



DARYL AND SHARNA BALFOUR

Black rhino (above and right) in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the few areas in Africa where the species is secure and numbers are on the increase.

Some rhino numbers increase in latest tally

More than 9 000 rhinos currently survive in Africa, according to the latest population estimates from the African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG). The population of black rhinos is estimated at 2 550 and that of white rhinos at 6 750.

The May 1994 estimates for each country are listed in the following table:

COUNTRY	WHITE RHINO	BLACK RHINO
Angola		10
Botswana	18 [↓]	4 [↓]
Cameroon		27 [↓]
Ethiopia		5 [↓]
Kenya	87 [↑]	417 [↑]
Malawi		2
Mozambique	0?	45 [↓]
Namibia	98 [↑]	583 [↑]
Rwanda		10 [↓]
South Africa	6 376 [↑]	897 [↑]
Sudan	0?	
Swaziland	33 [↓]	4 [↓]
Tanzania		132 [↓]
Zaïre	32 [↑]	
Zambia	6	33 [↓] ↓ Downward trend
Zimbabwe	134 [↓]	381 [↓] ↑ Upward trend

According to Dr Tom Foose, a member of the AfRSG, black rhino numbers appear to have stabilized. He said this 'indicates in part that the sanctuary/intensive protection zone strategy in use in most countries appears to be succeeding.'

Scientists are encouraged because, for the first time in many years, there is not a significant decline in numbers. Nonetheless, they believe the situation for black rhinos is still critical. For example, the north-western subspecies of black rhino, known to survive only in Cameroon, has declined to an estimated 27 animals, although major new conservation efforts are now underway.

It is notable that population estimates for the black rhino – Africa's rarest rhino species – are still slightly

higher than for all three Asian rhino species combined.

White rhino numbers continue to rise due mostly to vigorous growth of southern white rhino populations in South Africa where 95 per cent of the species survives. 'There is, however, no cause for complacency,' according to Dr Foose, since 'the challenges to these populations are expected to intensify significantly in the near future.'

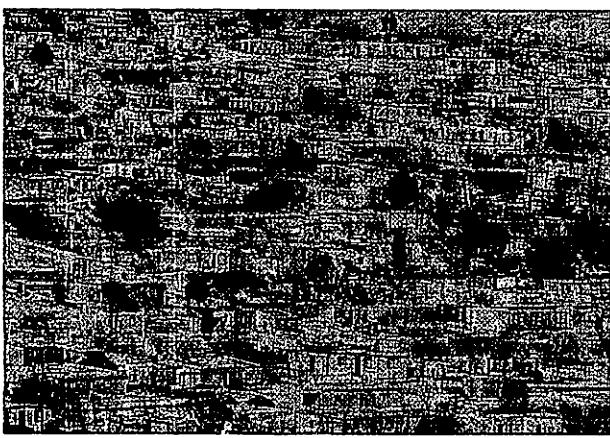
Much of the recent AfRSG meeting was devoted to developing an improved conservation program for the northern white rhino. Only 32 individuals survive in the wild, all in a single protected area – Garamba National Park in Zaïre. This population has increased twofold in the last decade, but



this high rate of increase has slowed in recent years. Major conservation challenges persist in Garamba, including poaching and other human pressures as well as the risks of having a single, small population in one place. Consequently, the AfRSG is supporting efforts to reinforce protection in Garamba and possibly establish a second free-ranging population. The proposed new population would include a few animals translocated from Garamba and perhaps some of the nine northern white rhinos currently held in captivity.

AFRICAN WILDLIFE UPDATE

LORNA STANTON/ABPL



Basic needs in health care

South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) states that the country '... spends R550 per capita per annum on health care, which is nearly 10 times what the World Bank estimates it should cost to provide basic public health services and essential clinical care for all, yet millions of our people are without such services or such care.'

The aim of the RDP is to ensure that all South Africans should get infinitely better value for the money spent in this area, and that their mental, physical and social health

improves both for its own sake and as a major contribution to increasing prosperity and the quality of life for all ... A fundamental objective of the RDP is to raise the standard of living through improved wages and income-earning opportunities, and to improve sanitation, water supply, energy resources and accommodation ... Reconstruction in the health sector will involve the complete transformation of the entire delivery system.

IN FOCUS, HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

Wandering albatross

The lightmantled sooty albatross, *Phoebetria palpebrata*, is one of the most 'wanted' seabirds for an African list. It breeds farther south than its darkmantled cousin, *P. fusca*, and seldom strays north of 40°S. The few records from African waters have been of storm-wrecked birds, with perhaps the sole exception of a bird seen from the cliffs at Cape Point during a great storm in the 1970s. There is hope, however, for all the stalwart sea-watchers.

A group of birders on a recent trip out of northern California were more than a little surprised to find a light-mantled sooty albatross sitting among a group of the more familiar (to them) blackfooted albatrosses, *Diomedea nigripes*. This is the first record from the northern hemisphere of this bird, and it remains a mystery how a bird with among the highest of aspect ratios, adapted to the gale-force winds of the Southern Oceans, managed to cross the doldrums.



River warblers overflowing in

River warblers overflowing in Baikiaea woodland

The river warbler, *Locustella fluviatilis*, is one of the ultra-secretive birds found in southern Africa, and its elusiveness is exacerbated by the fact that it is a non-breeding Palearctic migrant which seldom sings in Africa. Until recently there were only a handful of records from Zimbabwe, Botswana and the Transvaal. In 1992 Marc Herremans discovered that river warblers were abundant in the understorey of *Baikiaea* woodland in north-western Botswana, occurring at a density of about four birds per hectare. The birds were only noticeable at sunrise and sunset, when they clambered to the top of bushes and gave an explosive *phit* call.

Nocturnal flufftails

Striped flufftails, *Sarothrura affinis*, are one of the most secretive of southern African birds. They skulk around in dense montane vegetation, producing a laugh-like cackle in response to the various ruses used to try to lure them into the open. Tape playback, hooting, models and endless patience are not enough for this bird, and even all-out assault seldom induces them to flush. All this changes at night, though. When they are hooting, the exquisite males can be carefully approached and located on the ground. Dazzled by a torch, their only response is to walk slowly away, often passing between the legs of the observers. As wildlife experiences go, this is one not to be missed.



MALE STRIPED FLUETAIL

Madagascar serpent-eagle

The first capture and release of a Madagascar serpent-eagle, *Eutriorchis astur*, in 63 years has been confirmed. This species is considered to be one of the six rarest birds in the world. It was also the first time in history that photographs of the eagle have been taken.

The first confirmed sighting occurred on 2 November 1993 on the edge of some of Madagascar's last remaining rain forest by Peregrine Fund biologists Russel Thorstrom, Victor Baba and Barthelemy Damary. They had established a camp at a bird inventory site in north-eastern Madagascar when Thorstrom discovered the eagle not far from the camp.

Although Thorstrom and his colleagues saw this serpent-eagle several times over the next few days, they were unable to photograph it. Returning to the area three weeks later with traps and radio gear, they discovered the forest was being destroyed by slash and burn farmers. Needless to say the eagle was not found.

Subsequently, on 14 January 1994, on the west side of the peninsula, Malagasy field biologists trapped a Madagascar serpent-eagle. Before it was released, it was photographed, ringed and careful measurements were taken. The photographs were used to confirm the identity of the bird.

'Finding the Madagascar serpent-eagle is extremely exciting for us – we have been looking for it since we arrived in Madagascar in 1990,' said Dr Rick Watson, the Peregrine Fund's

Project Director for Africa and Madagascar. 'We hope that this achievement will create tremendous interest and support among the people of Madagascar and demonstrate that Madagascar's flora and fauna are of international importance.'

Since nothing is known about the behaviour or biology of this secretive species, the Peregrine Fund has organized a study team which will observe the ringed serpent-eagle during the next few months in an effort to learn as much as possible about its behaviour, and thus begin to work to ensure the species' survival.

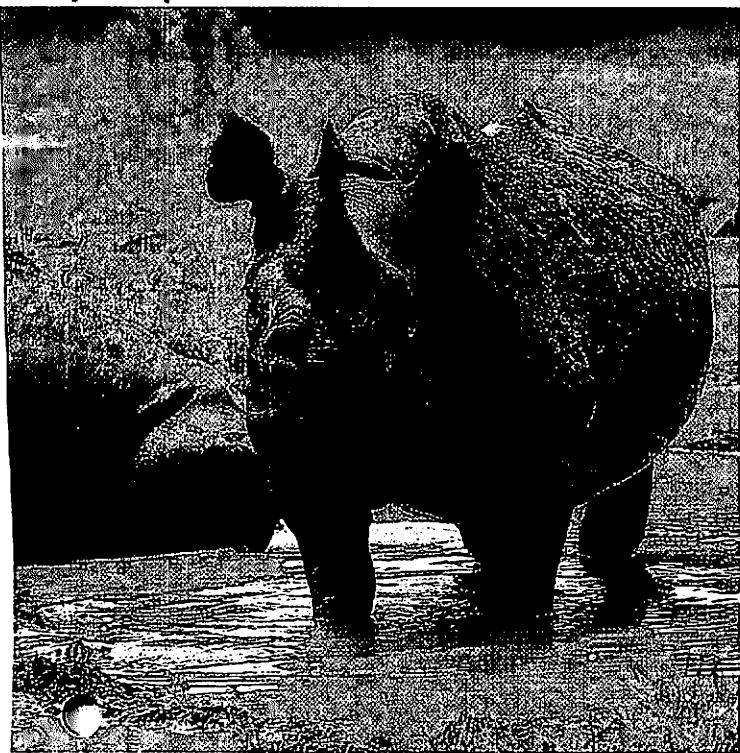
The Peregrine Fund is a non-profit international organization that emphasizes birds of prey for the conservation of nature. The Fund currently has projects in 10 countries worldwide. 



**MADAGASCAR SERPENT-EAGLE
MARTIN BABA: THE PEREGRINE FUND**

Africa Birdwatch aims to stimulate interest in and promote an awareness of the continent's rich diversity of avifauna by reporting new discoveries in the birding world, highlighting prime birding areas and focusing on conservation.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOAN SCHRAUWEN



'Wall of Death' at Saldanha Bay

In early April, police discovered a 700-metre illegal gill net in Saldanha Bay crammed with dead fish, sharks and seabirds, including four endangered jackass penguins. They believe that commercial fishermen were responsible. The net was found near the harbour on a routine police patrol, having apparently been dropped and marked with a buoy for inspection when the coast was clear. The maximum fine for using gill nets is R250 000.

FROM AN ORIGINAL REPORT IN
THE CAPE TIMES

White rhino (above) also in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve. Of the estimated 6 750 white rhinos in Africa, almost 6 400 occur in South Africa.

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IT'S TIME TO RESTOCK.

One rare treasure, J&B's unique blend of purest, old whiskies, now buys time for two others - 'Justerini' and 'Brooks', a pair of magnificent rare black rhinoceroses. The two young rhinos are among the first of many endangered species to benefit from J&B's new Care For The Rare programme. Their new home in Malawi's Liwonde

National Park should help ensure the future of their species. And we aim to raise over \$1,000,000 to give hope to many more. It's just one more way that J&B Rare can give enjoyment

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