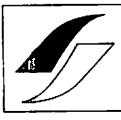


REF NEWS



Rhino & Elephant Foundation Newsletter No 19 July 1997
P O Box 381 Bedfordview 2008 Tel (011) 453-9829 Fax 453-7649



From the REF desk

The elephant debate recently held at CITES, has put the gentle giants in the spotlight. Also contributing to their current fame, are two magnificent books recently launched which made the world once again realise the splendour and magic surrounding these emotive animals.

Clive Walker was recently Guest Speaker at the launch of Daryl and Sharna Balfour's latest book, *African Elephants: A Celebration of Majesty*. Their book contains photographs (over 200) that takes one's breath away. Full-blown photographs depicting typical elephant behaviour, sometimes against the stunning orange backdrops of sunrise and sunset, are found on every page. Daryl and his wife, Sharna, tell the story of South African elephants which took them four years to write and photograph. Their travels took them across southern and East Africa to live with elephants in various safari areas.

"The more you get to know them the more you realise they are not just another animal," said Sharna. "They can certainly think and communicate. We'd follow a bull around for a day on foot and then sit perfectly still in the bush watching him. He would come towards us with curiosity and sniff. While they were bathing they would squirt water towards us as if wanting to play. They seemed to have individual personalities and you could recognise one straight away by appearance and behaviour."

The book is also about the ivory question. It is interesting to note that in the foreword Kenyan expert Ian Douglas-Hamilton says the following: "In the end, for elephant conservation, as for our own survival, we need to find a way of curbing human population growth and over-exploitation of natural resources on this planet."

And for those who are not weak at heart, Daryl Balfour gives a first-hand account on his near-fatal encounter with Tshokwane, a fierce Kruger National Park bull.



In the book *The Knysna Elephants and their Forest Home*, Clive Walker writes in his foreword: "The pages of this remarkable book bear testimony to those people who, over a number of decades, have fought so long and hard to preserve the last of the most southern elephants on the African continent. I am honoured to be associated with all those people who are mentioned in the pages of this book, especially Margo Mackay (the author of the book), who has championed their cause for as long as I can remember".

According to Gillian Carter the book "includes studies of the elephants by different teams of people and the adventures that befell them, fascinating tales of the elephants in days gone by, the story of the miners who strove to make a fortune from gold in the Millwood area of the forest, the brave experiment of transferring young elephants from the Kruger National Park to the Knysna forests in order to increase the small Knysna herd and the drama of their first encounter with the Matriarch, the last of the 'Knysna' elephants."

The selling price of the book is R65 and can be obtained from Wildlife Marketing, P O Box 1204, Knysna, 6570, tel (04457) 7732.

The book is available from Struik publishers at R169.

Rhino Museum

A call for more donations

The first ever Rhino Museum to be established in Africa has caused quite a stir amongst our friends and the media.

The old "Melkrivier" school is majestically being transformed into an Environmental Education Centre which would incorporate the Rhino Museum.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone that has supported this initiative to date. The many generous donations and sponsorships received from organisations and individuals need to be noted:

- ⇒ PJ's Printing and Mailing Services for the printing and repro of appeal brochures and museum letterheads.
- ⇒ Leba Jaffe and Reuben Lifschitz for the donation of artefacts and books. Mr Lifschitz has a priceless collection of books, many of which are complete ranges of encyclopedia. If you are interested in purchasing books, please contact him at (011) 786-6787.
- ⇒ Mr Mike Clark of Vadek Paints for the donation of paint.
- ⇒ First National Bank
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Dr M B Richter
Mr Hendrik van Heerden
Mr Peter D von Geusau
Mr P Warrener
Mr M Wilson

Please pledge your support.

For assistance, contact Lucinda Scholtz at
(011) 453-9834.

Report back on CITES

The main issues discussed in the corridors at the Conference concerned whales, bears and elephants. Very little was said about white rhino, although Dr George Hughes from the South African delegation presented a convincing argument at a press conference, which was very well attended. The overall impression of the Conference is that it is a political forum, with countries often more concerned about monetary contributions from foreign donor countries than about conservation issues. A continuous process of lobbying for votes for or against proposals went on, with some countries (dependent on foreign aid), changing their stand almost daily, depending on to whom they last spoke.

The South African proposal: The white rhino

The proposal from South Africa at the 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) was to remove the restrictions placed on the Southern African White Rhinoceros at COP9. South Africa asked for a zero quota, meaning that no actual trade would be conducted until the next Conference.

The result

The proposal by South Africa to legalise trade in rhino products was rejected by one vote on 18 June, with 60 in favour of and only 32 against. As some parties without voting rights participated in the vote, SA appealed against the decision and requested a second vote, this time by secret ballot. It was thought that this would allow some countries, eg. from the European Union, to vote in favour of the proposal despite the general European opposition to trade in white rhino products.

It thus came as a shock when in the second voting on 19 June, by secret ballot, the proposal was rejected with 54 votes for, and 48 votes against - far from a two third majority.

Proposals by Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana:

The elephant

The above-mentioned countries put individual proposals forward to down list the African elephant populations to Appendix II so that they could legally resume a restricted trade in ivory. Only stockpiled tusks would be used in the trade and only one trading partner, Japan, would be considered.

The result

Before voting on 17 June, South Africa proposed to treat the separate applications as one proposal, with the following amendments to the proposal:

- ◆ Allow trade in trophies, live specimens and raw ivory for all three countries.
- ◆ Allow trade in hides and leather, as well as ivory products for non-commercial purposes for Zimbabwe.
- ◆ Form an investigation panel from range states to work alongside with the CITES panel of experts on the issue of controls.
- ◆ Postpone trade for 18 months, after which the following quota can be sold - Botswana 25.3 tons, Namibia 13.8 tons and Zimbabwe 20 tons.

This proposal was rejected, but was only three votes short of a two thirds majority, with 75 votes in favour and only 41 against.

Two days later, the original three proposals were laid before the Conference again, with an amendment that trade would be postponed by 18 months for each country respectively. This time around all three proposals were accepted by the required two thirds majority.

Discussion

The poor performance of the South African rhino proposal was very disappointing, especially after the narrow defeat of the first proposal.

The results of the voting showed a strong support for sustainable use of natural resources. Much concern, however, was raised about the trade in white rhino products, such as horn for the medicinal market in the Far East. Despite the fact that our populations are productive and growing to such an extent that rhinos have to be removed annually from KwaZulu/Natal game reserves to prevent overpopulation and habitat degradation, the concerns of the opposing parties were that a legal trade could result in an increased poaching effort on other populations. The same arguments were used to oppose the trade in ivory.

Despite very strong undertakings that all necessary control measures will be implemented to prevent illegal products to enter the legal market, the opposing parties would not agree to at least give the system a chance to prove itself. All these arguments against the proposals showed that the parties are not willing to reward sound management efforts. Especially the larger non-African, developed countries like the USA, Australia and the European Union countries, who ironically do not have any elephants themselves, were very strong in their condemnation of the proposals. This raises suspicions that their motives are politically orientated, since large proportions of their constituents are animal rightists.

Daan Buijs

Obituary Nick Steele

Nick Steele came from a long line of distinguished Natal Parks Board wardens and was part of the original team led by Ian Player, back in the sixties, when the Natal Parks Board embarked upon the capture and translocation of the white rhinoceros. This was to be the forerunner of the most successful conservation exercise ever carried out in Africa and ensured the long-term survival of the species. Nick Steele, together with many other outstanding men, established forever the reputation that the Natal Parks Board enjoys to this very day.

I first made the acquaintance of Nick in 1987 when we were both en route to the World Wilderness Congress in Colorado in the United States. He was a great believer in the wilderness concept and did much to develop the wildlife areas that came under his control.

Our paths crossed again when he initiated the first security workshop held at Treasure Beach, dealing with aspects related to the poaching of both rhinos and elephants. He was to become the Chairman of the Rhino Management Group Security Committee which became the Rhino & Elephant Security Group. He succeeded in bringing not only the various conservation authorities in South Africa into the group, but countries such as Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia.

The Rhino & Elephant Foundation supported the Group from its inception and for the last five years, I have represented the private landowner at their meetings, dealing with the serious threats posed by elephant and rhinoceros poaching. In an area that is otherwise generally very suspicious of everyone and everything, Nick Steele was able to draw out the best in all concerned in a most exemplary, cooperative manner. Meetings were always punctuated by an open, honest approach, which resulted in considerable cooperation amongst all concerned. He was also responsible for initiating the Master Strategy for the security of both rhinos and elephants and was furthermore responsible for having Ian Thomson seconded from the KwaZulu Conservation Department as the Coordinator.

When the history of rhinoceros conservation is one day written, Nick Steele's name will be prominent, for he represented the true spirit of Africa's game ranger with his strong sense of duty, integrity, honesty and compassion for an animal that he loved a great deal. The African conservation world is diminished by his passing, but he holds out a beacon of light as an example to all of Africa's game rangers.

Clive Walker

Global Executive pledges their support

Global Executive, a newly established company that assembles and sells gearlocks, has come up with the splendid idea of selling Rhino Gearlocks to the public. The Rhino Gearlock symbolises the strength of a rhino and the good news is - Global Executive has pledged donations to the Foundation on the sale of every Rhino Gearlock!

Our grateful thanks to Mr John Conn, Director of Global Executive and his assistant, Mr Peter Slow for their support.

Donation to Itala Game Reserve

The Foundation and WWF South Africa have donated money to the Natal Parks Board for the purchasing of night vision equipment to be utilised in the Itala Game Reserve. The provision of this equipment can be seen as a positive means of combating poaching in the field of rhinoceros conservation.

We would like to thank Mr Dennis Tunnicliffe for his generous donation, which was applied to the funding of the night vision equipment.

Keeping Track magazine Survey

As an added bonus, members of the Foundation frequently receive complimentary copies of the popular environmental magazine, *Keeping Track*. The Foundation supplies information on its activities and projects to the editorial staff of the magazine on a continual basis.

We would like to undertake a survey in order to determine the popularity of the magazine amongst our members. The reason for this is that the postage costs for the magazine are high and we would like to determine if it is worth our while to regularly mail complimentary copies.

Please complete questionnaire and fax to (011) 453-7649 or mail to the Rhino & Elephant Foundation.

I read *Keeping Track* and would like to receive copies on a regular basis.

I do not read *Keeping Track* and do not have to receive copies.

Thank you for your valued co-operation.

A big thanks!

What else can we say but a sincere "thank you" to all our supporters and donors.

We wish to extend our appreciation to Jack and Georgina de Beer of Abberley Guest House in the beautiful Midlands for their support. They distribute the *REF News* and keep their clients up to date with our activities. We also want to thank Jack, owner of Vistel Vision, for fixing our electrical appliances free of charge.

We have received invaluable support and donations from the following corporates:

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Tudor Griffiths Group
T W Industrial Valves cc
Umgeni Water

Welcome to a new corporate member:

African Oxygen Limited

And a new individual member:

Mr Jaco Engelbrecht

Generous donations were received from the following individuals:

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