

RHINO MANAGEMENT GROUP

The black rhino *Diceros bicornis* is perceived, in a global context, as a high profile, endangered species of great value. Its populations elsewhere in Africa have declined sharply as a direct result of the internationally organised illegal trade in rhino products (especially horn). The recent acceleration in this decline has been facilitated by inept and corrupt conservation management and slack law enforcement in many countries, and southern Africa has not been totally exempt from such problems.

However, southern Africa now provides the last secure refuges for the species. Its conservation agencies are thereby entrusted collectively with the responsibility of protecting and managing these populations, a task that could not be achieved by any one of them alone.

This realisation, supported by IUCN activities, caused local conservation agency ecologists to draft the regional "Conservation plan for the black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* in South Africa, the TBVC States and Namibia". The Plan was formally adopted in 1989 by all the conservation agencies concerned. As a result the Rhino Management Group (RMG) was formally convened later that year to give effect to the plan.

Objective of the RMG

To provide research and management advice to assist the various conservation agencies and private owners in achieving the regional conservation goals for black rhino, which at present are aimed at achieving populations of at least 2000 *Diceros bicornis minor* (southern-central Africa), 2000 *D.b. bicornis* (south-western Africa/Namibia), 100 *D.b. michaeli* (northern-eastern Africa).

Strategies of the Group

- Identifying problems or information needs relevant to achieving the conservation goals for the species.
- Initiating and co-ordinating appropriate programmes (meetings, workshops, projects) necessary to provide management advice and to develop appropriate strategies.

- Assisting in the identification of conservation priorities for the species to guide both conservation authorities and non-government funding agencies.
- Developing and co-ordinating integrated research programmes to meet the regional conservation needs of the species.
- Evaluating project proposals and submitting recommendations to relevant bodies.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of current management programmes (e.g. security, population management, monitoring and re-establishments) as described in the annual Status Reports submitted by the management authorities.
- Providing advice, on request, to conservation authorities for the improved management of black rhinos.
- Liaising closely with all relevant conservation authorities and funding agencies.
- To be the responsible party for managing the Conservation Plan: by collecting, analysing and interpreting the information it requires; by keeping it updated and ensuring its continuing relevance; and by publicising the results of these activities in appropriate ways.

NATAL PARKS BOARD'S APPOINTMENT TO IUCN SPECIALIST GROUP



Dr Martin Brooks, the Natal Parks Board's Head of Scientific Services, has been elected Chairman of the African Rhino Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of