

Resource Utilization in the Maputaland Marine Reserve

Dr Robert Kyle

KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources

As mentioned in the second issue of NATAL, local residents are allowed to gather marine organisms, such as mussels, within the Maputaland Marine Reserve. Lately there has been considerable publicity about the collection of marine organisms along the Transkei coast and, although there are parallels, the two situations are currently quite different.

Historically both the Maputaland and Transkei coasts were used extensively by local residents for food collection. The methods of collection, such as pieces of metal and sticks, and the types of organisms collected, principally mussels and red bait, were the same. In past decades the levels of utilisation were also probably similar but there the parallels end.

Most Natal residents and visitors remember that not so long ago large crayfish and mussels were abundant and easily bought along the Transkei coast, but they now know that the situation has changed and, unfortunately, they are partly to blame.

Commercialisation of this exploitation in the Transkei acted as a catalyst, and both the effort put into "rock stripping" and the methods used changed markedly. Studies are currently being carried out but it is clear that much of the food gathered is for sale to visitors or local businesses. The population living close to the coast has also increased and, although regulations exist to limit catches and commercialisation is illegal, control appears erratic.

In Maputaland, however, the current situation is quite different. Studies on marine resource utilisation were carried out in 1981/2 and at present an extensive survey is being done to assess the present 'offtake' in terms of value to the local people, impact on the resources, and the implications to the marine reserve concept.

The results so far indicate that there is almost no commercialisation and, while the number of people gathering food appears to have dropped, the average mass per person gathered has risen. Since the methods of collection have not changed, this increase in the amount of food gathered would indicate an improvement in the stocks of intertidal organisms. If these apparent trends are confirmed by further research, it would mean that the situation along the Maputaland coast is slowly improving.

In the earlier survey, which covered part of the area, it was stated that the intertidal harvesting produced in the region of 30 000 kilograms of food per annum, but the present survey suggests that the total figure may be in the region of 100 000 kilograms. The food collected is almost exclusively for the subsistence use of local people and recent figures show that along much of the Maputaland coast there is fairly rapid depopulation.

The situation in Maputaland is still not totally clear. What is clear, however, is that an exciting experiment is underway to see if it is possible to allow regular harvesting of resources within the Maputaland Marine Reserve without jeopardising the aims of the reserve.

The experiment and monitoring are being carried out as a joint exercise by the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources and the Natal Parks Board and the findings will hopefully suggest how to manage the intertidal resources of the Maputaland Marine Reserve wisely.

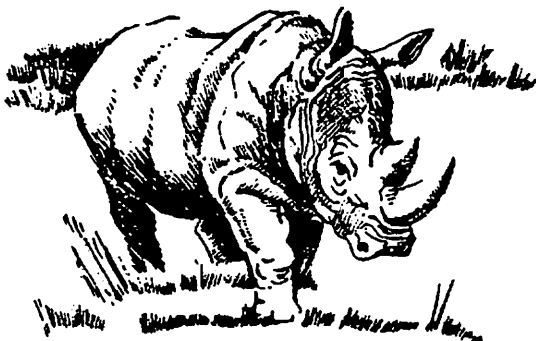
Rhino Capture Update

Keith Meiklejohn

It all started in 1960, when Operation Rhino was launched by the Natal Parks Board. In those days, catching and moving a white rhino was a long and risky process.

Since then, techniques have been refined, drugs have been improved, and the whole operation has been speeded up. So much so that the rhino capture team is proud of the fact that on one day, no fewer than 16 rhino had been darted, crated and moved to the bomas before breakfast. It was probably a late breakfast!

The latest count of rhinos caught by the Board's capture team is 3 247, but most remarkable is the fact that there has not been a single mortality during the capture of the last 200 animals. The team is proud of that record too.





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Partners in Conservation

Dr John Vincent

The policy of the Natal Parks Board is to work as closely as possible with its publics. For this reason, it has a number of liaison committees representative of various special interest groups.

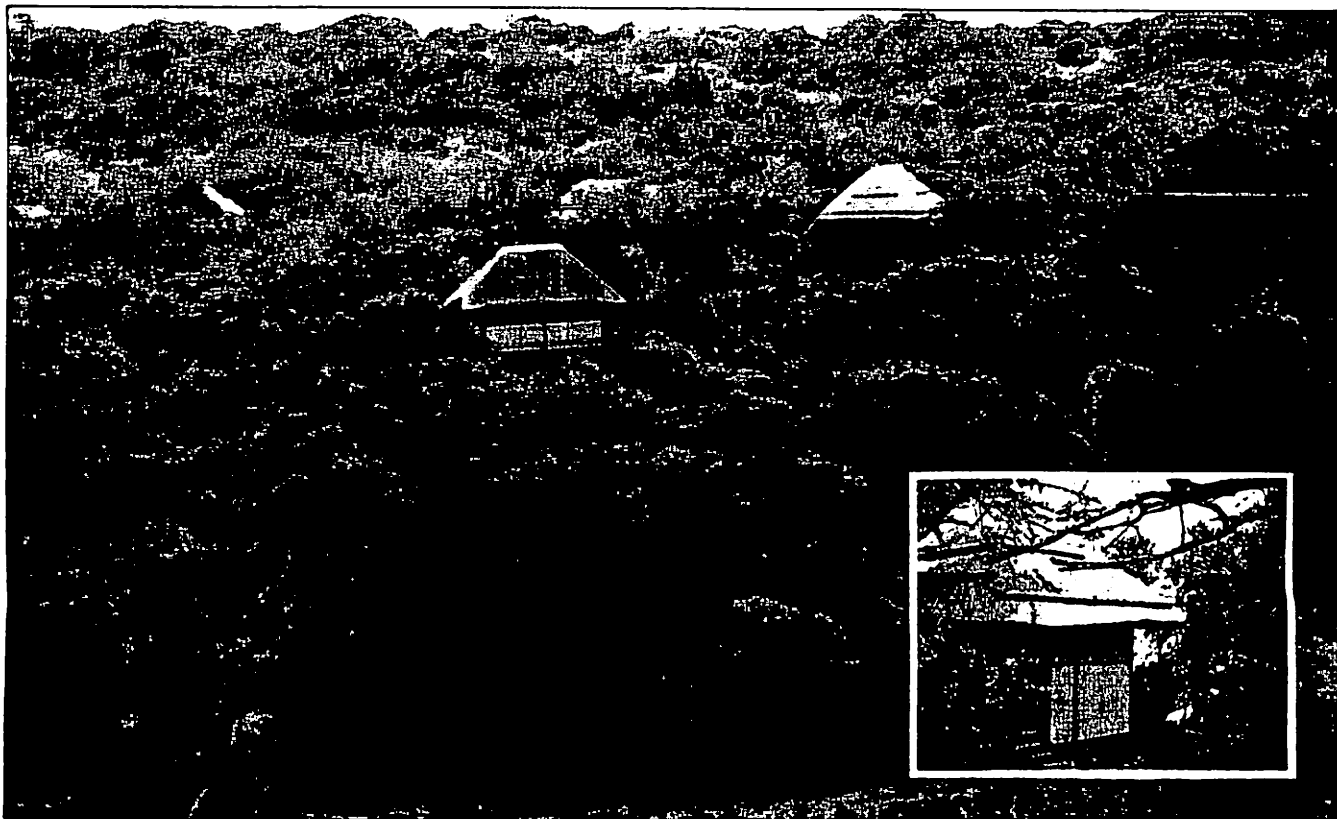
No organisation can work effectively in complete isolation: there must be consultation and discussion on many subjects if decisions that are taken are going to be acceptable to the majority of those people for whom they are intended. Decisions may not necessarily be altered, but at least the interested public knows the reasons for them.

Being a Provincial body, partially funded by the State and taxpayers' money, it is axiomatic that the public needs to know how its money is being spent. It is here that the role of the non-government organisations (NGOs) is vital. Their membership, whether it be of the 25 000 strong Wildlife Society or the local branch of the Falconry Club, is widely representative of interests that

concern the Board. They are able, not only to let their members know that their money is being wisely spent, but, more importantly, to convey to them the thinking of the Natal Parks Board on matters that concern them, and in turn to keep the Board informed of needs.

Obviously, it is not possible for the Board to liaise formally with every one of the NGOs, but its liaison committees do represent most of those which have members who are particularly interested in the Board's activities.

The most recent liaison committee to be established is for hiking and mountaineering, while there are others for such activities as inland and coastal fishing, hunting, game ranching, yachting and ski-boating. Others are bound to be created as time goes on, for the emphasis is on progress through co-operative decision-making.



Bhangazi Bush Camp, nearing completion