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FROM THE REF DESK...

World conservation agencies have warned that African elephants are still facing a serious threat to their long-term survival because of a massive reduction in funds for conservation and law enforcement by African governments. A study found that these states are unable to devote more resources to wildlife conservation because of growing social demands and rising debts and have called on wealthier nations and concerned individuals to pay the bill for elephant conservation.

Southern Africa's elephant populations are stable and even on the increase and each year

substantial numbers have to be culled due to competition for food and limited water supplies – thereby maintaining elephants numbers at a level which can be carried through drought years without detrimentally affecting the habitat. Whilst culling by man is an unnatural process and interferes with nature, the pressure on the land is relieved and conditions are more preferable for the breeding rate to go up – thereby creating a perennial problem.

Each year when Kruger National Park decides on its annual culling programme there is an emotional outburst as many people concerned with elephant management don't like the idea of them being killed. Most recently the translocations of family units to other suitable areas have given

some elephants a second chance thereby reducing the culling quotas. However, this still presents a problem; and it was from this perspective that the Rhino & Elephant Foundation facilitated the Elephant Debate where these problems were discussed.

The Rhino & Elephant Foundation, in conjunction with Marion Garai, is also co-ordinating the Translocated Elephant Association's interim committee.

Another REF project for which the Foundation provides the administrative backup is the African Rhino Owners Association.

You can read about both these associations in the second issue of **ON TRACK** which we are enclosing again with our compliments to all our members.

THE ELEPHANT DEBATE

Do elephants have rights? Or are they just components of the philosophy of maintaining biodiversity in the Kruger National Park? These questions were raised at the Elephant Debate, facilitated and organised by the Rhino & Elephant Foundations, to stimulate discussions about South Africa's annual cull of elephants in Kruger.

The debate, held on 3 May 1995 at the Theatre on Track, Kyalami Park near Johannesburg, was attended by about 200 delegates. It was convened as a result of discussions and correspondence between the National Parks Board (NPB) and the animal rights group FALCON (Front for Animal Liberation and the Conservation of Nature). The purpose of the debate was to provide a forum where both parties presented different viewpoints by recognised researchers and scientists with the public participating at the end of

each of the four sessions – as follows:

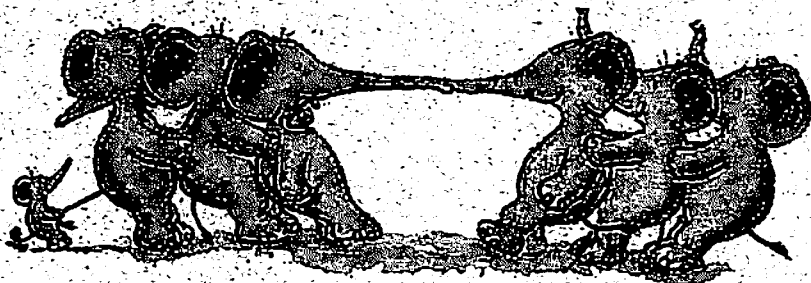
1. Control of large mammal populations as a component of protected area management, with specific reference to elephants (FALCON: Chris Styles – South Africa; NPB: Dr Richard Bell – Senior Wildlife Park Planner – Botswana).

2. Elephant management in a National Park (NPB: Dr Anthony Hall-Martin – South Africa; FALCON: Dr Mike Mentis – SA Envirobusiness Consultant).

3. An evaluation of techniques for killing elephants (FALCON: Dr Bill Jordan – Care for the Wild – UK; NPB: Dr V de Vos – Kruger National Park).

4. Sustained use of natural resources as a component of protected area management (NPB: Dr Jon Hutton – Africa Resources Trust – Zimbabwe; FALCON: Dr John Grandy – Humane Society of the United States).

The debate was chaired by Mr Rupert Lorimer, a well-known South African politician with a strong



"What the elephant's doing is keeping living food at low level... So what looks destructive is constructive for wildlife." – Garth Thompson – Safari Guide in Zimbabwe.



Interest and involvement in environmental issues. In addition, Dr Robble Robinson (Chief Executive NPB) and Mr Steve Smit (FALCON) introduced the arguments for their respective organisations. Dr Ronald Orenstein (International Wildlife Coalition, Canada) for FALCON and Mr Rowan Martin (Dept of Nat Parks and Wildlife Mgmt, Zimbabwe) for NPB then summed up their respective cases – both making excellent presentations.

It would have been unrealistic to expect compromise solutions out of such a meeting, however, the most tangible result of the meeting was that the National Parks Board was seen to allow itself to be criticised and analysed in public. Dr Robble Robinson also announced in his opening address "I am proud that it has been decided to undertake an in-depth review of the elephant management policy applied in Kruger National Park for the past 28 years". This review will focus on the prime motivation for elephant population control – the impact of growing elephant numbers on the vegetation and, in particular, the trees of the Kruger National Park.

As promised, National Parks considered the 1995 cull on the day after the debate and the outcome was that of a recommended quota of 600 elephants; only approximately 300 will be removed – either by culling or translocation. 35 elephants will be moved in family units to Marakele National Park, South Africa's newest national park near Thabazimbi and 51 animals (family units and calves) will be translocated to other areas.

The 7-hour debate has been recorded on video, audio and print – these are available from the Rhino & Elephant Foundations as follows:

Video: 3 x 180-minutes VHS cassettes – total cost R195.

Audio: 5 x 90-minutes cassettes – total cost R75.

Print: the proceedings (publication date August 1995) will be sent to all delegates having attended the debate – they are available to non-delegates at a cost of R50 each.

The price of all above-mentioned copies includes postage and packaging in South Africa – for overseas orders please add extra postage.

TURNING BACK FROM THE EDGE OF EXTINCTION?

Zimbabwe's black rhinos, once the world's biggest wildlife population, are showing signs of increasing their numbers after a decade of relentless poaching. A combination of aggressive anti-poaching law enforcement and the controversial strategy of dehorning appears to have paid off so far. Not one of the estimated 300 black rhinos has been killed in over a year.

In the Sinamatella region of Hwange National Park all 59 black rhinos were dehorned in mid-1992. In October 1994 only 33 had survived. Six carcasses, the stubby remains of their horns hacked off, were found and those unaccounted for are reckoned to have gone the same way. But the state of the survivors gave the veterinarians heart. In 1992, there were seven rhino cows with calves less than 6 months old, last year five of the same cow-calf pairs were found, with calves now 750kg sub-adults ready to leave their mothers for solitary adult life. Despite the two missing pairs, apparently shot, the survival rate gave hope.

However, the most exciting development was five new calves being born. Also, in the country's three major private conservancies in the south of Zimbabwe, the black rhino population is up by eight to 101 in a year. "We expect to see the graph of black rhino population begin to climb over the next several years," said Dr Mike Kock, a vet with the

Department of National Parks. "The day will come when we will stop interfering with these things."

But no less important is the discovery of Dr Kock and colleague Dr Mark Atkinson that removing the rhino's horn doesn't appear to affect the health of the population. Sinamatella abounds with lions and hyenas, and if the calves had been vulnerable they would have been taken.

This refutes criticism that the absence of a horn reduces a rhino mother's ability to defend its young. The new births are also evidence that dehorning does nothing to inhibit mating or fertility.

Dehorning on its own will never work. It has to be accompanied by vigorous law enforcement. The disappearance of poachers also makes a vital point. With heavy patrolling and only a stub for award, it is no longer worth it.

The discovery fails to help explain why rhinos have horns! Self-defence against predators is not a use because an adult's size – one tonne and 1.6m at the shoulder – is deterrent enough. What scientists do know is that horns are used with great effect when rhinos kill each other in territorial fighting, usually with terrible wounding. Dehorning may have the unexpected advantage of preventing them from self-destruction.

Adapted from a South African Press Agency feature.



THE IBM RHINO & ELEPHANT CELEBRITY GALA

The Rhino & Elephant Celebrity Gala has become an annual fundraising event, and the function this year was held at the Sandton Sun & Towers Hotel in Johannesburg on Friday, 2 June 1995 – the Friday before World Environment Week.

IBM South Africa was our major sponsor this year and our grateful thanks go to them for their support. We thank them too for the donation of a personal computer as our raffle prize.

With the Rugby World Cup in full swing at the time of the Gala, we didn't have the 'full house' that we'd hoped for, but nevertheless just under 300 people supported

natural environment was to be treasured and protected against encroachment by concrete.

Our auctioneer was well-known 'gardener extraordinaire', Keith Kirsten. He, together with some of our celebrities, did a sterling job of rallying our guests to ever higher bids for our auction items. For the donation of our action items, we would like to thank Paul Bosman, Keith Calder, IBM South Africa, Keith Kirsten, Horst Klemm, Nedbank and Clive Walker. We would also like to thank Dr Ian Player for donating to the action the framed black rhino print with which he had been presented earlier in the evening.



the evening and this included many well-known South African personalities who hosted tables.

We were particularly delighted to have Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Foundation's president, as our guest of honour. Dr Buthelezi delivered a short message to our guests, the full text of which appears below. Our guest speaker this year was one of the Foundation's patrons, South Africa's own conservation legend, Dr Ian Player. Dr Player's message was clear – that man is increasingly losing touch with his natural environment, that he must guard against this since his spirit will become all the poorer. The

Once the formalities were complete and a delicious dinner had been served, it was time to dance. This year, we were extremely lucky to get Mango Groove, South Africa's best-loved band, to play for us. They were terrific and had everyone on their feet.

In addition to those already mentioned, our sincere thanks go to Gilbeys/Justerini & Brooks for donating the wine and to Murray & Roberts for donating the lucky ticket holder prize – and finally to all our guests, without whose support the Gala would not have once again been such a success.

Message by Mangosuthu Buthelezi, President: Rhino and Elephant Foundation of Southern Africa

I am naturally delighted to be here this evening to meet again and move among people with whom I have a very special rapport. Conservation is very close to my heart and as you know I was for many years the Minister of conservation in KwaZulu. It was during this time that so many new and appropriate conservation and community participation policies were formulated under the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources, later to become known as the Department of Nature Conservation. But my interest in conservation predates even that time.

I have vivid recollections of the struggles that I and the former and current directors of that organisation, Ed Gregory and Nick Steele, were engaged in, to transform some of KwaZulu's pristine areas into proclaimed game parks before it was too late. One of these parks is the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve which we increased from 70 hectares when it was under the Natal Parks Board to 8 000 hectares. This was a running battle against some elements whose real intention was to transform the beautiful swamp forests into banana plantations. I sometimes hear our detractors say that they were not against this transformation but the way in which we did it.

Believe me, if we had not stuck to our guns in the eighties, precious few of these swamp forests would have remained intact.

Another habitat of vital importance to the future of South Africa's last free elephant was the Tembe Elephant Park, the proclamation for which I signed in 1983. Conflicts between rural people and the wild persecuted Tembe elephants had been going on for years. Endless were the stories of crop damage and killing of local people by the Tembe elephants. After the proclamation of the Department of Nature Conservation staff moved rapidly over the years to contain these splendid beasts and to provide physical and security infrastructures to prevent the loss

of peoples' property and lives and conserve the scattered bands of elephant, many of which were themselves refugees from the civil war in Mozambique. Today we have a really priceless elephant sanctuary set in some of the most beautiful sandveld forest in KwaZulu-Natal.

Very recently I had the privilege to attend a conference in Durban called the Parks and People Conference where some important new and refurbished principles were hammered out on the anvil of open debate to set the scene for the future of conservation in the new South Africa.

Quite rightly both urban and rural people alike are asking to be part of the conservation process and to be actively engaged in some way or the other in the management of our conservation areas. These are noble concepts and my own conservation department took active steps to encourage traditional participation and to evolve a policy of sharing, like the giving of 25% of the funds from tourism and game sales to the traditional authority in whose area the park was created.

Quite rightly people want more say and more involvement and I applaud the rapid moves by some conservation bodies in this direction, while I urge the slower ones to move ahead of the inevitable political pressure which will result from head in the sand attitudes.

However, let us not delude ourselves that because we move rapidly to ensure community participation in parks management and a policy of sharing and whatever else we deem necessary for the survival of our wildlife, particularly the rhino and elephant, that this strategy in itself will save them right now.

It won't.

Don't be phased by those in our society who say that handouts and baby kissing, or even joint management, is going to prevent the ongoing slaughter of the endangered rhino and the elephant. Yes, eventually changed attitudes will make it easier to conserve these species, but let's never forget that they have an economic value and there is that 10% or 15% of society who do not give a damn about

saying anything. If they can mug old people in the street to get R20 they will have little compassion for animals. For the present and foreseeable future we will have to take strong measures to protect the rhino and elephants.

The point of my story is that we should not delude ourselves into believing that somehow we don't need good conservators and field rangers and that somehow we can lay down our guns and stop the para-military training. Even if we have good neighbours we will still need fences and laws to prevent the dissipation of wildlife in Southern Africa.

I venture to say that no Utopia is in sight and those who perpetuate the impression that we can be soft on poachers have either never been in a game park or don't care about the future of these priceless wild creatures.

You know as well as I do that the black rhino populations have shrunk to a few isolated pockets in Africa, the white rhino and elephant are having their flanks attacked with militia-type poachers carrying the latest in military weapons even as we are here tonight; everything tells me that we must gird our loins and throw more trained men and women and better equipment into this struggle for these living examples of our cultural heritage. I would like to invite you to look with me at the population estimates for black rhino, white rhino and African elephant in Africa today - the current figures quoted by the Rhino and Elephant Foundation

are Black Rhino = 2 550, White Rhino = 6784, African Elephant = 609 000 for Africa as a whole.

When one considers that in the early 1970s there were in the vicinity of 65 000 black rhino in Africa one can only come to the conclusion that these dramatic animals are on the verge of extinction. The responsibility on us in Southern Africa to prevent the attrition of this remnant population, most of which are in South African Parks, is really daunting. There is an onerous responsibility on the shoulders of our conservation bodies to find innovative ways to save these remnant populations.

History is full of wise guy idealists who predict and expound instant solutions to very complex struggles and history is full of broken bones as a result. There is no easy solution to the problems we face in this field, and we need to pursue realistic attainable policies.

We have in South Africa many fine official state and parastatal conservation bodies on whom we are extremely dependant to conserve what remains of once pristine forests and priceless wildlife. I want to urge you and all the brave men and women who serve conservation to move ahead and take the fight to the destroyers. A great general of American Civil War Fame, Nathan Forest, when asked how to achieve victory said "Git there firstest with the mostest". My conservation friends I urge you to do just this.



"So, that's where you put this ridiculous transmitter - good, now let us have real fun where nobody can find us."

The spectacular rhinoceros has been around since the Eocene era some 60-million years ago, when many primitive mammal forms disappeared and modern mammal species made their appearance. Always one of the *dramatis personae* on the global stage, an early form of rhino, the 6-metre-high Baluchitherium was the largest land mammal in existence. For countless millions of years rhinos wandered over much of the face of the Earth without serious challenge or opposition – until modern man came along. Today, mainly because of the use of rhino horn in traditional Oriental medicine, rhino numbers worldwide have been reduced to no more than 11 000.

Powdered rhino horn has been used in traditional Oriental medicine for at least 3 600 years. The innovativeness of the Chinese has long been known, and admired – think of spaghetti and silk, gunpowder and fireworks, printing and paper. Their firm belief in the efficacy of animal products as medical cure-alls was established in the earliest times, and continues to this day, and this firm belief is now held throughout much of the rest of Asia. Not only the unfortunate rhino's horn is used, but also its blood, flesh, bones, skin, stomach, penis, hooves, dung and urine (this last collected from zoo animals for use as a cure for sore throats and asthma). But the medical imagination of the Orient goes way beyond the rhino – tiger skin, bones and penises, bear fat, gall bladders and bile, body parts from musk deer and saiga antelope, giant salamanders, rare snakes and pangolins, apes and monkeys. Apart from the pharmacist's mortar and pestle, many of these products are also destined for the wok and the diningroom table; in fact, Asia has been described as a Black Hole for Endangered Species. But back to medicine...

Over the aeons, the use of Chinese medicine spread to most of the East, including Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Burma and Nepal, and there are indications that it is also being used in Asian communities in North America and Europe. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that more than one-and-a-half BILLION people, more than a quarter of the Earth's population, are potentially exposed to the use of rhino horn in traditional medicine. Rhino horn is used for a wide variety of medical reasons, but one of the myths that needs

RHINO HORN: MIRACLE MEDICINE OR MYTHICAL MAGIC?



IMMEDIATE debunking is that it is used mainly as an aphrodisiac. The Gujarati people in India do use the substance as an aphrodisiac, and there are probably other isolated pockets of such usage elsewhere, but generally speaking rhino horn is NOT used as a sexual stimulant.

As medicine it is sold in two forms, as 'raw' horn by pharmacists who make up the medicine for customers from horn held in stock, and as a constituent of manufactured medicines. There are also two major type distinctions – 'Fire' (or Asian) horn, which is believed to be more efficacious than 'Water' (or African) horn. In most Asian countries traditional medicine is OFFICIAL medicine; therefore rhino horn is prescribed by licenced doctors and pharmacists and in public, as well as private hospitals and clinics. Its main usage is as a heat or fever-reducing drug, but it must be realised that Chinese medicine is based on the principle of homeostasis, where 'heat' or 'fever' is not merely manifested as high body temperature.

Oriental medical text books from the Shen Nong Ben Cao Jong written in the first century BC to those still being written today, prescribe rhino horn as an anti-pyretic, as a detoxicant for insect- and snake-bite, as a "cleanser of the liver and stomach", as a cure for the common cold, typhoid, jaundice, rashes, the vomiting and excretion of blood, delirium and abscesses, and for soothing the nerves and improving the eyesight.

Modern textbooks used in medical universities today specifically recommend rhino horn

for dispelling heat and cooling the blood, as well as in the treatment of febrile diseases, influenza, high fever, poisoning, convulsion, epilepsy, restlessness, delirium, macular eruptions, haemoptysis, epistaxis, carbuncle, malignant swelling, abscesses and even possibly AIDS. It is also commonly held that rhino horn may be used in the treatment of hepatitis, leukemia, haemorrhage, rhinitis, meningitis, cerebrovascular diseases, gastrorrhagia, severe external burns, dermatitis, stroke, common headaches and dizziness, and it can also be used as a general "pick-me-up" or tonic.

There are even documented cases of veterinarians prescribing rhino horn for the treatment of distemper in lap dogs in Taiwan. Daily doses for human treatment range from 0.08g upwards. Annual consumption in Taiwan alone (population 21-million) is estimated to be anything from 400kg to 1-tonne, at a retail cost of some US\$7 000 per kilogramme. The average live rhino in the wild carries perhaps 2.5kg of horn.

DOES IT WORK? Oriental traditional medicine undoubtedly works, but the issue surrounding rhino horn is far more complex. As the substance is no more than keratin, it can be argued that it is no more effective as a medical treatment than fingernail parings. Recent Western laboratory tests on rats have indicated that it does act as an anti-pyretic, but using doses 100-times higher than would be taken by a human, with the added doubt factor that the initial pyrexia was induced in the rats anyway. Alternatives? Yes, including saiga antelope (which is itself already becoming endangered), water buffalo and common cattle horn, and in the plant world *Chrysanthemum merifium*, *Odontochilus inabai*, *Bupleurum fulcatum* and *Coptis chinensis*, among others.

However, the issue is not really whether rhino horn is an effective medical treatment or not, but that some 1 500-million people believe it is. There are about 11 000 rhinos left in the wild, enough to supply just a small portion of the East's annual needs, so the real question is – when will you and I see our last free-roaming rhino on the African bush or in an Asian jungle?

David Holt-Biddle

Special acknowledgements: The Rhino & Elephant Foundation and the TRAFFIC organisation.

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HELPING ELEPHANTS CONTROL THEIR NUMBERS, AN ALTERNATIVE TO CULLING

Elephants living in national parks have been found (Douglas-Hamilton) not to control their numbers but to breed so long as food supply is adequate. Management policies therefore may include culling.

One alternative to culling suggested is contraception. I suggest an alternative which would be in the form of helping elephants control their own numbers. If workable, this would be a long-term solution, not disturbing to the elephants and compared to contraception probably less costly in terms of time and money.

My suggestion is based on the idea that before man took over most of the land in Africa, elephants as the dominant mammals with few natural enemies must have had the ability to control their numbers. Without this they would have prevented other large mammals from sharing their habitat. That this was not so is shown by fossil evidence indicating the existence of well balanced mammal communities at the time before these disappeared as a result of the impact of modern man.

In support of my suggestion I present a model describing how the ancestral elephant cows may have controlled their numbers.

The Model

The regulation of numbers among elephant cows living under natural conditions would have operated via socially mediated suppression of reproduction (Abbott, 1987; Dunbar, 1988; Wasser and Barash, 1983) in subordinate females. This would have required the presence of two factors (1) awareness of habitat saturation, i.e. of a condition in which a population's suitable habitat is fully occupied; (2) a dominance hierarchy.

(1) Awareness of habitat saturation would have come from receiving and interpreting signals

advertising the presence of elephant communities occupying neighbouring areas.

The ancestral communities are likely to have been "clans", social units described (Moss, 1988) as consisting of several "bond groups" (ibid) and sharing a home range amicably. Each clan would have occupied a home range large enough to permit complete recovery of the vegetation between visits and also to allow for ecological fluctuations. Home ranges would probably have been overlapping and ownership of the range would have been maintained by regular use and advertisement of owners' presence. For advertisement clan members would have relied on long-distance calls (Poole et al, 1988).

(2) The dominance hierarchy would have operated within the bond group, a social unit consisting of three to four closely associated "family units" (ibid). The adult component of a well studied group has been described (ibid) as consisting of four dominant cows or "matriarchs" and their subordinate female descendants.

Social suppression by dominants of the reproduction of their subordinates would have been the outcome of female - female competition over breeding rights and would under normal conditions of resource limitation have been the rule. Perceiving the calls of neighbouring clans occupying all areas surrounding their range and therefore being aware of habitat saturation, the matriarchs would have claimed exclusive breeding rights.

Only under rare exceptional conditions unoccupied land suitable for colonization may have become available. In such cases the matriarchs would not have suppressed the reproduction of their subordinates. The result would have been a surplus of adult females and surplus individuals would have dispersed to colonize the unoccupied land.

Discussion

The validity of the idea that suppression of reproduction can be induced by social stress has long been doubted. The idea has, however, in recent years found considerable interest (Dunbar, 1988) and socially mediated reproductive suppression among female mammals has been reported for a wide range of

species (Wasser and Barash, 1983). It is thus reasonable to expect that elephants living under natural conditions practiced social contraception.

One reason why the causal role of social stress has been doubted is that rates of aggression often seem too low to have any significant physiological effect (Dunbar, 1988). However, low rates may be sufficient to induce reproductive suppression (ibid). Among highly social animals such as elephants very low rates of aggression would probably be sufficient.

The reason why elephants no longer practice social contraception would be that the matriarchs receive no reliable information concerning the occupation of suitable land. Since no signals advertising occupation come from the vast stretches of land surrounding the park, they perceive these areas to be unoccupied by elephants and therefore available for colonization. They cannot know that the land has been claimed by humans.

An alternative to culling

If my model is valid, the tragedy of elephants would be that life in national parks prevents them from realising their potential for self-control of numbers. To help them regain this potential one would have to find a way of deceiving the matriarchs and making them believe that the land surrounding the park is occupied by elephants.

My suggestion is to communicate to the matriarchs a condition of habitat saturation by setting up, outside the boundaries of the park, stations emitting taped long-distance calls made by unfamiliar dominant females.

Elephant long-distance calls tend to be below the range of human hearing (Poole et al, 1988) and therefore would tend not to be a disturbance.

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THE LAST KNYSNA ELEPHANT

A full-scale survey of the Knysna Forest has established that there is just one Knysna elephant left – and that for five years it roamed the forest with no name, no friend and no future. It is the southernmost free elephant on the African continent, the sole survivor of a herd that earlier this century numbered in the hundreds.

Its solitary existence was shattered in October 1994 by the introduction of three female elephants from the Kruger Park – it literally got the shock of its life. Forestry officials say the area where the elephants met was devastated by the animals' bewildered reaction.

The solitary Knysna elephant seemingly fled from the intruders. But the three Kruger Park elephants, equally frightened, pursued it, seeking the companionship they had once been used to in the Kruger National Park. The chase went on for more than two days and covered more than 60km. At the end of it one of the young females lay dead of pneumonia, in all likelihood brought on by stress and exhaustion. The remaining three elephants co-existed peacefully for a short while, however, nowadays they live separate again – with quite a distance between their ranges.

Why have the elephants in the nearby Addo Elephant reserve been so prolific while the Knysna elephants are dying out? Research done suggests that certain vital elements – protein and minerals, especially

phosphorus – are missing from the available diet of the forest vegetation. Not that the elephants are unhealthy, in fact they are larger and stronger than their counterparts. The problem is that the Knysna elephants have not been able to reproduce well enough to ensure the survival of the herd.

Latest indications are that the sole surviving Knysna elephant is not a mature bull as previously believed. Pathological tests were carried out by the Forestry Department to establish the sex of the Knysna elephant and the results showed definitely that the existing Knysna elephant is a cow – about 40 – 50 years old. If the remaining three now are to survive in any form, the relevant authorities have to seek expert advice to decide the future of the last elephants living today in the Knysna Forest.

DEAD RHINOS REFLECT POACHERS' GRIM HANDIWORK



Picture by Simon Pillinger – Natal Parks Board

This was the grisly scene facing Natal Parks Board rangers after poachers slaughtered four white rhinos – a sub-adult male, two sub-adult females and an adult cow – in Umfolozi Game Reserve in December 1994. It was revealed later that the cow had been about to give birth.

The sound of gunfire attracted

game guards and when they arrived at a waterhole they found three poachers starting to hack the horns from the animals which had been shot with AK-47s. A gunfight ensued, leaving one poacher dead. The other two men escaped but dropping some of their weapons. Since then one suspect was arrested outside the

reserve and it was established that four people were involved in the rhino killings. Investigations are still continuing with the likelihood that the remaining two poachers might be comprehended as well.

All the horns on the rhinos were still intact although attempts had been made to chip one off. (Natal Mercury)

40°C IN THE SHADE – BUT IT'S STILL CHRISTMAS IN THE BUSH

Once again, a Christmas party was held "under the Fig Tree" for the game scouts and their families of the Tuli Safari Area. However, this time the Fig Tree was in Zimbabwe, just inside its border with Botswana.

The party venue was decorated with streamers and balloons, and a thorn tree was hung with tinsel and little parcels of brightly coloured sweets with wrapped Christmas gifts piled up beneath it.

Communication with the more remote areas of Zimbabwe is not easy, but somehow it all came together and shortly after midday on the Saturday before Christmas, David Mupungu, the warden of the Tuli Safari Area, arrived at the appointed Fig Tree with his scouts, followed by their wives and children – all beautifully dressed for the occasion. About twenty children from the local rural villages were also invited to join in.

The party began. The children were all given cool drinks, Christmas cake, biscuits and sweets for their "lunch" while the adults enjoyed beer, meat, pap and sauce for theirs. Thomas, our chef, deserves a special thanks for preparing the food on an already baking hot day.

Once lunch was over, there was dancing and music and games. With three different languages to contend with – Shona, Matabele and Tswana – the games had to be kept simple. "Musical chairs" was a favourite and was enjoyed as much by the children playing it as the adults watching them!

Late that afternoon, the moment everyone had been waiting for arrived. Christmas presents were handed to every man, woman and child – all in all about 120 people with well over half being children. Soon everyone was making their way home, waving their goodbyes and already looking forward to another happy reunion next Christmas.

The Christmas party was hosted



by Rozanne Savory (REF) and Gareth Patterson (Tuli Lion Trust, Botswana), who were accompanied this year by a television crew from the SABC.

The Christmas party idea began in 1993 when the first party was held for the game scouts of the Tuli Safari Area and their families. Game scouts are dedicated men who do a wonderful job of protecting wildlife, often under difficult circumstances. They are at the forefront of any wildlife conservation activity and it is important to remember and recognise the key role that they play. Christmas is the perfect time to do this.

If you would like to help with donations or gifts, please contact Rozanne at (011) 460-0204.

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THANK YOU!

Tom Ansley for once again generously donating his speaker's fees to REF.

Tuli Safari Lodge, Botswana – especially John Hood – for its financial contribution to the Scouts' Christmas party.

Bushpots – Marie and Phil – for donating a selection of beautifully hand-painted chinaware for this year's Christmas party.

The Puppet Theatre – Debbie Lowther – for the full collection tins and other donations received from the children at the schools she visits.

Pathfinders Travel, Camping for Africa and Lapalala Wilderness for more full collection tins.

TW Industrial Valves for being enthusiastic supporters of REF and their monthly contributions.

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AITEC for a generous donation of R2000.00.

Eiger Technologies for regular "out of the blue" cheques.

Verina Blake and Michelle Ward for their regular donations – two ladies who just love elephants and rhinos.

South African Breweries – Beer Division for their significant annual donation.

Trish Zschenderlein and Derek Fullerton (USA) for donating again a substantial sum towards an elephant project.

Dr Hanno Sierts for blockmounting the huge red REF poster and then donating it to us for our new office premises.

... and First National Bank for sponsoring our newsletters.

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