

# SAVE FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA (INC)

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## *April 2000 Update*

### **TRAGIC DEATH OF ANDY SEARLE**

It is with deep regret that we announce that Andy Searle was killed in a helicopter crash on Monday 6 March. Nicholas Duncan has recently returned from a very sad trip to Zimbabwe to pay all our respects to Lol and Drew on their loss of a fine man and great conservationist. In his tribute, Nicholas referred to Winston Churchill's famous saying after the Battle of Britain and amended it as follows: "*Never in the field of wildlife conflict, was so much owed, by so many, to one man - Andy Searle*". John and Aliye Panos from African Wildlife Rescue, Brisbane, and Sharon Pincott from Elefriends, Brisbane, also attended the funeral. More details are enclosed.

Andy crashed whilst returning from a routine Rhino tracking exercise in Sinamatella, having been demonstrating our donated Sirtrack equipment to Kevin Lay, who was visiting from New Zealand. Some of Andy's last words to Kevin were "*I love my work - the Lord has been kind to me*". Kevin was dropped off and Andy turned for home at Umtshibi. He crashed 10 minutes short of his destination and was killed on impact. An investigation into the cause of the crash is currently being conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority. He leaves a widow, Lol and a three-year-old son, Drew.

Strangely, as Andy and Kevin flew off in the morning, Drew burst into tears and said that he didn't think he would see his daddy again, as he would be killed in a crash! Lol's strong Christian beliefs have comforted her at this time

and given her strength to carry on - she believes that Andy had an appointment with his Maker.

Andy will long be remembered as a tremendous all rounder within National Parks and southern African wildlife conservation. We all respected his strong, and sometimes controversial, views on what he thought was right for wildlife management. This led to certain difficulties in his professional career, but he still persevered with his beliefs whilst most of his colleagues turned elsewhere. His dedication was an example to us all and he is literally "irreplaceable". When you consider what he offered to his vocation - tracking skills, man management, animal darting, fixed wing and helicopter piloting and a general care for wildlife - it is easy to see what a great loss this is. And all this for a mere \$255 per month!

We will always remember their trip to Australia last year and it was evident how popular they were wherever they went. Andy was a very good public speaker and enriched all his audiences. Many attended his presentation at the Perth Zoo and were keen to support his projects with purchases and donations.

Andy's life was not insured by National Parks, despite thoughts to the contrary. A local appeal was set up and received great support in the first weeks. Nicholas has been asked by the family to co-ordinate an overseas appeal and the **Andy Searle Memorial Trust Fund (International)** is being established. The trustees will be Nicholas and Kevin Judge. This will be for

Drew's school fees and their combined general living expenses. The funds will be wisely and responsibly monitored and spent in conjunction with discussions and Lol and Andy's family.

**L**ol has been left without a house or vehicle, and absolutely no money in the bank. Please support them as best you can. It's the least we can do as our tribute to honour the dedicated work and memory of Andy's 18 years in wildlife conservation.

**P**lease can you donate whatever amount you think is appropriate, so that we can partly ensure the safe future of Lol and Drew. Please make your donation payable to **Andy Searle Memorial Trust Fund (International)**, and post it to our address. Thank you.

**T**his is our chance to repay Andy for all that he did and ensure that Lol and Drew have a new and secure life. Every little bit will help and will have a far greater value in Zimbabwe than here.

### ***ZIMBABWE UPDATE***

**Y**ou will have read of the terrible political unrest in Zimbabwe at the moment, and we can only wait and see what happens after the proposed Election only hope that the wildlife is not too affected by the political upheavals.

**I**n January, Willas Makombe was relieved of his post of Director of National Parks and we are eagerly awaiting the appointment of his successor. There seems to be a slight wind of change blowing through the Department and Andy was quite optimistic about the future. In fact, he had a major meeting arranged for the Thursday after his death. There is a new Rhino Co-ordinator, Florence Msipa, and parties close to the action are hopeful that some attitudinal changes will be made.

**A** new rhino calf was found in Sinamatella last week, and numbers continue to increase in the Parks and Conservancies. Chewore, now released in Matusadona, is developing into an adult rhino and another of the re-located calves, Umgufu, will shortly start to fend for himself. That will leave four young calves at Tashinga,

under the safe care of Dr Chris Foggin, Chief Vet of the Wildlife Veterinary Unit.

**D**uring the past two years your Executive has adopted a "wait and see" approach to the situation in Zimbabwe. We have been far from satisfied with some of the developments within National Parks and we have closely monitored the situation by phone and occasional visits.

**F**ormer Chief Warden, Glenn Tatham, now manager of a safari lodge at Kariba, is hoping to continue his association with National Parks in a voluntary capacity, and co-ordinate all necessary anti-poaching work in the Matusadona and Zambezi Valley areas. We wish him well.

### ***ANDY SEARLE MEMORIAL FUNCTION***

**A** Memorial function has been organised for Thursday 27 April at Zebra's African Steakhouse, 18 Hislop Road, Attadale. Our special guest will be Chris Foggin who is visiting Perth for his son's wedding.

**C**hris is totally dedicated and committed to ensuring the conservation, veterinary security and wildlife disease control and prevention for the entire country. One man, who alone is responsible for tasks that would normally be delegated to dozens of individuals anywhere else in the civilised world, but here he is not only burdened with those enormous responsibilities, he is also underpaid and hassled at every turn by those above him.

**H**e worked closely with Andy for a number of years and he will review Andy's life and work. The event will take the form of a cocktail party with light refreshments and will run from 6.30 pm onwards. There will be plenty of opportunities to help with the fundraising for Lol and Drew and a variety of items will be available for purchase or auction.

**T**he cost will be \$30 all inclusive and we are making a special offer in conjunction with our membership renewals of \$35. If you attend the Memorial Function and also renew before that date, this will be at a discounted price of only \$50.

Please complete and return the attached form, or  
phone through your booking.  
Thank you.