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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

I have read with interest the general attack in your letters column by Zoo Check on all zoos and the spirited replies by Dr.Brambell of Chester Zoo, Mr.David Jones of London Zoo and Mr.Roger Wheater of Edinburgh Zoo. One correspondent was surprised that we have given coverage to this attack as *IZN* is, of course, very much a zoo publication. My own view here is the robust one of allowing critics to say what they think and then allow full space of any refutations.

BBC Television also gave an opportunity for both sides to put their case not long ago and the public had to suffer two indifferent films giving the contrasting view points. I doubt if any effect was made either way.

If it is of any interest to our readers, my own view on these matters rests roughly in the centre, a very unusual position for me. Zoo Check, both leaders and led, are enthusiastic idealists and have a large and vociferous following. The old urban zoological institutions are struggling to free themselves from the unwanted trappings of their past; they are changing slowly. If the accusing finger of Zoo Check makes them change somewhat faster than they would have done otherwise, not much harm will come. If Zoo Check want to abolish all zoos they will undoubtedly fail. If they want to stimulate zoos to contribute more to genuine conservation they might just succeed.

Yours faithfully,

John Aspinall.

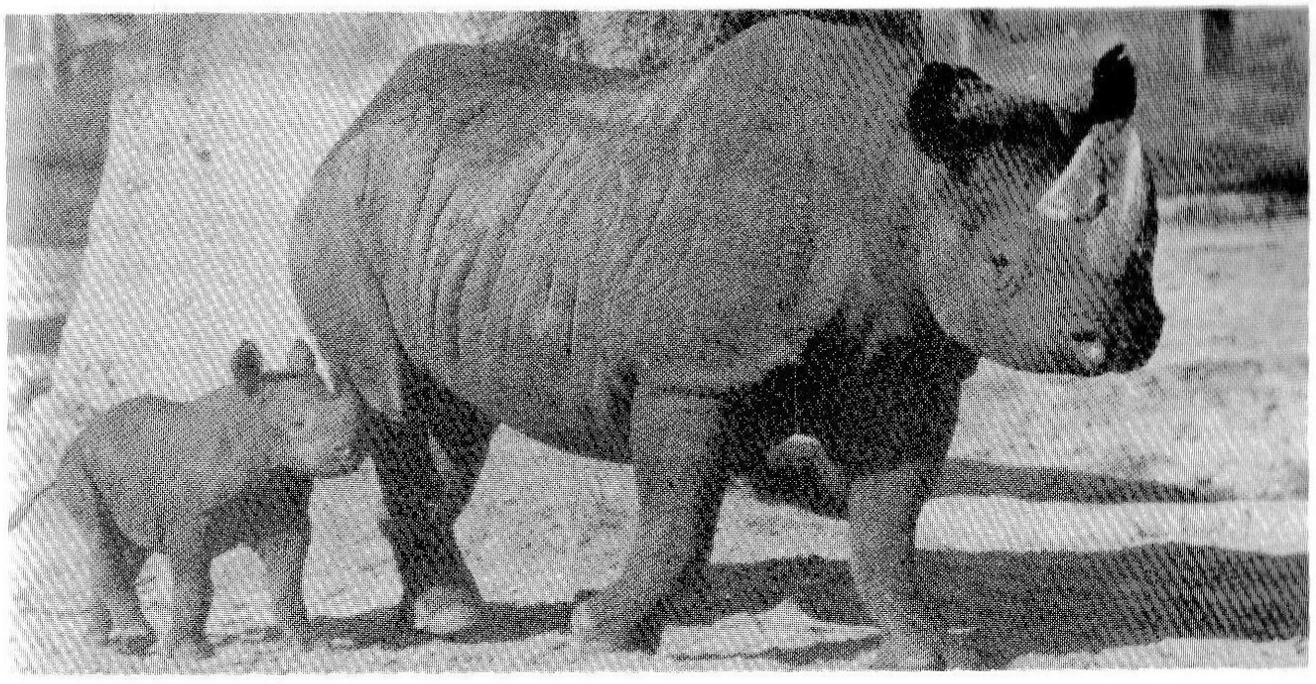
Dear Sir,

Re: The Black Rhino in Kenya

I refer to the letter under the above heading from Mr.David Jones in *International Zoo News* (No.205, Vol.34/36, Nov./Dec.1987).

On the specific point of Zoo Check's involvement in the Tsavo Rhino Sanctuary (lack of space prevents me from correcting Mr.Jones's various other inaccuracies), may I please be allowed to set the record straight once and for all. I quote verbatim from a letter I wrote on the subject to Mr.Jones's colleague, Mr.Roger Wheater:

"In 1985 Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers were visiting George Adamson in Kenya, when they received a radio call from Ted Goss and Bill Woodley asking them to go down to



Black rhinoceros

Tsavo, where Goss and Woodley thought they might be able to help them.

Goss and Woodley wanted to set up a rhino sanctuary in Tsavo, and had heard that a particular area of an estate owned by Brooke Bond was to be returned to the Africans for shambas, and that a long length of solar-powered electric fencing owned by Brooke Bond was thus redundant.

In this same general area there were three rhinos, and Bill Woodley and Patrick Hamilton of the Parks Service had flown over the locality and had selected a suitable site for the sanctuary. So the three main components of the operation – the rhinos, the land and the fencing – were in existence, but there was no cash to fund the operation.

An initial sum was raised by Zoo Check to purchase the fencing from Brooke Bond, move it to the site, and erect it. From that important beginning under the sole auspices of Zoo Check there has been subsequent funding for the running of the sanctuary from Zoo Check and other sources. Originally covering about 4 sq kms, the sanctuary has subsequently increased in size fivefold".

Incidentally, the first birth of a baby rhino in a sanctuary on government-owned land in Kenya occurred in Tsavo a few weeks ago.

In view of the above, perhaps Mr.Jones will have the grace to retract his unfounded allegation that "Zoo Check's contribution in terms of the total effort for the black rhino in Kenya is trivial". May I suggest that in future he checks his facts before incautiously rushing into print.

Yours faithfully,

Sir Christopher Lever, Bt.
Consultant, Zoo Check.

Trustee and Patron,
Rhino Rescue Appeal.