



## Report from Kenya

To be given the opportunity to walk our rhino costume across Kenya, visiting and celebrating with rural Africans as we marched onto Mt Kilimanjaro, was a real privilege, but to receive the continued support of Kenya's very own rhino man, Michael Werikhe, has been a great honour. Michael is now working part-time for the charity and we are in the process of establishing a small office in his house in Mombasa. Since building classrooms for primary schools in the Taita Tavet district from the Mt Kilimanjaro Rhino Climb funds, Save The Rhino are also providing walking boots donated by Caterpillar, and two-way radios from Motorola, which are proving invaluable in anti-poaching efforts: good communications between monitoring teams are essential when working with black rhinos whose range can be vast.

Our commitment to supporting community conservation initiatives is strong in Kenya and, at the time of writing this, we are casting the net amongst Grant Making Trusts to fund a pioneering Puppets For Conservation programme. The puppet performances will be used as a communications tool to demonstrate the problems faced by the communities living in the areas surrounding the great National Parks of Kenya. The initiative will leave the communities with sufficient skills to enable them to earn incomes from hosting puppet performances at tourist lodges across Kenya. Providing funding is forthcoming, we will begin training selected local communities by September 1997.

David Stirling



## Mt. Everest Rhino Climb

After the unprecedented success of The Mt Kilimanjaro Rhino Climb in 1994, when a six person team took it in turns to wear the rhino costume all the way from Mombasa at sea level to Africa's highest point, the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro, Save The Rhino International has kept its eyes open for an even greater challenge. When I met Britain's first Everest summiteer, Doug Scott, I knew we would have to give it a go ourselves. In 1999, Save The Rhino will attempt to walk the rhino costume from Calcutta at sea level to the highest point in the world, the summit of Mt Everest. Some might criticise us for being foolhardy in trying to attempt the world's highest mountain clad in our 32lb rhino costume, but I believe, with the back-up of Doug's Himalayan climbing company the Trekking Co-operative and the expertise of British climber John Barry who will lead the expedition, we have every chance of success, weather permitting!



Our team on Kilimanjaro

The objective is not only to raise awareness of the plight of the rhino, but to use this end of the century rhino climb to set up an Indian rhino fund to support India and Nepal's population of greater one horned rhinos. With a population of around 2000, split mainly between Chitwan National Park in Nepal and Kaziranga Park in N.E. India, the situation might not seem as dire as other rhino populations, but the difference is in population densities. Africa's black rhinos, numbering some 2500, are spread over a large number of protected areas in East and Southern Africa, whereas India has a population of 1200 rhinos almost entirely within a 450 sq km area. Due to such a high density, this population is extremely vulnerable and poaching of up to 2 a week is not uncommon. The Indian Rhino Fund will be set up from money raised by the Everest Climb and will help to protect the population further, eventually leading to finding ways of relocating rhinos into other areas of India.

The Sea to Summit Everest Climb will be our greatest challenge to date, rest assured we shall keep you up to date with its preparation and fundraising initiatives.

David Stirling



## The History of the Rhino running The London Marathon

In 1990, despite desperate last ditch efforts by conservationists, many rhino populations were on the brink of extinction. Numbers of rhino had plummeted by over 97% in less than thirty years.

Two modern-day African explorers, united by a lifelong friendship and a love of Africa, dedicated an African expedition to the rhino. They discovered that the rhino had disappeared in most places and that to many people it was becoming a distant memory, an animal that only old men of the tribe could tell their children about.

The two explorers returned to London full of the energy and idealism of youth... the rhino could be saved, it must be saved. Surely mankind wouldn't knowingly be responsible for the extinction of the planet's last living dinosaur, an animal which has been around for 50 million years? Within six months they were as despairing as the conservationists. The issues involved were so complex, there seemed no way forward. At the darkest time, they were told about a play at Chichester Theatre called Rhinoceros, by a famous playwright called Ionesco. The inhabitants of a Spanish village fall into such a state of social and cultural decay that they then turn into rhinos. The play bombed, but the rhinos, or the two-legged rhino costumes, were requisitioned - they were to become the symbol of the battle to save the rhino.

In 1992, one of the actors from the Chichester play volunteered to run the 26.2 mile London Marathon in a rhino costume in order to raise funds for the rhino. He also ran in a pair of Rockport brogues, supplied by the multi-national company which promised sponsorship if he finished. He did, in six hours 45 mins, carried along on a tidal wave of emotion generated by the millions of cheering, screaming, crying spectators lining the course. No one in the media reported this epic achievement, because they assumed that the costume had been worn at the beginning, and at the end, for show. Rockport proved impossible to contact after the event.

This heroic, unrecognised effort paved the way for other rhino costume runners, culminating in the ten rhino costume runners in the 1997 London Marathon, including the first women to take up the challenge. All finished, including Jenny rhino who ran almost the whole race alone with her "zookeeper", towards the back of the field, and finished in seven hours.

The phenomenal efforts of ordinary people, some of whom have never seen Africa, let alone a rhino, has provided a solid foundation from which Save The Rhino International can support rhinos in the wild. Save The Rhino has launched the Global Rhino Fund to provide responsible, financial support for countries to build on their rhino populations, or to re-introduce them into wild areas.

The rhino costume has touched the hearts of millions around the world. It has generated goodwill and support for all conservation organisations and conservationists, and offered them a life-line, a light at the end of the tunnel, in the effort to halt, then reverse, the terrible damage that mankind has inflicted on the planet and itself in recent generations.

Johnny Roberts

