

RHINO WOMAN

No, it's not me. If Michael Werihke is the "Rhino Man" then Anna Merz is the "Rhino Woman" For more than ten years, Anna has committed her life to rhino preservation on a 5,000 acre ranch (Lewa Downs). Below is an excerpt from an interview with Karen Kane which appeared in ZOOLIFE [Winter, 1993]

"With the blessings of the Kenya Wildlife Service, black rhinos were captured and released on the reserve now called Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary. At the present time it is home to nearly two dozen white and black rhinos. In just a decade the rhinos translocated there have produced 15 young. The Bowling for Rhinos fundraiser helps support this effort and in fact, the sanctuary has expanded to 45,000 acres (the entire Lewa Downs) and the adjoining 16,000 acres Ngare Ndare Forest Reserve owned by the Kenyan government. Nearly every species of East African animal (except hippos) live on the reserve. Two well-guarded openings in the fence allow for animal migration.

When asked what the most important thing she would want people to know about rhinos, Merz responded, "They are sensitive, intelligent animals. they have been on this earth for 60 million years and have adapted themselves in living quite comfortably among nonhuman creatures."

In describing the poaching around Ngare Sergoi, Merz commented that "the Somali Shifas are the most dangerous gangs of poachers. They travel from the north armed with machine guns. No one can stop them before they reach Ngare Sergoi. Fortunately, no rhinos have been lost to the poachers. Guards watch over the animals every day, and the electric fence alerts us to anyone who touches it. We are also fortunate in that the villagers near the reserve, who are very grateful to us because the fencing protects their crops from animals, are watchful of poachers too."

Merz' response to the dehorning of rhinos to protect them was, "it would be a shame to mutilate an animal to protect it, but I also think it is better to have a dehorned rhino than a dead rhino." (Rhinos at the sanctuary are property of the government whose policy is not to dehorn.)

When people in the U.S. ask how they can help rhinos, Merz suggests learning about them, "understand why they are such wonderful creatures and support organizations that work to protect them. Why anyone should help rhinos is akin to asking why anyone should help older people and innocent children. People should have reverence and respect for every living thing."

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Excerpts from Anna's United States lecture tour have been reprinted in the Fall, 1992 issue of H.O.R.N. magazine, the official newsletter of the Ngare Sergoi Support Group. A year's

subscription is \$15 and you get a 10% discount on any products they sell. To subscribe to H.O.R.N. or to order your own copy of *Rhino At the Brink of Extinction*, send \$22.50 to Ngare Sergoi Support Group, PO Box 29503, Columbus, OH 43229. All proceeds go directly to Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary for the continued operation and success of the sanctuary. P.S. Did you see Andy Lodge and Anna Merz on the recent National Geographic special about zoos

SEX AND THE SINGLE RHINO

Tell me you watched this November episode back in December! Affectionately known as "sewer science" by participants at the International Rhino Conference in 1991, this hour program delved into the problem of artificial means of propagation of the rhino species. You may be vexed that the producers ask such questions as "why bother?" or "does tampering with genes effect evolution of the species?" and there is definitely no consensus on the efficacy of these projects. If you would like to have a copy of this program, write to PBS in Washington, DC. (Call your local library for the address)

(X-Rated)
Just kidding