D. A. Pringle, 1992 The Conservationists and the Killers.

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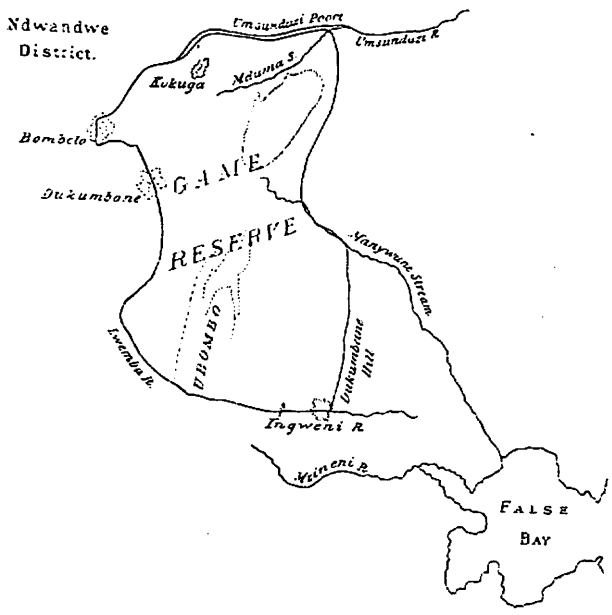


eyes on the Zulu country, would have to wait for the carve-up. The delay acted as a temporary reprieve for the wildlife – as soon as white settlement began, the wildlife would be under pressure.

In 1895 five areas were demarcated and set aside as reserved areas for game where hunting was prohibited (Zululand Government Notice No 12 1895. See maps for details.)

About this time an incident occurred which lead to the proclamation of the first reserves in Natal. A hunting party operating near the confluence of the two Umfolozi rivers shot six white rhinos. There may have been no game protection association to protest at this slaughter but there was one angry citizen who cared. In 1895 Mr C D Guise wrote to the Resident Commissioner stating that white rhinos were almost extinct in Zululand and recommended that

- the white rhino be included in the list of Royal Game
- no further permits be issued for hunting white rhinos
- the particular range of country in Zululand embracing the habitat of the white rhino be beaconed off as a game reserve.

In 1897 the first Natal reserves were proclaimed, namely, Umdhletshe, Hluhluur Valley (original spelling), St Lucia, and Umfolozi Junction.
Above: Umdhletshe Reserve deproclaimed in 1907. *Above right:* St Lucia Reserve deproclaimed several years later.
Natal Archives

Eventually Guise's letter reached the Governor of Zululand, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, who was resident in Pietermaritzburg. He set about implementing all three suggestions. The first two were straightforward but he had to wait for further details before creating game reserves. The recommendation included the same five areas set aside in 1895. Four of these, namely Hluhluwe, Umfolozi, Umdhletshe and St Lucia, were proclaimed as reserves in 1897.

All of them lay within fly belts – in fact their boundaries almost defined the very worst tsetse areas. Tsetse flies had once been the salvation of the game, keeping men with their nagana-prone oxen, horses and dogs at the edges of the hot river valleys. When the first white settlers began to stream into Zululand, the flies would no longer be saviours – they would be the cause of conflict.

During the years 1895 to 1897 cattle losses from nagana were overshadowed by a far greater menace which swept down from the north into Africa – rinderpest. As a result of this dreaded plague, 746 000 head of cattle died or were destroyed in South Africa over a period of two years. Eventually, according to the chief magistrate of Zululand, Sir Charles Saunders, eighty per cent of the cattle in Zululand died.

During the rinderpest epidemic a strange thing happened to the tsetse flies in the lowveld of the Eastern Transvaal. The lowveld had always taken its toll of the trek oxen of the transport riders travelling between Maputo (Lourenço Marques) and Johannesburg. However, as the rinderpest epidemic subsided, the tsetse flies (*Glossina morsitans*) of the lowveld disappeared, and they have never returned. People hoped that tsetse flies in Natal would suffer the same fate, but this was not to be.

In 1898 Bruce was ready to publish his *Further Report on the Tsetse Fly Disease of Nagana in Zululand.* This report, together with his earlier one, remain classics in the literature of experimental medicine, and secured Bruce a Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1899 at the early age of 44.

In 1902 the clamour of land-hungry Europeans reached a crescendo in Natal. The five-year deadline was up. It was time to share out Zululand. A Commission was appointed to do the job.

Meanwhile a railway to Zululand had been pushing steadily north. A bridge was built across the Tugela River and the line wandered through a wilderness of bush to its terminus at Somkele, a short-lived coal mine. In September 1903 the Governor of Natal officially opened the odd little line – but also opened an easy route for crowds of trigger-happy hunters. Somkele

The immediate effect of this wordy conference, unfortunately, was the deproclamation of Umfolozi Game Reserve 'to alleviate the sufferings of the Ntambanana farmers'. The nagana battle had shifted to a new battleground. If Warren, Vaughan Kirby and their supporters had only known it, their troubles were really just beginning. This time, however, they held a trumpcard – the white rhinos.

'It is exceedingly difficult to compute their numbers even approximately,' Vaughan Kirby had stated in 1916, 'but I consider that there are between 30 and 40 adults animals actually resident in the Reserve, as well as a useful number of calves.' There was also a number that lived close to the Reserve boundaries.

The small group of white rhinos in the Umfolozi Reserve represented the last remnant of this southern subspecies which formerly spread over vast areas of Southern Africa.

Because of the white rhinos, Umfolozi would be given a stay of execution.

In September 1920 the Minister of Agriculture, Mr F S Malan, discussed the nagana question with the Natal Executive Committee. Malan had a sympathetic attitude to wildlife and agreed that Umfolozi should not be thrown open as a free shooting area, but should remain subject to ordinary game regulations. He also promised to try and get funds to fence the boundary between Ntambanana and Umfolozi. But the next time the Natal EXCO met the Minister, a new man would be in the job – a man with no time for wildlife.

In 1921 the Department of Agriculture took steps to provide 'further scientific research'. A Veterinary Research Officer, Dr H H Curson, was stationed in the Ntambanana settlement and Mr R H T P Harris set up a camp on the White Umfolozi River to investigate the bionomics of the tsetse fly.

Above: Black rhino. Edmund Caldwell.
Courtesy William Fehr Collection

ɔtain H Potter, chief game conservator for Zululand.
ɔto: L Acutt

'Astonishing figures were also quoted of the number animals shot outside the reserve,' the press reɾted. 'Of zebra alone, in less than 12 months, over)00 have been shot outside the reserves, although ınger F Vaughan Kirby estimated that in 1927 there ːre only 2 150 zebras in the whole of Zululand. ıese figures, with others, were quoted by C F Clarkn as proving the truth of the settlers' claims that the serves were overstocked.'

To members of the Wildlife Society, however, they ·oved something quite different. There was no such ing as accurate data available. Everybody was guesıg.

'A qualified field naturalist must be employed to get ːcurate data on the number of animals the reserve ill hold,' they insisted. 'He must find out the rate of ıcrease and the effect of drought.'

But the Society was fobbed off.

'When the time is ripe,' they were assured, 'efforts ːill be made to obtain such information.' But the time ·ould not be ripe for another 25 years.

Dr George eventually paid a visit to Zululand to see ɔr himself. 'The Skin Game', 'Slaughter in the Reːrves', 'A Desolating Picture', newspapers headlined .is report on his return.

'What struck me most was the complete lack of scientific control of the whole campaign,' he said. 'Take for example the destruction of game taking place in the Mkuzi Reserve, and the terrible slaughter of inyala, our rarest and most beautiful species on the Ubombo Flats above it. At least 1 400 head of game have been killed in the reserve. The game ranger of this reserve, in his two years' residence, has not seen a single tsetse fly. There are no settlements to the north of the reserve to be affected; yet parties are going out and shooting down buck does and young as they walk out of the bush to look at them. One party in a few days shot 57, and we saw wagons returning piled high with skins and carcases of does and young.'

At the beginning of 1929 the Zululand game reserves covered about 80 000 hectares, manned by a small staff of white and black rangers.

At Umfolozi there was Harris, tsetse fly research officer and also in charge of the Reserve.

No facilities existed, neither camping grounds nor rest huts. These reserves were closed to the public – but open, periodically, to hunters with permits!

Umfolozi was the oddest of the odd reserves. Deproclaimed in 1920 to get rid of the tsetse fly, it had been hastily reproclaimed in 1929 – to get rid of the fly. Harris wanted the game, and therefore the fly, to be concentrated in one area. Only then could an attack be planned on the fly.

Harris was happy to be back at his old camp at Umfolozi, experimenting with his fly traps. He liked the isolation and did not always welcome visitors. An able person, he had one failing – he could not get on with his fellows. He certainly could not get on with Roden Symons, the new warden who had succeeded Vaughan Kirby in 1929 and who departed within a year.

Symons was followed by Captain Harold Potter who spent just one month with Harris and was then transferred to Hluhluwe Reserve. Unlike Vaughan Kirby, Potter insisted on living in the reserve he had to manage. He selected Luhlasa Ridge, which was free of mosquitoes, and here he pitched his tent under some large wild fig trees in August 1929. A year elapsed before he was able to erect his first corrugated iron shelter. For the next 26 years he would play an important role making Hluhluwe into a famous reserve and generally placing wildlife conservation in Zululand on the world map. This role was recognised by the Wildlife Society when Captain Potter and his wife were elected honorary life members in 1967.

When Potter moved on, Harris continued to have visitors, who took him away from his fly traps.

'I am continually interrupted in order to count the number of rhino,' he complained to Ernest Warren.

He was not alone in cursing the white rhinos. The huge animals were mobile tsetse feeding stations,

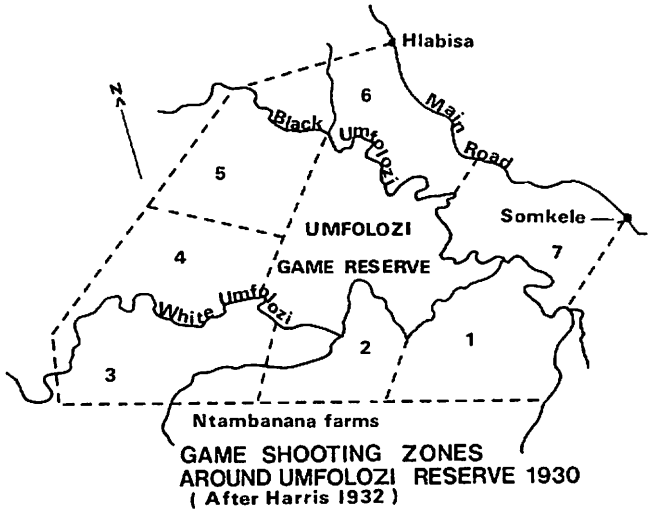
trundling where they liked, making nonsense of the extermination plan. What was the use of destroying all the other animals if rhino were allowed to go free? Tsetse clustered on the thick rhinoceros hides. As long as there were rhino there would be tsetse. And, some officials sighed, as long as there were rhino there would be sentimental fools fighting for Umfolozi. If only the damn rhino were found somewhere else. Or could be moved somewhere else ...

Soon after there was talk of moving 12 rhinos by rail from Umfolozi to the Kruger National Park. Dr H Lang, a visiting zoologist from the American Museum of Natural History, estimated the operation would cost £8 000. The transfer never took place – probably because South Africa, like the rest of the world, was moving into the Great Depression, and no funds could be provided for projects to translocate wild animals. Some 30 years elapsed before the first rhino were moved to the Kruger Park. In 1928 this last remnant of white rhinos in southern Africa had become a trump card in the hands of conservationists. The number of rhinos in the reserve at that time was uncertain. Three years before, Lang had spent seven days at Umfolozi 'walking from end to end, from dawn until night' and he had come up with an estimate of 40. 'The only positive way of counting them is to see each animal,' Lang said. In his last report before retirement in 1928 Vaughan Kirby mentioned 28. Ranger Wehrner had counter 150. The Game Advisory Committee wanted an updated census in 1930 and asked Lang to help. At the end of three weeks in the reserve he reported 100 inside and about 38 outside. Vaughan Kirby's estimate was too low and should be disregarded.

Soon afterwards the corresponding trio broke up. Caldecott, who lived in Cape Town, died. He had been ill for months, unable to cope with the effort of writing. His stream of letters, his gifted articles had tailed away to nothing. He was only 43 when he died and he left a gap in the wildlife movement which was difficult to fill. Lang returned to the United States.

Ernest Warren, now 60, was close to retirement. He sorely felt the loss of his two friends but felt encouraged when he saw the younger men in the Wildlife Society were well able to carry on the work started by the trio. The years behind had not been easy – the years ahead looked no better.

At this point Clarkson was elected to the Senate and left the Provincial scene. This man had succeeded, against tremendous odds, to maintain the Natal reserves more or less intact, thus formulating the future policy on the status of these reserves. His game destruction policy helped to placate and even divert the attention of farmers and government officials away from the reserves. Had it not been for the determination of this man in a position of power, Natal might have lost some of its reserves.



GAME SHOOTING ZONES AROUND UMFOLOZI RESERVE 1930 (After Harris 1932)

Overleaf: Tsessebe. *Edmund Caldwell*

In November 1930 Harris gave a field demonstration of his fly trap. The Natal Administration decided the trap had merit and 1 000 were ordered at a cost of £1 800. When the traps arrived in 1931, they were set up in ten areas inside the reserve where the fly populations seemed most dense. During the first year of operation, the traps were successful beyond Harris's wildest dreams. In one month he recorded more than two million flies – and the total for the year was 7 299 992. He was literally inundated with flies, and when he could no longer count them individually, he scooped them up with a quart measure holding about 6 000 flies.

'The flies actually appear to prefer the traps to live animals,' reported Dr P J du Toit, Director of Veterinary Research and Education when he visited Umfolozi to inspect the traps. 'As a matter of fact it seems not improbable that the reduction in the number of flies will reach a stage when they will no longer be a menace to the settlers.'

However, today could not wait for the future, and today the newspapers were reporting: 'Nagana Problem Unsolved. Position Worse Than Ever.' Killing the game had not yet killed the fly.

In September 1931 a tightlipped General Kemp, Minister of Agriculture, faced yet another nagana conference.

'For six years,' he said grimly, 'I have held the view that the only solution to the problem is to eliminate the host of the fly, which can only be done by eliminating the game reserves. Hluhluwe and Mkuzi must be abolished. The white rhino can be preserved at Umfolozi, but the rest of the game there must be reduced when it becomes too plentiful. Settlers and game cannot coexist. One must give way to the other.'

The members of the Natal Executive Committee, angered but troubled, listened to Kemp.

'Will the Union Government contribute towards the fly control and nagana campaign?' they asked Kemp. The Depression was tightening its grip. Natal would not be able to pay for Harris and his fly traps much longer. Yet Natal was convinced the fly traps offered a real chance of nagana control.

Kemp kept to his point. 'How can I ask the Cabinet to incur expenditure in the matter,' he said, 'unless the Hluhluwe and Mkuzi reserves are abolished and a plan made to destroy the game?'

'These are not terms, they are blackmail!' said an outraged Natal newspaper. Natal did not like blackmail, but it badly needed money. The Province began to bargain with the Minister, the to-and-fro official memos playing for time, postponing the end of the reserves.

'If we are to have only one reserve – can it be Hluhluwe?' Natal asked.

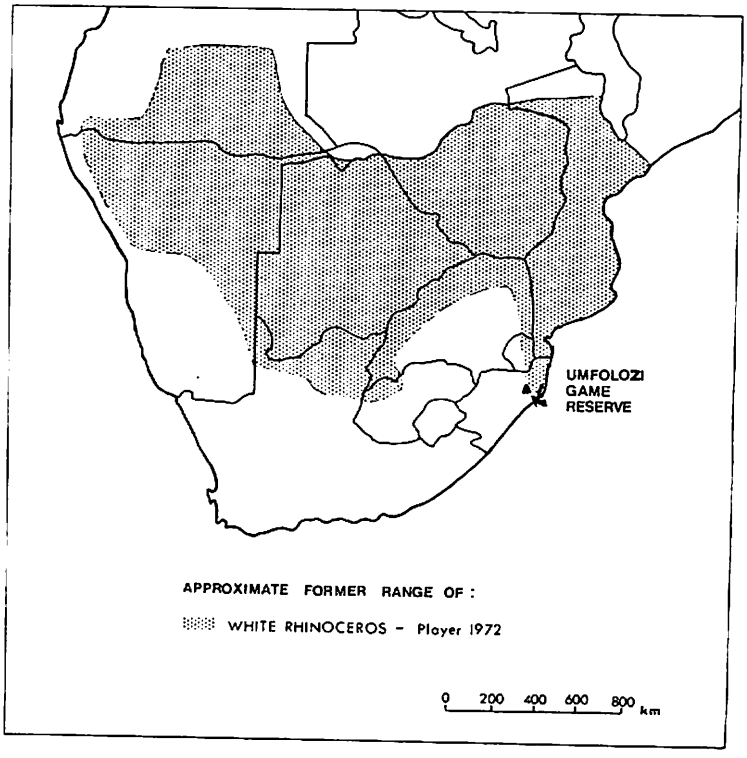
'Can the rhino be protected too?'

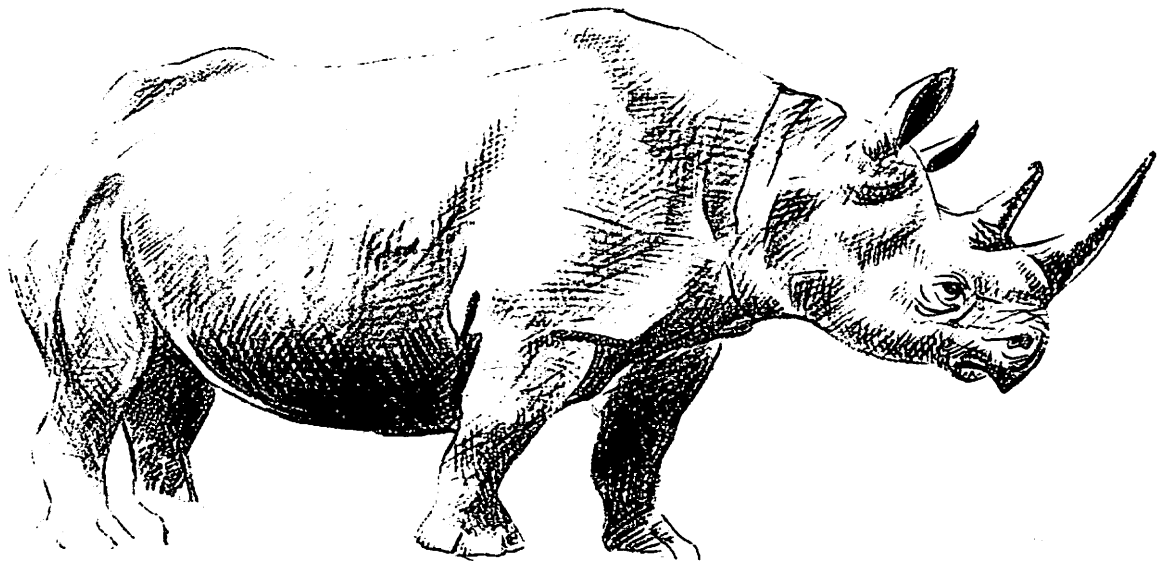
'Can we have the Corridor between Umfolozi and Hluhluwe as well?'

'If we do fly trapping inside the reserves – will you do it outside?'

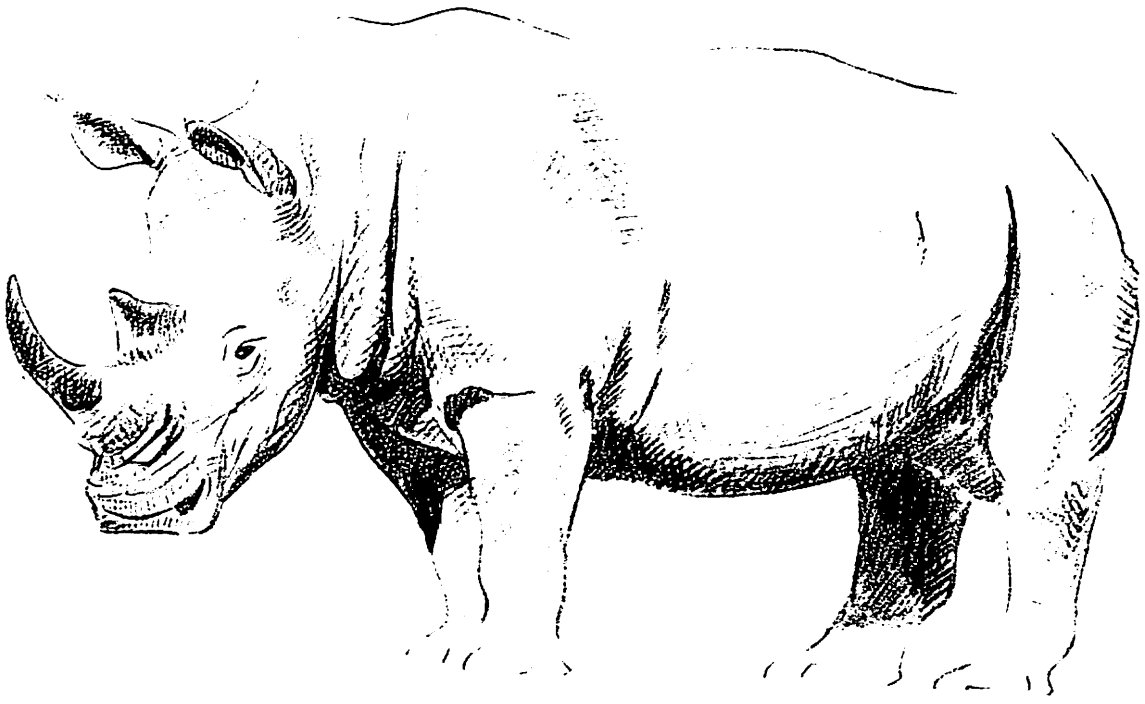
'If we do bush clearing in the buffer zones – will you pay for the work?'

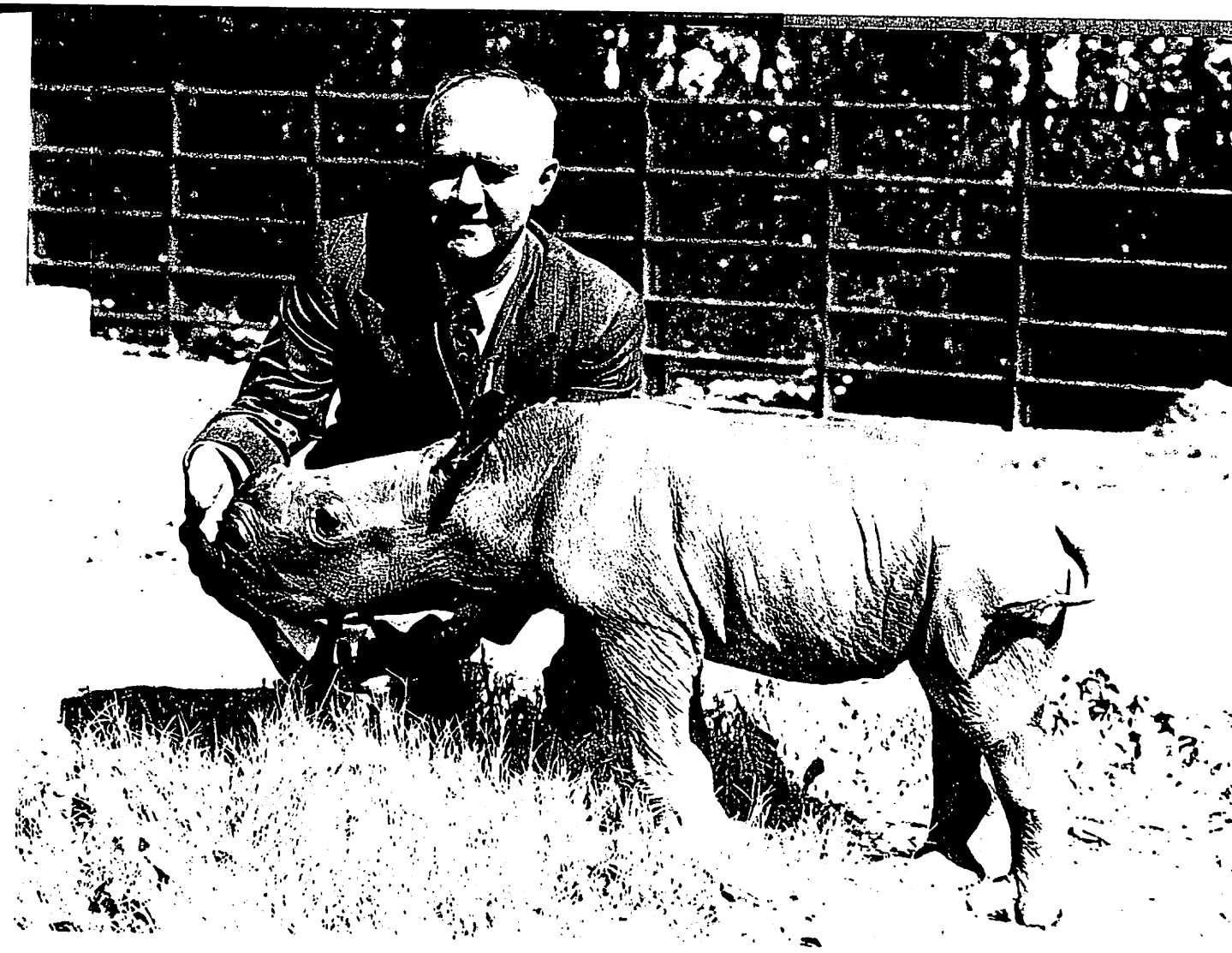
'If we abolish Umfolozi and Mkuzi – will you destroy the game?'





Above: Black and *below:* white rhinos showing their characteristic differences. The white rhinos in the Umfolozi Reserve represented the last remnant of the southern subspecies. These animals were a key factor in retaining this area as a reserve during the anti-nagana campaigns. *Sketch by Gordon Cunningham*





'Because the warnings issued by some of us from time to time have been completely ignored, the Kruger Park wagon is sinking deeper and deeper into the mud. It is opposition to the legitimate claims of science that has brought about the unenviable position in which the National Parks Board now finds itself.'

Bigalke suggested that the biological aspects of all national parks should be reorganised on a scientific basis and the Kruger National Park be transferred to the control of the Transvaal Provincial Administration.

The latter proposal was too drastic. Members certainly did not want to see the park a provincial concern. However, they no longer argued about the need for science.

'The Council feels most strongly that the administration of the Kruger National Park should be reorganised giving adequate representation to business and scientific opinion ...' it said in a press statement.

In 1949 Dr Bigalke was appointed a member of the National Parks Board, the first scientist to get through the door in 23 years. But there was not yet a biologist at work in any national park. Bigalke was not yet finished writing his memos. The Board capitulated. In 1950 the first biologist was appointed by the Board – Dr T G Nel.

It was one thing to offer posts to wildlife scientists – it was quite another thing to find the men. As the embryo Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation began to develop, the new Conservator, T J Steyn, realised this more and more. In 1961 he came to the Wildlife Society for help.

'Gentlemen,' he told a council meeting, 'we urgently need people who are qualified in the basic principles of nature conservation. We have no institutions where such a training course is provided. Can your Society assist us to establish such a course?'

The challenge was immediately accepted. Mr T R Robson undertook to organise fund-raising with Mr H C Payne and Mr W Pearse. At the end of 1964 the Society was able to announce it had raised R50 000 necessary to introduce at Pretoria University a post-graduate course in wildlife management. Apart from this guarantee of R10 000 per annum for the first five

Above: Dr R Bigalke with Zuluana, the first white rhino calf reared in captivity. She was deserted by her mother in the Umfolozi Reserve and reared in the Pretoria Zoo.
Photo: Wildlife Society Archives