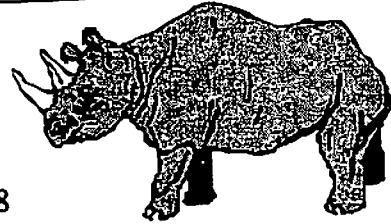


REALLY, RHINOS!



Volume 12/3, 1998

Last White Rhinos in the Wild Imperiled by African Civil War

David Orr, Christian Science Monitor, March 14, 1997

The northern white rhinoceros of Africa is one of the rarest mammals on earth. Hunted to the brink of extinction for its horn, it now faces a new and potentially lethal danger: civil war. Since its habitat in the north of Zaire has been occupied this winter, first by Zaire's Army and now by rebels trying to overthrow President Mobutu Sese Seko, conservationists have been unable to carry out work essential to its survival.

Garamba National Park, home to the world's few remaining northern white rhinos, is now part of a vast swath of territory held by rebels of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. "It's not so much that the rebels themselves pose a danger to the rhinos," says Fraser Smith of the Washington-based World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). "But, because the patrolling and monitoring have been disrupted, we can't protect the animals from poachers.

"I must admit I'm really concerned for the rhinos' safety now," Mr. Smith says.

No more than 31 northern white rhinos exist in the wild, all of them in Garamba. There has been no effective management of the Zairean park, an area about the size of Delaware since December.

According to one assessment, between two and four animals will be poached this year if the necessary support is not provided. "For a while we completely lost contact with what was going on in the park," says Smith, who got rebel approval to journey to Garamba this week to see if the region's de facto authorities will let him continue the conservation program. "It's still not clear what it will take to resume our activities there."

"Quite a lot of our equipment...was looted by government soldiers as they left. We also believe the guards' weapons may have been confiscated by the rebels.

From a logistical point of view, we might be starting almost from scratch," he says.

Among the conservation measures most affected will be an innovative program to implant radio transmitters in the rhinos' horns. Last year, five animals were fitted with transmitters so aerial trackers could monitor them more closely.

Plans to implant more transmitters this year will probably have to be shelved, but the aerial monitoring of the already tagged rhinos will be funded this year by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. "Our work has been interrupted at a critical moment," says Kes Hillman Smith, a rhino monitoring coordinator in Garamba. "Poaching has been getting more sophisticated in the last few years. The poachers are also becoming more daring and (are) ranging deeper into the park."

Last year, two rhinos were slaughtered by poachers. rhino horn fetches a high price in Yemen where it is made into dagger handles; and in China, where it is used in medicine.

Discovered early this century, the northern white rhino once roamed across much of central Africa. but by 1980, civil unrest and poaching had reduced the population to fewer than 400 animals. By 1984, when the WWF started the protection program at Garamba, the number was down to 15. Thanks to its efforts, the number doubled during the last decade. But the rhino is still extremely endangered.

Despite its status as a United Nations World Heritage Site, Garamba has received little help from Zaire's government. Were it not for the WWF and the International Rhino Foundation in Cumberland, Ohio, the 300 park staff would not have been paid for the past four years.

Despite the uncertainty of the situation, many conservationists say that Zaire's park and animals stand a better chance in the hands of the rebels, who least appear sympathetic to conservation issues.

That was then, this is now...

Rare white rhino survives civil war

NAIROBI (Reuters) - The northern white rhinoceros, one of the world's most threatened sub-species, has survived last year's civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said in Nairobi Sunday.

A survey of a remote northeast area of the country has revealed at least 24 northern white rhinos, WWF's Dr Sheila O'Connor said in a statement.

The Garamba National Park in this area is the only known place where the northern white rhino -- a separate sub-species from the southern white rhino found in South Africa -- survives in the wild.

The white rhinos formerly found in neighboring Uganda and Sudan have already died out, the victims of poaching and civil wars.

WWF conservation specialists were evacuated from the Garamba park when fighting broke out in the Congo -- then Zaire -- in 1996. They were able to return there only recently, fearing that the last white rhinos had been hunted out by poachers.

O'Connor said the animals surveyed included at least four young ones, born within the last year. Further surveys are to be carried out to establish a more exact figure for the rhino population.

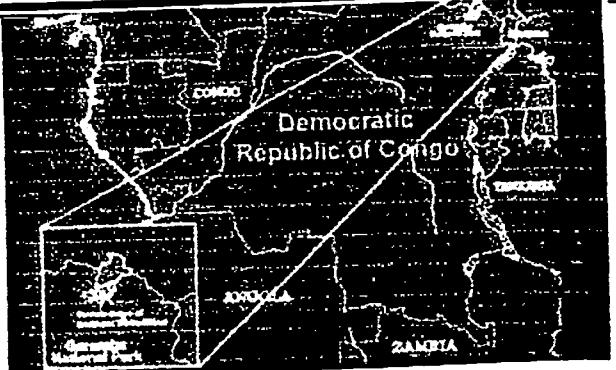
O'Connor said the authorities in the Garamba park had a "commitment to conservation." The WWF was assisting the Congo government to re-establish conservation programs in the Garamba park and elsewhere.

She said that when WWF began its rhino project in Garamba in 1984 there were thought to be only 13 rhinos left. The latest survey provided a great source of encouragement, and was evidence of the rhino's powers of endurance, she added.

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Moral of the story:

War is unhealthy for children and other living things...



Adopt a Guard/Patrol in Garamba National Park

Since 1995, the International Rhino Foundation has provided all funds for guard salaries and bonuses within Garamba National Park. However, a recent joint report from WWF and AfRSG has stressed an alarming increase in armed contact with poachers between January and April of this year. Also during this time, two northern white rhino were found poached for the first time since 1983 and one guard was shot and killed by poachers. In response to this situation, the International Rhino Foundation is offering a new way for you to help the northern white rhino in Garamba by instituting an "Adopt a Guard/Patrol" program.

For only \$20.00/month you can sponsor the salary of a single guard. With an additional donation of \$5.00/month you can also provide a guard with 2 uniforms and a pair of boot

For \$100 - \$200/month, you can support a Patrol (Patrols consist of 5 to 10 guards). With an additional \$25.00 - \$50.00/month you can provide 2 uniforms and a pair of boots for each guard in the Patrol.

More funds are urgently needed to help train, equip and recruit additional guards and patrols to protect the surviving 25 northern white rhino from poachers!! For more information visit: www.irf.org

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CRES, the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species, is operated by the Zoological Society of San Diego. Here are excerpts from its quarterly newsletter.

[Fall, 1997]

During the last five years, [CRES has] established new techniques to monitor reproduction and stress in the black and the white rhinos. Since daily blood samples are not appropriate or safe to obtain from most rhino species, we have developed techniques to measure reproductive and adrenal steroids in fecal samples. Fecal samples are abundant, simple to collect, and collection procedures are non invasive to the animal. This allows evaluation of daily reproductive hormones to assess ovulation, early pregnancy, infertility, and impending parturition(birth). In addition, to indicate if an animal is experiencing stress, adrenal steroids can also be measured in the feces. Hormonal evaluations using techniques can be applied to help solve several problems.

For example, free-ranging rhino species in general have a much better reproductive rate than those populations held in captivity (although wild rhinos have a poor survival rate because of poaching). The captive black rhino population has been reproducing at a lower rate than the free-ranging population.

The only captive population of northern white rhinoceroses in North America is at the Wild Animal Park, and they have not reproduced. [The] population of two males and two females needs to be thoroughly evaluated for reproductive fertility. Fecal hormone analysis of the females will provide valuable information to the animal care managers and veterinarians so that proper pairing or treatment can take place.

The Wild Animal Park has been very successful in contributing to the captive population of the southern white rhino: since 1972 some 83 rhinos have been born at the Park. [however] All Park births have been to mothers born in the wild, while none of the captive-born females have given birth. This is not a problem unique to the San Diego rhinos, since only 8% of captive-born females have reproduced in North America.

together with the CRES behavior divisions, which is monitoring behavioral variables in both captive-born and wild-born females, "we will evaluate their reproductive hormone cycles to look for any unusual patterns, differences and any changes in stress. With this combined study, we look forward to uncovering clues that may solve this problem of poor reproduction in the captive-born rhinoceros population," according to Nancy Czekala, Endocrinology Specialist/CRES.

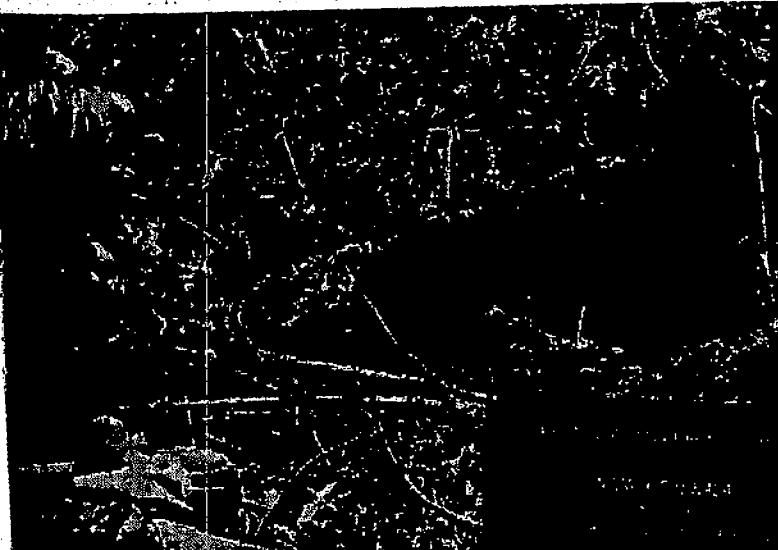
[Winter, 1997]

As rhino populations decline worldwide, researchers are working with diseases that affect rhino species in captivity. In recent years, our understanding of the many factors involved in determining the resistance or susceptibility of a host animal to infectious agents has increased significantly. Some of these factors include the relative ratio of two types of white blood cells, genetic variation in specific immune response genes, and the presence of a gene that possibly determines which of two major types of immune responses an animal may produce upon infection. In addition, a minor change in the amino acid sequence of a protein found on immune system cells called macrophages may determine the relative level of natural resistance of a host to some pathogens. In collaboration with Dr. Jeff Stott and Myra Blanchard, immunologists at the School of Veterinary medicine on the University of California at Davis campus, [CRES] is beginning to investigate some of these factors in the black rhinoceros. Some captive members of this species experience hemolytic disorders, fungal pneumonia, and immune complex diseases. Efforts to understand just a few components of the rhinoceros immune system will eventually provide information concerning the immune status of individuals with these diseases and possibly a stronger basis for genetic management of the captive population.

[Spring, 1998]

Under Threat of Pollution: Nepal's Royal Chitwan National Park

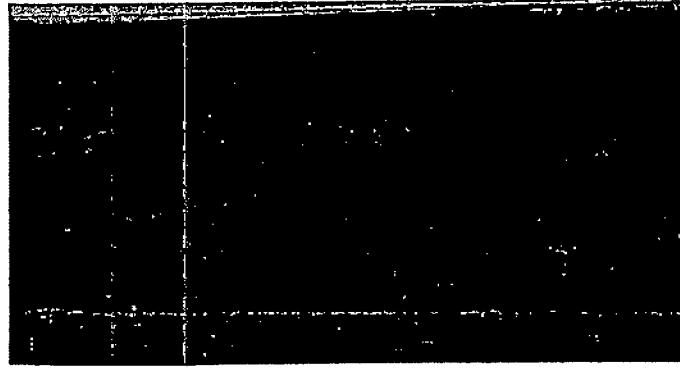
The Naryani, one of the major rivers of Nepal, rises in the Himalayas, flows south through Royal Chitwan Park and then into India, where it eventually enters the Ganges. Listed as a World Heritage Site, Chitwan Park receives an average of 65,000 visitors a year. The remarkable and unique mixture of wildlife in Chitwan Park - which includes the one-horned Indian rhinoceros, is largely dependent on the Naryani as a source of food and water. But the river is no longer pristine: a brown stain in the water can be seen for many miles.





In the past ten years, the human population along the banks of the Naryani and just upstream from Chitwan has increased dramatically. The inevitable deforestation has followed along with an increase of agriculture and industry - and of course, a huge increase in pollution.

Of particular concern is the effluent from a recently constructed paper mill - and the road through the once-pristine forest - that was built along the banks of the Naryani. An enormous amount of water - 250 cubic meters/minute, or approximately 66,000 gallons per minute - is drawn from the river. Five percent is consumed and the rest is poured back into the river in the form of a dark brown, foul-smelling effluent. This effluent is produced 24/7.



The impact of road building on forested area is now well known. The road along the Naryani's banks is a classic example of how such well-intentioned efforts can lead to ecological disaster. The spectacular forests that supported one of the richest faunas in the world are almost gone. The population along this stretch of river is increasing rapidly. With a modern road, a large pool of cheap labor, and an unlimited supply of water from the Naryani, this region will attract even more industry.

A report on the levels of pollution and their potential threat to the wildlife of Chitwan will be presented to the Nepalese government, with a goal for conservation and antipollution measures to be implemented before irreparable damage is done.

Wildlife in Jeopardy

World Wildlife Fund |Focus (July/August, 1998), 20:4 p.4

Hunted across Africa and Asia for horns that are prized for dagger handles in the Middle East and for traditional oriental medicines, rhinos are seldom far from crisis. In locations from Nepal to Kenya, WWF is working to give these majestic animals a viable future.

Helping nature reserves strengthen anti poaching unit and clamping down on international trade are only a part of the strategy. Just as important, WWF is helping local communities become guardians of wildlife habitats with techniques and training to restore forested buffer zones and promote uses of these areas that preserve wildlife.

WWF is also monitoring rhino populations, helping to restock parks and reserves as nearby populations recover, working to create innovative sanctuaries on private lands, and promoting the designation of "intensive Protection Zones" for rhinos within existing nature reserves.

By giving anti poaching units more funding, equipment, and training, WWF also hopes to reduce poaching. Political instability and lack of resources have reduced the ability of many nations to protect rhinos. With reliable support, park guard staffs can quickly respond to poaching threats.

To control trade, the single greatest threat to rhinos today, WWF is working through its TRAFFIC affiliate to maintain a database on seizures of rhino horn worldwide that offers a comprehensive picture of poaching, markets, and transit routes - information vital to ensuring the rhino's survival.

**Give To World Wildlife Fund . . .
As It All Life Depended On It!**



Microchips Used to Protect Rhinos

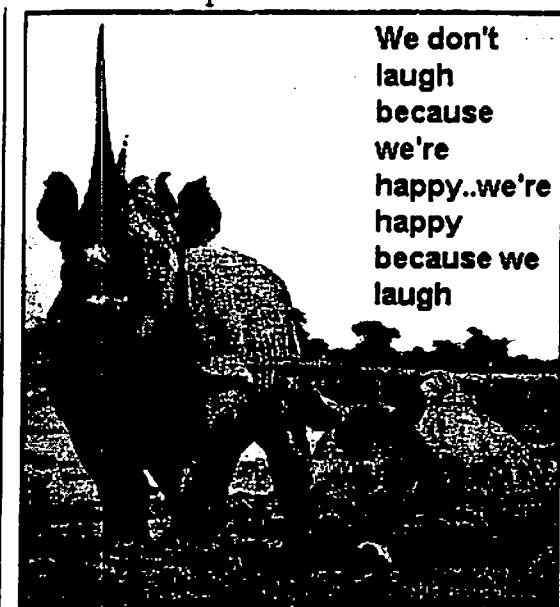
[Monica Hilton-Barker]

Microchips are now being used to deter potential poachers from exploiting illegally obtained rhino horn. Recently South Africa's Mpumalanga Parks Board began implanting tiny microchips into the horns and under the skins of rhinos in its reserves.

Information on each rhino, including the chip number and genetic particulars, will be entered onto a national computerized database, enabling wildlife law enforcement officers to identify immediately the origin of the rhino horn when they are investigating smuggling cases. The required data is read by simply swiping a sophisticated sensor along the length of the horn. It will now be possible for officials to positively identify the exact cases in a court of law. Mpumalanga Parks Board's head of Field and Public Support, Jan Muller, said a similar technology had worked very well with wild cycads and had led to a spate of successful prosecutions.

The rhinos are darted from helicopters and a highly qualified ground team, led by well-known vet Kobus Raath, works quickly on the selected animal once it has been drugged. Each horn is drilled and a microchip inserted and sealed with silicone. In time, as the horn grows, the insertion mark will be very difficult to detect with the naked eye. The entire operation on each animal, including the drawing of blood samples and marking each ear, takes less than 15 minutes.

Muller said he believed it was the first time high-tech had been called on to help rhino conservation in South Africa.



Time to order some rhino books for the holidays!

For used books:

www.powells.com
www.daniel.interloc.com

For new books:

www.amazon.com
http://bookshop.co.uk
(Internet Bookshop)

The Internet Bookshop is in England but check out some of the titles it has available:

Black Rhino

(J.T. Willans)

Decline of the Black Rhino in Zimbabwe...
(T. Milliken)

Horns of Dilemma: Market for Rhino Horn in Taiwan
(K. Nowell)

I Know Rhino

(K. Hayes)

Nola: the Story of Nola the Rhinoceros
(G. Hunter-Jones)

Operation Rhino

(J. Shimanyula)

Rhino!

(E. Zingg)

Rhinoceroses

Rhinoceros: The Horn of a Dilemma
(I.D. Wallace)

Ruby, the Car-boot Rhino

(R. Powell)

Under Siege: Poaching and Protection of Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros
(M. Vivek)

World Trade in Rhino Horn: A Review

(N. Leader-Williams)

The Writing Rhino

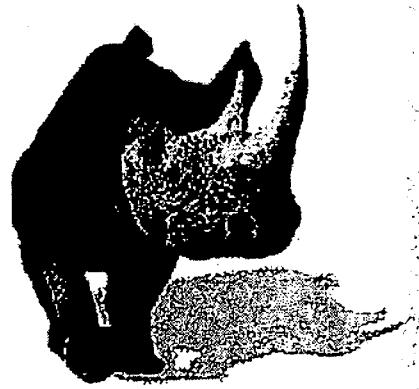
(B. Armstrong)

Don't forget your favorite bookstores too!

Report from Thomas J. Foose, International Rhino Foundation (IRF)
IRF Programs, September 1997 - December, 1998

In Situ:

Zimbabwe - Various Black Rhino Projects	\$34,000
Mkomazi Black Rhino Sanctuary - Tanzania	5,000
Ngulia Black Rhino Sanctuary - Kenya	2,500
Garamba - Northern White Rhinos	75,000
Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary - Indonesia	300,000
Javan Rhino Protection Units - Indonesia	36,000
Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary - Malaysia	30,000
Sumatran Rhino Protection Units - Malaysia	40,000
Javan Rhino Technical Assistance in Vietnam	35,500



[www.rhinos-irf.org]

Ex Situ:

TAG/SSP/GCAP	35,000
Research	160,000
TOTAL	\$973,000



Seen recently on a greeting card...

O.K. You're stuck in a room
with your boss,
a charging rhinoceros,
a raging tiger
and a poisonous snake.
Your gun has only two bullets.
What should you do?

Answer in the next issue (unless you have the card already!) :-)

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