburg and some 60 km to the east of Vryheid. The northern boundary of the reserve is formed by the Pongola River which also forms the boundary between Transvaal and Natal, and access to the reserve is through Louwsburg village on a

good tarred road.

The Reserve was first established in 1973 when some 8 500 hectares were proclaimed. The current area under control is close to 30 000 hectares and it is hoped to add to this in the future. In October 1985 a firm of consultants was commissioned to undertake the preparation of a master plan for the development of the rest camp and construction commenced during 1989. To do justice to the beautiful setting, the Board has planned to create the most attractive and interesting overnight facility it has yet provided. Included in the plans are:

- i) accommodation for approximately 200 people in self-catering chalets and cottages, all under thatch to retain the aesthetic appeal of the traditional game reserve rest camp;
- ii) a restaurant which it is intended should provide high quality but simple meals, including take-aways;

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Ntshondwe Camp, nearing completion. Photos: Mark Coetzee

HONORARY OFFICERS

Sharron Hughes

The concept of Honorary Officers has been around for many years but at no time has the Honorary Officer played a more important role than at present. This band of ladies and gentlemen is used to assist staff in many ways, ranging from aviary inspections to slide shows and talks. There are many less pleasant tasks which they perform, such as midnight beach patrols and law enforcement.

At present there are 637 Honorary Officers with more applications being received daily. Honorary Officers are appointed on a recommendation from their local zone officer or officer in charge of a reserve. The zone officers on the South Coast insist on their Honorary Officers serving a 6 month probation period during which time their ability and enthusiasm is put to the test. All this ensures that only Honorary Officers of a high calibre are appointed and the days of the hangers-on are numbered.

The Honorary Officers are the extra eyes and ears of the Board staff and their efforts and enthusiasm should be nurtured by all those who come into contact with them.



"BORN IN THE USA"



A female black rhino which was translocated from Umfolozi Game Reserve in 1985, recently gave birth to her calf in Texas!

MANAGEMENT OF ROCK

ART SITES

Paul Miles

Southern Africa is the richest treasury of stone age art in the world, and, despite the activities of explorers and researchers over the years, many sites still await re-discovery.

There are an estimated 15 000 rock art sites in southern Africa, but regrettably by its very nature, rock art presents us with a particular set of problems regarding its preservation.

In considering the management of these unique sites, one is essentially considering the minimisation of impacts resulting from different types of disturbances. Prevention is obviously the desirable optimum, but it is not always possible or feasible.

The sandstone surfaces on which this art is executed is prone to exfoliation, and, although modern techniques are being experimented with to try to arrest this problem, these have proved to be long term and costly.

The major threat however is human impact. Strict control over access to certain sites is in force today, but it is physically and financially impossible to monitor all known sites.

In the long term, only education and appreciation can save these sites from vandalism and only research and technology can protect them from the elements.

By combining research and education we can and must preserve these priceless rock art treasures. We owe it to our future generation.

