



# Rhino Watch

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AFRICAN RHINO OWNERS ASSOCIATION  
A SPECIALIST WORKING GROUP OF THE RHINO & ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

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NUMBER 8

## Editorial

The Committee of the African Rhino Owners Association has asked me to assist in editing future issues of Rhino Watch.

I recently arrived from Holland to take up the new post of Curator of the Waterberg Environmental Centre incorporating a Rhino Museum (the first in Africa) and a Cultural History Museum in the Northern Province.

For any Newsletter to be interesting to its readers, it needs input from various sources. I would like to request your co-operation: send me information about any rhino happenings in your area, and tell me what kind of information you would like to read about.

From this issue onwards, I will try to include two columns, one a "Rhinoceros Factfile" focusing on different biological and historical aspects of the Black and the White Rhinoceros, the second on "Rhinoceros Illustrations" to show and explain the background of older and newer published pictures and plates of the African rhinoceroses. Send us your information, comments and questions, you will have a more interesting newsletter.

Dr Kees Rookmaaker, Editor

## Pregnancy determination in rhinos

Pregnancy in rhinos and elephants can be detected by a new technique called "infrared thermography",

according to Sabine Hilsberg writing in the last issue of 'Bongo', the annual journal of the Zoological Gardens in Berlin.

One needs a specially designed camera which measures the heat that every living body naturally transmits into the air, and translates these emissions into a simple colour picture. No need to touch the animal or even come near it.

The photographs seem quite easy to read, exhibiting signs of pregnancy even to the eyes of a layman. It seems like a simple and exciting technique, which will need further research. (*Bongo*, Berlin, 28, 1998, pp. 1-8).

## Northern white rhino update

While the numbers of Southern White Rhino are ever increasing, the Northern subspecies of Uganda, Congo and Sudan is very near extinction. It was exterminated in much of its former range where even fifty years ago it was quite numerous.

Its last stronghold is the Garamba National Park in the North-East corner of Congo.

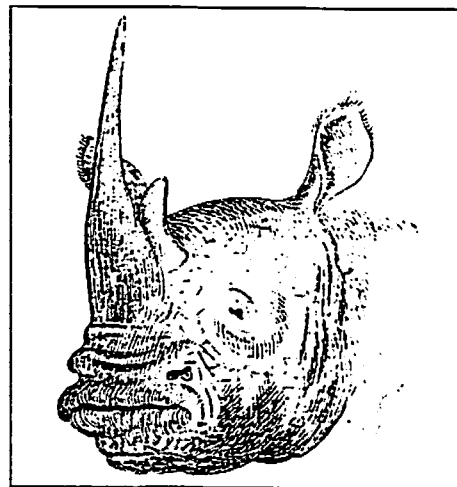
While the number of survivors was not all that high for the past years, at least they were increasing and well protected. Of course, the recent civil war in Congo could easily have wiped out the total population, at least there were fears that only a handful would have remained.

However, a survey by WWF in May 1998 showed that a minimum of 24 white rhinos continue living in Garamba. This should encourage the local authorities to continue their fight to maintain this special kind of rhinoceros.

eros. (WWF Press Release)

## "Rhino Ranching" still available

This Management Manual for owners of white rhinos, by Dr J.G. (Kobus) Du Toit, is still available from the AROA office, at R 75.00 (post free) for addresses in South Africa. Call or write our office and order your copy.

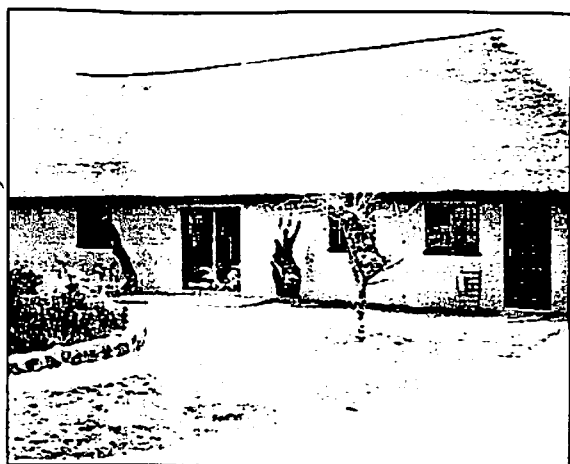


## Rhinoceros illustrations, 1: W.J. Burchell

By Dr Kees Rookmaaker

Shown here is the first known published representation of the White Rhinoceros. It was engraved after a drawing made by William John Burchell (1782-1863), an Englishman who explored parts of Southern Africa between 1810 and 1815. In 1822 the first volume of his *Travels* appeared

in London, followed in 1824 by the second part. Burchell saw his first White Rhinoceros on 16 October 1812 at Heuning Vlei near the Makuba Range, about 120 km north of the city of Kuruman. He made several drawings on the spot. One of these sketches he sent with a letter describing this new variety to scientists in Paris, who reproduced his letter (in French) as well as the engraved sketch. There is no doubt that Burchell saw the white rhinoceros, clearly shown by the broad upper lip, which gave it its name.



## Rhino museum update

In the last issue of *Rhino Watch*, we highlighted the Rhino Museum, to be established in the Waterberg Mountains of Northern Province. This is a major project under the auspices of the Rhino & Elephant Foundation, led by Mr Clive Walker.

The renovations of the old school buildings are now entering into their last phases and we expect to open within a few months: watch this space for further information! While the Museum itself will highlight aspects of environmental education, there will also be a research library with literature on the rhinoceros, the elephant and the natural history of the Northern Province.

Dr Kees Rookmaaker, the Curator of the Museum, has brought with him from Holland his own personal library of rhinoceros literature, already numbering over five thousand references to books and papers dealing with the rhinoceros in all its many facets, biological and cultural, ranging in date from Roman times to the most recent.

As soon as this collection is arranged in the museum premises, it will be made accessible to the public. However, if you have any books on the rhinoceros or elephant or wildlife in general, sitting unread and maybe unwanted on your bookshelf, the Museum will be most happy with your donation of these. Call us for further information. All donations will be acknowledged.

## Waterberg biosphere reserve

by Clive Walker

On 16 June 1998, Mr Clive H. Walker, Chairman of AROA, delivered a paper on the subject of a Biosphere Reserve, to a group of international students at the SYMCO Conference held at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty.

The area of the Waterberg Mountains in the Northern

Province was a largely unknown destination until recent years, despite the fact that it is only a few hours drive from the major urban centres of Pretoria and Johannesburg, and a region of spectacular mountainous scenery and diverse nature. From about 1980, however, many private game reserves and tourist destinations began to develop.

The concept of a Biosphere Reserve was established in 1957 by UNESCO, which stipulated that any such reserve should consist of (1) a Central Area with minimal or no human interference, (2) a Buffer Zone, in which there could be sustainable use of land, such as tourism, hunting, environmental education, and (3) a Transition Zone, where farmers and communities could be located.

The Waterberg Mountains can satisfy all of these criteria. The role of the government is facilitatory and advisory only. The Biosphere Reserve will not only enhance the value of the land in the Waterberg, but it will also provide assistance to the peoples of the region, not least in the form of job creation, thus ensuring the survival of one of South

Africa's most unique areas.

## Safety at Shamwari

Dr Johan Joubert, Committee Member of AROA, sends us the following comments about safety procedures adopted at the Shamwari Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape:

Populations of both black and white rhinos have been introduced at Shamwari over the past five years. They were subsequently released into the Reserve after an adaptation period in bomas, and have since not only adapted well to the environment, but their reproduction has exceeded all expectations.

The reserve is employing a special anti-poaching unit led by Ryan Adcock, an ex-SADP officer. The unit members have received special training in anti poaching techniques and they are well-equipped with semi-automatic rifles, a radio system with private channels and a four wheel drive vehicle. Patrols are also carried out on foot and on horseback. Every rhino in the reserve has its own file with photographs for positive identification. Every rhino sighting, also by other personnel, is recorded. If a specific rhinoceros has not been seen for some time, the anti-poaching unit will search for it until it is found.

## Rhino as watchdog

A local newspaper reported that one morning before dawn, in the Zoo of Cali, Columbia, a man who had managed to evade security had been gored and sat on by a rhinoceros, which had resulted in his untimely death. On enquiry at the zoo, their response had been that they did in fact have a single specimen of white rhinoceros on exhibit. On the eve of the incident, as was customary, the park had been locked up, however, the following morning they had discovered the clothes and remains of a 60-year old man, who had presumably been trampled to death by the rhinoceros. Maybe the animal had been frightened by his unexpected night caller?

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