

# New move in black rhino conservation

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On 18 June 1990, a founder population of black rhinoceros – two bulls and three cows – were auctioned by the Natal Parks Board, which realised a sum of R2,2 million, the highest price ever paid for the species by Mr Dale Parker, the owner of Lapalala Wilderness, and it means that the black rhino today is worth more alive than dead. In addition, the sale has provided the Natal Parks Board with important funding for various conservation programmes.

Lapalala Wilderness, a 24 400 ha sanctuary in the Waterberg mountains of the north-west Transvaal, was one of eight private game reserves that had applied to the Natal Parks Board for classification as suitable for the introduction of black rhinoceros. An area of approximately 10 000 ha was selected for the black rhino introduction. The entire reserve area, covering approximately 100 square kilometres, is encircled with an 18-strand game fence over a distance of approximately 45 kilometres. Five game scouts have been appointed to control the area, which amounts to one scout for every 20 square kilometres.

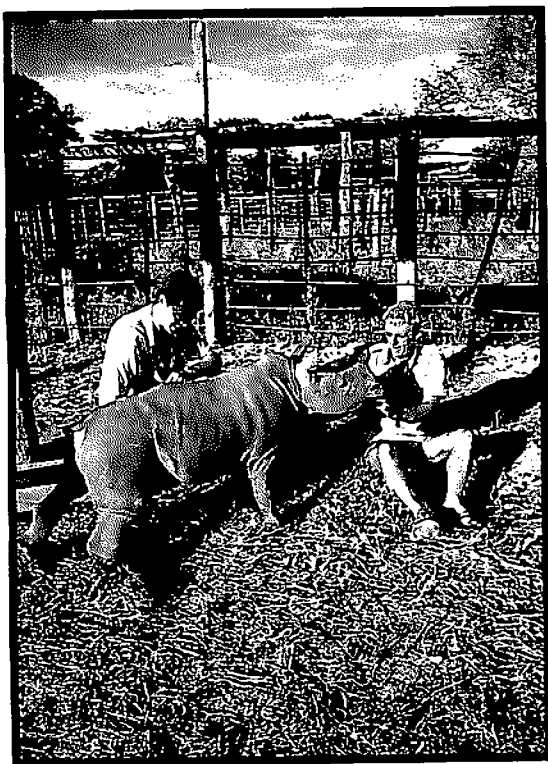
The topography of Lapalala Wilderness consists of densely bushed slopes, hills, plateaus and valleys, with the Blockland River running from south to north; this is a tributary of the Lephalala River, providing an excellent source of water. The entire area is surrounded by some

75 000 ha of wild country, devoted entirely to conservation.

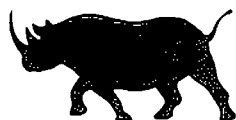
The rhinos left Natal on 8 August 1990, arriving at Lapalala the next day after a journey of some 15 hours in the Natal Parks Board's 18-wheeler rhino transporter, drawn by a powerful MAN Diesel Horse lent to the Board for the occasion. The operation was under the control of Apie Strauss and veterinarian Pete Rogers. Offloading into the newly-built bomas proceeded smoothly and heralded the return of the black rhino after an absence of more than 100 years.

The final release of the rhinos into the 10 000 ha sanctuary commenced on 3 December 1990, after eighteen weeks in the bomas. Previously, about four weeks was considered suitable, but extremely late rains had resulted in poor veld conditions and the decision was taken to hold the rhinos for a protracted period. A number of rhino specialists consulted unanimously, confirmed the wisdom of holding the rhinos back, regardless of cost, as the risk was high.

The protracted confinement resulted in all five rhinos calming down extremely well, which resulted in releases proceeding easily over a period of 10 days, one animal being released every 48 hours. No problems were experienced whatsoever and all five rhinos have settled in well; the two bulls selecting well separated locations.



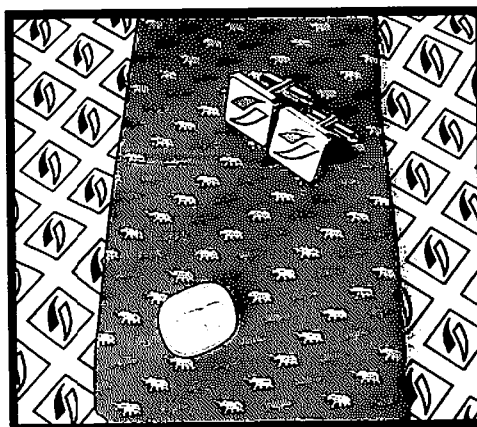
White rhino orphan rescued – Danie Pienaar, researcher for the Rhino and Elephant Foundation in the Kruger National Park, and Peter Hitchins, trustee of the Foundation, seen with Vurhami, the baby white rhinoceros found abandoned in the Kruger National Park. The youngster was hand-reared by Pienaar and staff of the National Parks Board in Skukuza, with support from the Rhino and Elephant Foundation. Vurhami gained one kilogram per day and was soon strong enough to travel to his new home in the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria.



The new REF tie is red with dark-grey rhinos and light-grey elephants running diagonally across it.

The lady's long scarf is 27cm x 118cm in white with black.

The REF jewellery is 24-carat goldplated and sandblasted, with a safety pin for the lady's brooch and a butterfly clutch for the lapel badge.



## NEW RHINO & ELEPHANT FOUNDATION REGALIA

	Price	Qty	Amount
Tie	R30,00		
Scarf	R27,50		
Cufflinks	R30,00		
Brooch	R17,50		
Lapel Badge	R17,50		
	Total	R	

Please find enclosed my cheque/postal order payable to the "Rhino and Elephant Foundation".

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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Two of the cows have been seen together on a number of occasions and the youngest, at seven years old, is very settled in the presence of people in vehicles, which has provided wonderful viewing for visitors to the reserve's exclusive lodge. The other four rhinos have reverted to type and are extremely shy.

Lapalala Wilderness wish to acknowledge the considerable support, advice and encouragement given by the Natal Parks Board and the following individuals and organisations. Their personal interest in the project was highly appreciated and

persisted during the entire period the rhino were held in bomas. They are: Dr Martin Brooks and Keith Meiklejohn of the Natal Parks Board; Dr Kobus du Toit; Dr Hymie Ebedes, Department of Agriculture; Dr Peter Rogers and Apie Strauss, Umfolozi Game Reserve; Louis Geldenhuys, Directorate of Nature Conservation, Namibia; Peter Hitchins, Songimvelo Game Reserve; Rod Henwood, Touchstone Game Reserve; Dr Anthony Hall-Martin and Dr Cobus Raath, National Parks Board of SA; and Clive Ravenhill of Lapalala Wilderness. 