

Rhino success story continues

Classified as one of the most threatened mammals on the African continent, the black rhino is a target for poachers throughout Africa. It is ruthlessly slaughtered for its horn, which commands very high prices in countries in the East.

In the areas in which the black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis*, occurred naturally in Africa, there are estimated to be less than 1 500 remaining. In Zimbabwe, for example, where there were still more than 1 000 black rhino three years ago, the numbers have fallen to less than 300.

The National Parks Board has been closely involved in attempts to save the black rhino from extinction, and concerted

efforts have been made to ensure the future of this endangered species in South Africa. Over the past decade, it has been part of the Parks Board's management policy to establish new black rhino populations in safe areas, far from where poaching generally occurs or away from vulnerable places such as international boundaries or densely populated rural areas.

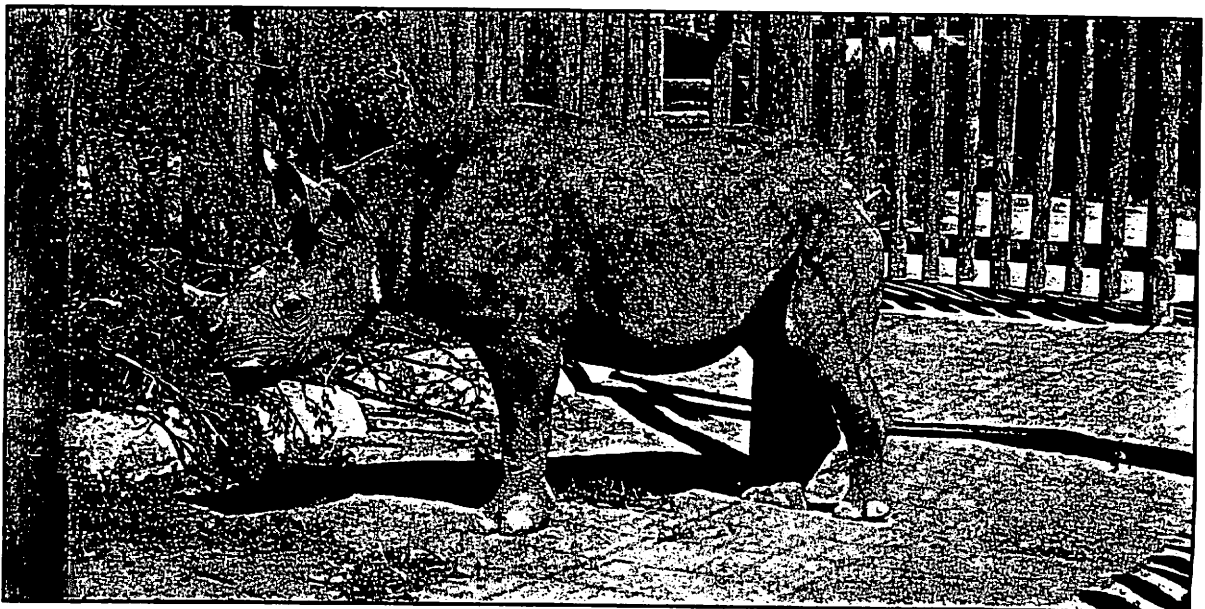
National parks in which black rhino populations have been established and where these populations are thriving, are the Addo Elephant, Augrabies Falls, Vaalbos, Karoo and Kruger national parks.

The rhino populations in the Addo Elephant and Karoo national parks were supplemented recently with new

arrivals in the form of a black rhino calf born in the Karoo National Park and a bull, which was imported from a private zoo in Port Lympe in the south of England to improve the genetic diversity of the rhino stock in the Addo Elephant National Park.

The calf which was born in the Karoo National Park, arrived just 18 months after three rhinos were released in the park in December 1993. A bull, Chipembere, and a cow, Ngara, had been transferred to the Karoo National Park from Vaalbos where they were joined by another cow, Catherina, from the Augrabies Falls National Park. They all belonged to the Namibian subspecies, *Diceros bicornis bicornis* (the true Cape

Gamka, the new arrival in the Karoo National Park. Photo: Henriëtte Engelbrecht.



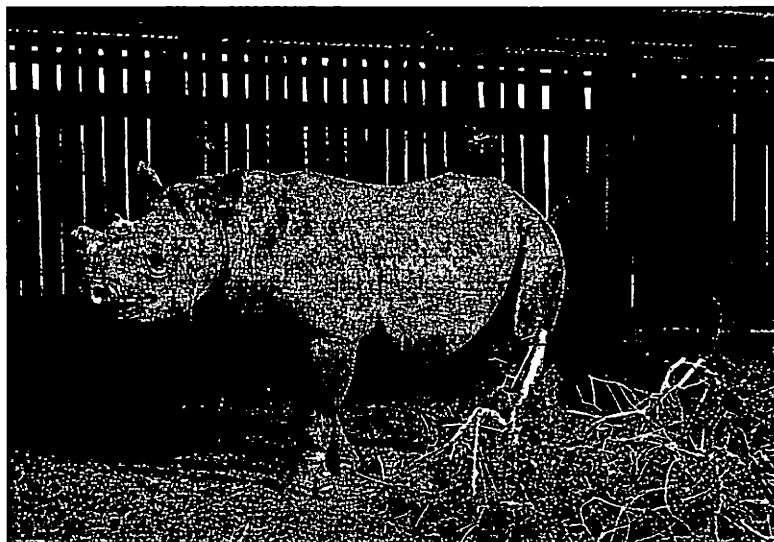
black rhino). The last rhino of this subspecies was shot in the vicinity of the Gamka River by Robert Jacob Gordon in November 1778. The new arrival has thus been named Gamka.

Its mother, Ngara, caused some excitement on her arrival in the park when she pushed one of the thick posts of the boma out of the ground with the greatest of ease with almost the first step she took. Shortly after their release from the boma, Chipembere was observed rubbing heads with Ngara. They were standing face to face and bumping against each other without any aggression. This is characteristic of mating behaviour and was indeed, as all had hoped, the prelude to more Karoo black rhino!

Addo's latest addition received all the treatment accorded an international guest when it boarded the plane at Heathrow, to complete its journey to its new home. From Johannesburg International Airport, it was transported by road to the park near Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape.

The four-year-old bull, a member of the subspecies *Diceros bicornis michaeli*, was born in captivity in the English zoo. It has been christened Bwana Kidogo (little master) and has been put into a two-hectare bush enclosure where it will remain until it is accustomed to the natural vegetation. It is presently receiving supplementary feeding in the form of potatoes, lucerne and cabbage. Once it has adapted to the natural food of the Addo bush, it will be moved into the park itself.

The bull's arrival is part of an exchange project with the zoo in an attempt by the National Parks Board to contribute to the captive populations of scarce or endangered sp-



Bwana Kidogo, the 4-year old black rhino bull which arrived in the Addo Elephant National Park after a flight all the way from England.

Photo: Wayne Erlank.

cies. An adult black rhino bull was relocated to the zoo last year and was followed by a young cow in August 1995. Both animals come from the Addo Elephant National Park.

The black rhino of the subspecies *Diceros bicornis michaeli* originate from East Africa. Four of these rhino were translocated from Kenya to the

Addo Elephant National Park in 1961/62. The bull has been brought to the park to promote greater genetic diversity, as the original Addo rhino population stems from only four animals. Due to the fact that the bull was born in captivity, it will be rehabilitated and will hopefully mate with Addo's rhino cows. 'It is our objective,' says Dr Anthony Hall-Martin, Director: Research and Development of the National Parks Board, 'to ensure a genetically strong rhino population in Addo, because we want to send them back home to East Africa.'

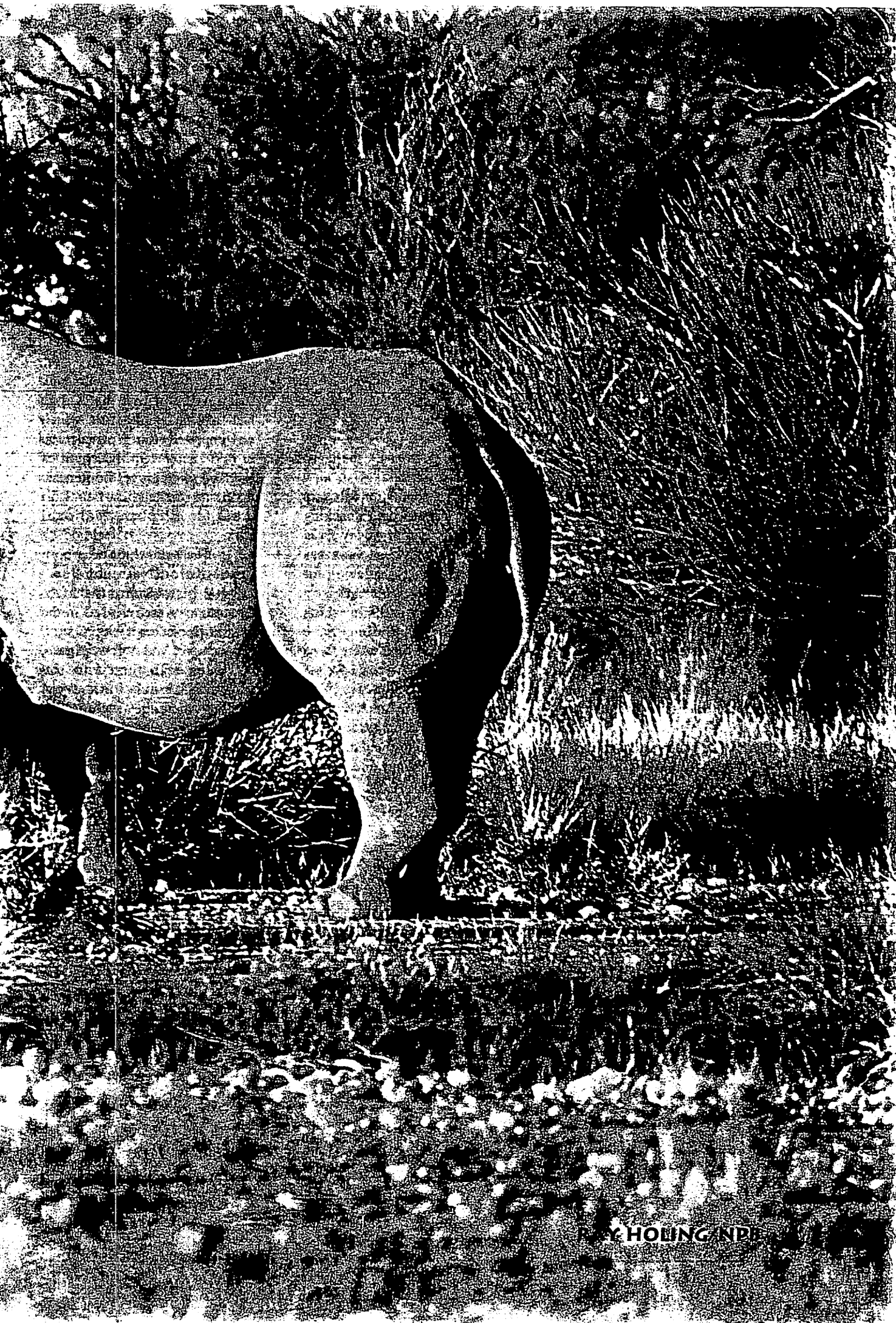
The bull follows in the footsteps of Shibula, a black rhino cow from the subspecies *Diceros bicornis bicornis*, which was successfully translocated from the Lisbon Zoo to the Augrabies Falls National Park in August 1991. Shibula adapted extremely well to her new home and has subsequently given birth to a female calf. This, coupled to the latest arrival in the Karoo National Park, is proof that the success story continues ...

Shibula, the black rhino cow which was successfully relocated in the Augrabies Falls National Park in 1991. Photo: Pat Hagen/NPB.





BLACK RHINO COW AND CALF



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