



Black rhinoceros, mpingo tree and coral reefs in Tanzania

Background

Tanzania lies in the southeastern half of Africa and includes the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. The Indian Ocean, home to thousands of species of fish, is on its eastern border. Tanzania's precious resources of fish and the African black rhino have been declining rapidly due to the practice of dynamite fishing and illegal hunting. As part of its commitment to the BP Conservation Program, BP Tanzania has supported Frontier-Tanzania, a London-based non-government organization (NGO), and several governmental agencies who are encouraging the return of the rhino and an end to destructive fishing practices.

Projects

BP's involvement in Tanzania goes back to the early 20th century, initially through the import of kerosene into Zanzibar, which was the distribution centre for most of the east coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean islands. Today, as in past years, BP Tanzania is committed to the environmental concerns of Tanzania. The following are descriptions of some of the important conservation projects supported by BP Tanzania.

African Black Rhino

With the help of BP Tanzania, the African black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) has returned to Mkomazi, a region in northern Tanzania. The black rhino once roamed the Mkomazi area as part of its natural habitat, but virtually disappeared due to poaching. Now, the African black rhino has been reintroduced to the Mkomazi Game Reserve, located between Mt. Kilimanjaro and the Indian Ocean on the Tanzania-Kenya border. This rhino sanctuary is now complete after five years of development.

In 2001, BP Tanzania donated the fuel for the cargo plane, which transported four black rhinos (two males and two females) to the rhino sanctuary. BP Tanzania is in partnership with African groups such as Wildlife Conservation and the National Environmental Management Council to support the Mkomazi project. Additionally, we are keeping the public informed about the progress of the sanctuary by publishing updates in various local newspapers.

Dynamite Fishing

In Tanzania and many other eastern African coastal communities, fishing by using dynamite in the water is an increasingly serious problem. Despite being illegal in Tanzania, it is widely practiced. Recent levels of dynamite blasting on the southern Tanzania coast are rapidly destroying marine habitats and removing the breeding grounds for fish.

Frontier-Tanzania is conducting surveys of marine habitats and resource use, and is training local fisheries officers in marine survey techniques. BP's support, in the form of fuel and solar equipment, has enabled Frontier-Tanzania to work farther afield by boat and carry out more intensive surveys.

Mpingo Tree Study

BP Tanzania is supporting a project for the African Blackwood, locally known as the Mpingo, aims to provide much-needed basic data on the distribution, ecology, and exploitation of the tree (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*). This Mpingo an important economic asset to Tanzania and is known as the 'Tree of Music' because of its high-quality wood for woodwind instruments; additionally, the Mpingo is a premier wood for ornamental turning.

The Mpingo, a thorny member of the rose family, requires 60 years to grow large enough for harvest. Because of this extended growth period, only 20% of the trees are harvestable at any one time. Today, the tree is harvested at an unsustainable rate. Other pressures on the tree are human-caused burning, which threatens the young trees that are not yet fire resistant and can cause defects in growing trees. Replanting trees and controlling fires are the first steps to maintaining a healthy stock of Mpingo trees.