



RIGHT, FAR RIGHT, BELOW SAVE THE RHINO



# Conservancy collaboration for conservation



Maggie Esson from Chester Zoo discusses the new education displays with Martin Mulama, Chief Conservation Officer

At Ol Pejeta Conservancy an exciting new development has been established. This development, which comes in the form of a Capture and Translocation Facility, will not only succour the future of rhinos at this Conservancy, the largest black rhino sanctuary in Kenya, but also make a major contribution to rhino survival in the greater Laikipia and Ewaso Nyiro Districts where other private and community conservancies manage rhino and other threatened species.

Thomas Wimber | Development Programmes Manager, Ol Pejeta Conservancy

**B**ased at Ol Pejeta Conservancy (OPC), the centralised Capture and Translocation Facility (C&T) with its specialised capture truck, will provide the facilities to move, relocate, rescue and/or release rhinos as instances of injury, poaching attempts, breakouts and other emergencies require. The facilities will also allow for the restocking and redistribution of endangered species as populations increase.

As a resource, the USFWS-funded C&T represents an important milestone in the coordination and cooperation of the Laikipia Conservancies where rhinos are so vulnerable.

As a centralised resource, the C&T saves costs and shares expertise. In a very literal sense, pound for pound, this project represents good value. Symbolically, the project means a great deal more; combined with an Emergency Fund to support animal emergencies, the C&T makes a significant statement about collective and regional concern and collaboration amongst conservancies, land owners and the government for the conservation of rhinos (and other species). This collaboration sends a message to would-be poachers: species vulnerability and security are taken seriously. By offering operational support to the Kenya Wildlife Service, the C&T also garners the private conservation sector more credibility.

The C&T is not only about emergencies and security urgencies; it will also contribute greatly to the restocking and relocating of surplus animal populations in the region. It will also allow for the movement of animals in danger of hybridisation and therefore enhance the genetic integrity of rhino populations in the Laikipia District. At OPC, rhino, and other endangered species, are thriving and, through the C&T, OPC can

share its biodiversity wealth and aid the increase of animal numbers beyond its borders.

The C&T will also serve as a catalyst to the Laikipia Wildlife Forum's Environmental Education & Literacy Programme (EELP). The EELP helps disseminate education about species conservation, natural resource use and the environment's role in society. One of the opportunities offered by the EELP is educational visits to the OPC 'Morani' Education Centre. By being based next to the centre, the C&T will augment key conservation messages whilst also providing a hands-on teaching example of the realities of animal management. In light of the potential teaching opportunities associated with the facilities at Morani, SRI has suggested that we work with Chester Zoo to develop a masterplan for education, including the interpretation material that should be created in conjunction with the new C&T. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting initiative!

Maintaining security for rhinos is intensive and expensive. A security structure that is multi-layered, requiring greater effort to penetrate makes for an effective barrier against species loss. Armed pursuit of a poacher following a poaching incident is a reality, but this is the last resort. Better to install prevention strategies such as: guarding, rhino patrols, cattle herder reporting, boundary fencing, and community watches. C&T augments this security strategy by allowing for a better response, and by demonstrating enhanced communication and coordination and a region-wide concern for rhino safety.

We hope this sends a clear signal of our commitment to rhino survival.

## Grant

Our thanks to USFWS RTCF which provided \$32,780 for the construction of the new Capture and Translocation Facility. The second part of this project is the creation of an Emergency Fund for black rhino work in Laikipia, which is being administered by the Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries, and which will pay for 50% of all emergency black rhino work. Save the Rhino granted \$3,278 and thanks to Chester Zoo for awarding £7,334 for year one costs and £583 from the Mary Heap Charitable Trust.

The Capture and Translocation Facility is situated next to the education centre so that visitors to OPC can fully understand its importance

