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As always... It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the much-anticipated Summer Edition of North West Icons, packed with interesting reads, thrilling adventures and memorable experiences. North West Icons, as the name suggests, focuses on the North West Province of South Africa, where the untamed splendour of the landscape is matched only by the sheer beauty and warmth of the people who call this land home.

Known as the 'Heritage destination of South Africa', the North West Province presents travellers with a rewarding holiday destination that offers exciting wildlife and adventure encounters as well as the opportunity to participate in a rich cultural and historical heritage. There is also plenty of fun to be had, and in this edition of Icons Magazine we take a look at some of the province's exciting activities for young and old.

The North West Province offers up the Big 5, fantastic bird-life and wide-open African skies. We will be putting the spotlight on the magnificent, yet greatly endangered, Rhinoceros and emphasise the importance of rhino conservation.

The area also boasts archaeological discoveries that date back to the beginnings of humankind, as well as the world-famous Sun City hotel complex, creatively dedicated to ancient lost civilizations and modern-day pleasures.

Come along with us as we take a trip to visit the Taung Heritage Site, and then head over to the renowned Sun City where you can opt to simply unwind, or join in for the adrenalin experience of a lifetime.

While exploring the pages of this magazine, the story of this land will be shared with you, as well as a sense of pride in the history and culture of the province, and visitors can take home with them lasting memories of an extraordinary experience.

Enjoy the journey...

NORTH WEST PROVINCE Icons

DISCOVER THE TRAVELLER IN YOU

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WILDLIFE

Icons

RHINO CONSERVATION





THE MOST ENDANGERED SPECIES



» DID YOU KNOW?

Rhinos are one of the "Big 5" animals popular on African safaris. They can therefore contribute to economic growth and sustainable development through the tourism industry, which creates job opportunities and provides tangible benefits to local communities living alongside rhinos. In almost all rhino conservation areas, there are other valuable plants and animals. While protecting rhinos, other species such as elephant, buffalo, predators and small game are often also conserved. Egrets and other birds can be found with rhinos, feeding on the species external parasites.

Of the three Asian rhino species, two are Critically Endangered. A subspecies of Javan rhino, recently re-discovered in Vietnam, only survives as a tiny remnant population, if at all.

Successful conservation efforts have seen the third species, the greater one-horned rhino increase in number, leading to a reclassification from Endangered to Vulnerable.

AFRICAN RHINO

Different subspecies of the two African rhino species are similarly faring differently. Once thought to be extinct, southern white rhinos are now thriving in well-protected sanctuaries and are classified as Near Threatened. In contrast, the northern white rhino only survives as a remnant population of four individuals.

Black rhinos have also increased over the past decade or so, although total numbers are still a fraction of what they were 50 years ago and one subspecies is classified as Probably Extinct. To help protect these endangered species, WWF is assisting the North-West Parks and Tourism Board (NWPTB), the authority responsible for a number of protected areas within the province, to improve rhino conservation. This includes range expansion, aerial and field surveys, and tagging

activities. Increased surveillance will also improve the general security of these animals.

The NWPTB administers 14 protected areas within the North-West Province in South Africa. There are five parks which harbour two important white rhino populations according to criteria set by the IUCN's Species Survival Commission's African Rhino Specialist Group (AfrSG).

RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

Responsible management and monitoring of the white rhino populations requires a better understanding of:

- Structures of the populations, such as sex and age.
- Reproduction, including age of first calving, inter-calving rates of the individual cows, age at which the reproductive rate drops.
- Territoriality, including the size and distribution of home ranges.
- The project supports the incremental ear-notching of rhinos as well as implanting passive transponders into horns and rhinos in order to link specific horns to specific rhinos. The cumulative effect of this exercise will improve both the biological and security monitoring of individual rhinos in the parks.

OBJECTIVES

- Create a further important white rhino population within the NWPTB.
- Further enhance the security of the white and black rhino populations by training staff in field techniques.
- Improve the identification of white and black rhino populations through micro-chipping and ear-notching.
- Optimise the potential for tracking and identifying rhino horns/parts within the SADC region.

SOLUTION

1. A monitoring strategy has been devised whereby the rhinos are ear notched. This allows them to be individually identifiable



through aerial or ground surveys.

2. Field staff are trained to conduct ground surveys to collect more frequent and detailed population dynamics data, such as sex and age data, breeding periods, calving intervals, home ranges, and territories of individuals and also general movement and distribution.
3. Ear-notched animals should also be implanted with transponder micro-chips to facilitate post-mortem identification. Photographic records for identification purposes of all known animals should be updated regularly.
4. In the smaller parks, each rhino can be individually marked, thus providing valuable information for management to fully understand each population. In the larger parks the strategy is to have at least one third of the population individually marked to enable the development of a statistically sound and repeatable population estimate.
5. This 'mark-recapture' methodology contributes to a better understanding of a wide range of general population data vital to good rhino management. The increased surveillance of the white rhinos will also improve the general security of these animals.

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THREATS TO RHINOS

- Demand for rhino horn is the greatest threat. Although international trade in rhino horn has been banned under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora) since 1977, demand remains high – fuelling rhino poaching in both Africa and Asia.
- Demand in Yemen for rhino horn dagger handles, worn as status symbols, grew in the 1970s and a 20-fold rise in the price of rhino horn had a devastating effect on rhino (mostly black) populations.
- Rhino horn is also used in traditional Asian medicine to treat a variety of ailments. The major markets are China, Taiwan and South Korea.
- Although some traditional medical practitioners are using alternatives, a TRAFFIC survey of medical practitioners showed that 60% stocked rhino horn and 27% maintained that it was essential to their work.