



INTERNATIONAL ZOO NEWS

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CONSERVATION

Massive re-stocking operation in South Africa

The World Wildlife Fund's international "Save the Rhino" campaign was launched in southern Africa on 5 June with the release of ten white rhinos in the Pilanesberg Game Reserve in Bophuthatswana. A number of cheetahs were also released in the reserve on the same day. This was one of the first major steps in "Operation Genesis", which involves resettlement of more than 4,000 animals at Pilanesberg in the western Transvaal, some three hours' drive from Johannesburg.

The animals include 900 eland from Namibia and Natal, 700 red hartebeest from Namibia and Kimberley, 55 giraffes from Namibia, 670 blue wildebeest from Natal, 80 white rhino from Natal, 500 impala from Natal and Transvaal, 20 waterbuck from Transvaal, 1,100 zebra from Transvaal and Botswana, 10 buffaloes from Addo National Park, 30 cheetah and a number of elephants from Namibia.

This mammoth task, which has the support of the World Wildlife Fund, is eventually expected to cost nearly \$2 million. Donations in kind will include the use of a helicopter, two large trucks, elephant fencing, and fuel for game-

catching operations.

The Director of the S.A. Nature Foundation, Jacques Verster, said the reserve was to be stocked to two-thirds of its capacity. "After that we will let nature take its course." Pilanesberg is near Rustenburg in the Western Transvaal. Its 60,000 hectares of lush vegetation lie in the bowl of an old volcano and besides its natural mountain boundary the entire reserve is fenced in.

Endangered species ban by Lufthansa

Lufthansa, the West German national airline, has announced a total ban on the carriage of all animals listed on CITES Appendix I. While all airlines are obliged to observe IATA's "Live Animals Regulations", this is the first time a major international airline has imposed a general ban on the transportation of endangered species.

Help for Africa from Frankfurt

The Frankfurt Zoological Society continues its support for conservation in Africa. In April the society donated about \$22,000 for a mobile film unit for the

Wildlife Clubs of Kenya. The colour films are shown in the evenings in remote villages, and are looked at with excitement by people who do not have cinemas or television.

Many former soldiers from Idi Amin's army have fled Uganda for Zaire, where they are poaching, especially in the Virunga National Park. Frankfurt has donated guns, ammunition, equipment for rangers, etc., worth about \$34,000 to the park authorities to help fight these well equipped poachers.

Finally, in Tanzania, the Frankfurt Zoological Society has paid for an aerial survey of the northern national parks. In the Serengeti, only 50 rhinos remain from a former population of 500-600. The rhinos were apparently killed by a "poaching mafia" crossing over from Kenya. The society has trained four rangers as pilots and equipped them with aircraft. It has also donated tents, uniforms, vehicles, and other equipment totalling altogether about \$425,000.

Much of the money is collected from television audiences in German-speaking countries, in response to Professor Bernhard Grzimek's TV programme "Help for Threatened Animals".

Great Indian bustard down to 180

The great Indian bustard is in the news again. The World Pheasant Association has sent a letter to Premier Indira Gandhi urging her to take steps to save the rare bird from extinction. Once found in various parts of India, the bustard has now dwindled to a mere 180 birds in the Rajasthan desert.

It became a national issue in January 1979 when a royal Saudi Arabian hunting party was hunting the bustards with falcons. Protests poured in and the Saudis in their sand-buggies and air-conditioned vans withdrew after bagging a reported 17 bustards. But it is claimed no steps have since been taken to conserve the bustard.

The WPA charts the decline of the bustard in India from 1,260 in 1969, to 745 in 1978, to 180 today. It says that unless drastic steps are taken to provide

special reserves for the bustard the present population might disappear entirely.

\$3 million to fight poachers

The World Wildlife Fund with the full support and involvement of the Zambian Government has concluded a unique multi-party emergency conservation agreement involving expenditure in excess of US\$3 million over the next three years. The WWF's share of \$493,000 makes it one of the largest conservation commitments made to any one country since WWF's founding in 1961.

The rest of the funds are to be made available by a Zambian Government grant of \$1,000,000 plus contributions by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Zambia, the Honorary Rangers of Zambia, the Zambian business community, and further fund-raising appeals.

The funds will be used to finance a massive campaign aimed at wiping out commercial poaching in the country.

The agreement follows an investigatory visit by Peter Murphy, head of WWF/IUCN Project Management, who brought back evidence of poaching on a scale never seen before. He reported: "As soon as the rains subsided poaching started on a completely unprecedented level both in scale and sophistication of operations."

"Around 55,000 elephants and 1,200 black rhinos — among the world's largest black rhino populations — in the magnificent Luangwa Valley are the principal targets. At least 10 gangs of poachers, with up to 26 mercenaries per gang, have descended on the valley armed with AK-47 automatic rifles and other sophisticated weapons."

"This alarming situation only became evident recently as anti-poaching units began tracking down the poachers, who are lured by the now astronomical world market price of rhino horn — which can top US\$600 per ounce or more than \$24,000 for a 40-ounce horn, as well as the ready market for illegal ivory," said Mr Murphy.

While poachers become increasingly