

new arrivals in Mkomazi: Rhinos & Wild Dog Pups!

The last few months have been dramatic. On 28th October, four new rhinos were delivered by Russian Antonov, and were welcomed to Tanzania by 150 Tanzanian dignitaries and VIPs. A great exercise in PR for this species, as many of the guests had not seen a rhino before.

The four rhinos were kept in holding compounds for six weeks while they adjusted to the vegetation of the sanctuary and the sounds and smells of the Tanzanian bush. They were visited by the resident rhino, but thankfully no fights broke out. Tsetse flies did not prove to be too much of a problem either.

In December, the vets from South African National Parks returned to fit the rhinos with telemetry transmitters. One male and two females were then moved to their own designated section of the rhino sanctuary, fenced off with funds raised by SRI. Within 24 hours, the male had chased one of the females through the internal fence. This unexpected event proved to be a blessing. The female soon settled into the largest area of the sanctuary where she linked up with a resident female and the two resident males. Breeding potential was therefore increased. We would, in any case, have opened up this section to these rhinos, if they hadn't pre-empted us.

The other male is keeping to his own designated small section near the sanctuary's main gate. He is only three years old and has been hand raised. We hope in the future to be able to bring in an adult female for him. In the meantime, he is a mascot for visitors.

Our sanctuary staff look after eight rhinos. Day-to-day tracking and visual sightings are a priority, as are ongoing patrols and maintenance of the fence line. The personnel are hard working, conscientious and efficient. They have watched the development of the sanctuary from its initial beginnings as a wonky line cut through the bush to the professional operation that it now is. SRI have supported this sanctuary since those early days and we are incredibly grateful for your faith and help.

The wild dog project has been blessed with a set of seven pups, and we now have two - and potentially three - breeding groups. A new vaccination programme has been designed and initiated by the

GAWPT vet and the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Following the outbreak of canine distemper, the whole immunity system of the wild dogs will be looked at for the first time.

The reintroduction programme is still on track, although it has obviously been delayed. Advisors are putting together updated reports for this reintroduction, using all available information from previous reintroductions in South Africa and Kenya.

Lucy Fitzjohn, Mkomazi Game Reserve



Stop Press:

9 rhinos take Wimbledon by storm!

Thank you to everyone who supported our 'Rhinos at the Dogs' event at the Wimbledon Stadium on 19th March. The highlight of the evening was the extraordinary 14th race: the 'Rhino Chase' sponsored by the London Speaker Bureau, which featured 9 rhinos chasing the hare around the track. This was excellent training for the Marathon des Sables.

The Rhinos at the Dogs event will enable us to make another sizeable grant to the Mkomazi Project this year. Initiatives earmarked for support include a new vehicle and radio communication equipment for the rhino sanctuary. In particular, we'd like to thank Duncan Heath, Frankie Toshack and Tom Kenyon-Slaney for their help in making the event happen.