

THE RHINO MAN

Michael Werikhe is the spokesman for the rhino – a noble beast of Africa that is threatened with extinction

In Kenya they already call him the "Rhino Man". Next year, Michael Werikhe, the tireless crusader, will begin a trek to Europe to bring awareness of the plight of one of the world's most threatened species to non-African countries.

Soft-spoken and gentle, Michael Werikhe might seem an unlikely candidate for spokesman for the rhino. However, Werikhe has proved to be one of the most determined and effective individuals concerned with wildlife conservation. Mombasa born Werikhe says that nature has fascinated him since his childhood. His collection of pets included such curious choices as chameleons, lizards, snakes and small primates.

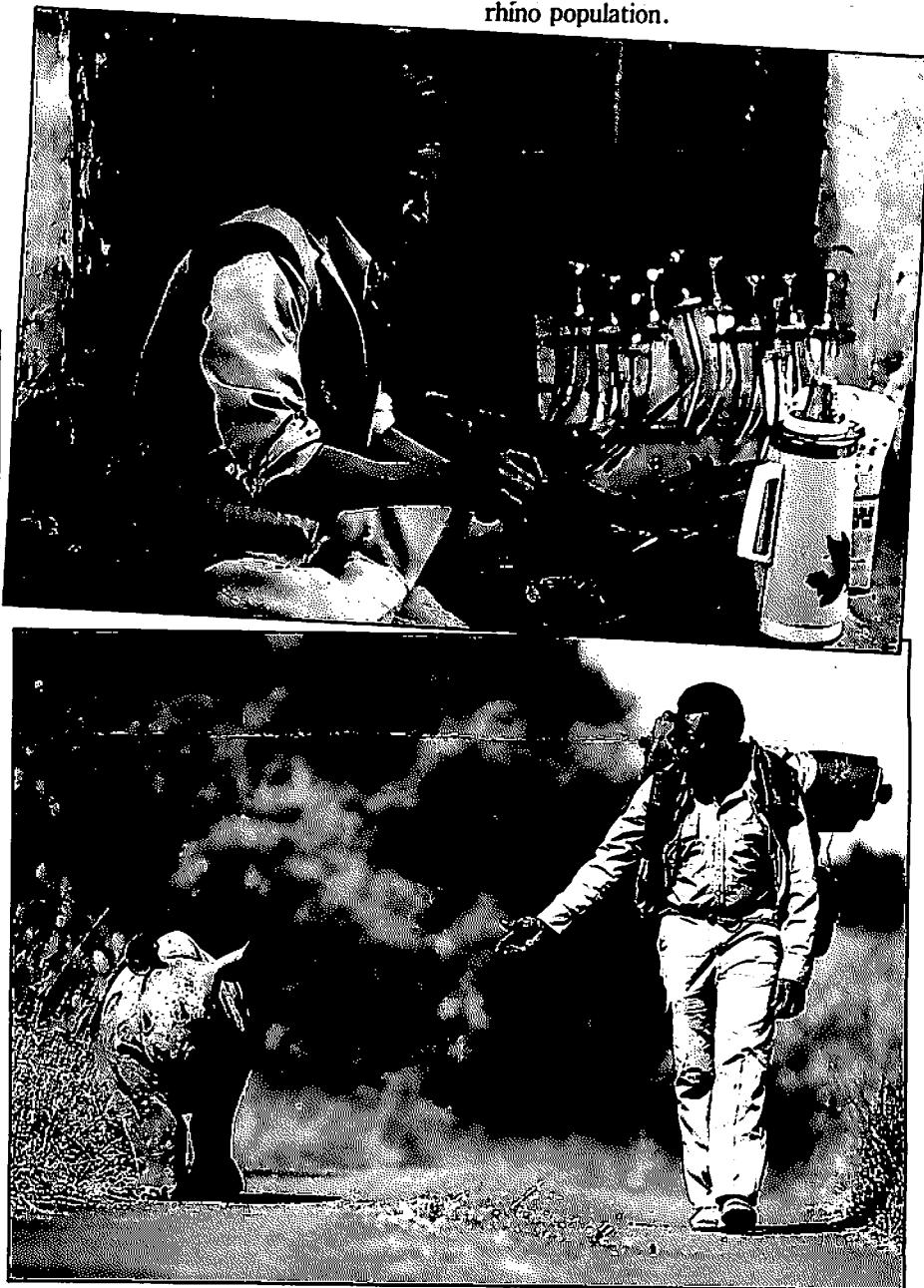
Always a protector of snakes, almost

universally feared in East Africa, Werikhe learned about their habits through frequent visits to Nairobi's Snake Park. He compares the fate of snakes with that of the rhino: both are threatened with extinction. He says: "It is regrettable that due to man's greed and selfishness, a number of reptiles feature prominently in the list of animals faced with extinction if the destruction of the environment continues".

Werikhe began his personal crusade in 1982, when he walked from Mombasa to Nairobi to raise money for "Save the Rhino" projects. "The best way to reach

people and pass on the message of conservation is by talking to them," he says. He proved his point again in 1983, during a 500 kilometre walk when he raised Shs 281,000 to benefit the Nakuru Rhino Sanctuary, Laikipia Rhino Ranch and a camel anti-poaching unit at Gorbessa in Meru National Park.

Most recently, Werikhe has walked through Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to spread the message a bit further. Next year, he will pack his knapsack and head for Europe, where he hopes to capture the attention of the western world in his continuing battle for the future of the rhino population.



Top: Rhino horn being used for dagger handles in North Yemen.

Above: Michael Werikhe and friend take a stroll.

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