

Rhino killed at Imirie Park

by John Gripper

On our first visit to Zimbabwe, in the late 80's, Annie and I were taken to Imirie Park by veterinarian Ev Cock. We qualified together in the same year at The Dick Vet College in Edinburgh and he had been involved in the capture and rearing of seven orphan black rhino calves by the Travers family.

One of these calves had had its ears chewed by a hyena just after birth and Ev had to carry out a comprehensive stitching job on them. These seven rhino calves were bottle-fed with special milk formula from five litre bottles fitted with calf teats and eventually the adults gave birth to calves, six of which were transferred and released at Matusadona National Park. However there was an incident, a few years ago, when two of the juveniles were poisoned whilst in their pre release bomas.

In November 2007 Ev sent me the following message in an e-mail:-

It appears that armed men in uniform tied up the staff at the lodge, took one guard to direct them to the rhino, tied up the guards and shot the rhino in their boma with AK 47 automatic rifles. They then left. The rhino had been dehorned and they did not try to take the horn stumps.

Sounds more like a 'political' killing. These are 3 of the 7 you saw with me that I was involved with the capture and rearing etc. So I am very sad.



Left - Rhino Grazing

Above - Rhino in Boma

Other reports I have received confirm that on the night of 7th November 2007 the brutal killing of three adult black rhino took place at Imirie Park. The poachers shot dead D.J., a female rhino but her seven week old calf was left unharmed. Amber, who was heavily pregnant, was also shot dead and attempts to save the unborn calf were unsuccessful. The male Sprinter was also shot and killed - a small horn stump from one rhino may have been taken. It would seem that this was a 'grudge' killing.