

Vets might fly

Saving endangered animals takes time, knowledge and commitment. Around the world, many organisations are working to protect rare and threatened animals. Unfortunately, most do not have the money for, or access to, specialist veterinary care. Very few conservation agencies have their own vets, yet all of them work with animals in need of special protection.

Olivia Walter
Wildlife Vets International

Wildlife Vets International (WVI) is a British veterinary conservation charity set up and managed by veterinary professionals. It raises funds and provides expert veterinary support to rare and endangered wildlife all over the world. WVI is committed to the belief that by providing expert veterinary care for these species, the chances of protecting animals from extinction are greatly increased. For example, in the Russian Far East, the total remaining population of Amur leopards is approximately 30 animals. As part of the conservation strategy to conserve this cat, it is planned to introduce a second population from the offspring of captive stock. However, before any introductions

can be made, WVI is health-screening the existing wild population and captive stock for the new population, in order to avoid any detrimental disease introductions that could threaten not only the leopard, but also the Amur tiger.

The charity's main objectives are to provide veterinary expertise to support new and ongoing projects, and training for staff who work hands-on with endangered animals. With trained staff in the field, veterinary care can be planned, animal handling can be carried out professionally and diseases can be prevented or cured quickly and effectively. For example, WVI has recently become involved in training Bangladeshi forestry guards in how to resolve some aspects of tiger-human conflict situations around the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans.

Inevitably our work is related to the health of humans and livestock where this impacts on the health of rare and endangered animals. For example, WVI is currently assisting the Painted Dog Conservation project in Zimbabwe to deal with an outbreak of canine distemper amongst the domestic dog population.

Like Save the Rhino International, WVI has strong links with zoos. Not only are zoos



strong supporters, raising vital funds and using WVI's expertise for their own field projects, but they are able to provide safer conditions in which to develop new veterinary protocols that can be used in the field. For example, WVI's Veterinary Director developed a new robust and transportable system to provide gaseous anaesthesia to wild animals in the field without relying on cumbersome supplies of compressed oxygen. The equipment was tested on zoo animals before being used on critically endangered animals *in situ*. The equipment allows field staff to avoid the prolonged recovery times that may result from anaesthesia with repeated injectable drugs - an approach that is all too commonly used during radio collaring, biometric surveys, translocation or other scientific study.

WVI is a small organisation at present, but it is growing steadily to increase its range of activities. We would welcome contact with rhino projects around the world to explore ways in which we can assist the conservation of these charismatic animals. Please contact info@wildlifevetsinternational.org for more details.

Clay Pigeon Shoot

On Sunday 20th June, Father's Day, Save the Rhino Trustee George Stephenson is organising an exciting day of Clay Pigeon shooting in the beautiful surroundings of Hurdcott House in Wiltshire.

Fiona Macleod
Events Manager

What better way to spend Father's Day than taking part in a family-friendly event? Teams of four, which can be all adult or families, will compete on ten stands, four of them flushes and six individual, to win highly acclaimed titles such as best family, best estate team and the dreaded Clay Conservation prize! The winning team will also get to choose a charity to which a substantial donation will be made on their behalf.



For those needing a little extra tuition, there'll be a coaching stand; for those who don't fancy shooting a gun, there will also be an archery and air rifle stand. If that were not enough, a delicious lunch will also be available to all competitors.

If you are interested in entering a team, please contact Fiona on fiona@savetherhino.org or call **020 7357 7474**.