



Rhino Watch

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Comments on CITES and trading in rhino products

The cabinet has approved that the Department of Environmental Affairs make a submission to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to allow South Africa to investigate legal trading in white rhino products and rhino horn. CITES is to take place in Harare in June 1997.

We gathered a few views for *Rhino Watch* readers:

Clive Walker

The Rhino and Elephant Foundation's viewpoint is simple and straightforward. We will support any effort to ensure the long-term survival of rhinoceros in Africa. If it can be found that a legal trade is possible, subject to all the necessary mechanisms controlling that trade being in place, then it is an option that every responsible agency or organisation should at least be prepared to sit down and discuss. Our concern is that there is far too much emotional hype at the very mention of a legal trade, whilst at the same time, an unwillingness at any attempt to sit down and talk to the end users, Animal Rights

movements, responsible NGO's and government agencies.

Dr Hym Ebedes

The *Natal Daily News* recently featured the following interview with Dr Hym Ebedes, a wildlife veterinarian:

Dr Ebedes recently attended a symposium on deer and deer products in the People's Republic of China. There, he says, he spoke to people who used rhino horn for treating fever, heart conditions and flu - and met a South African who took a concoction containing rhino horn for a cold and claimed he felt better after a few hours. Dr Ebedes says that the rhino's salvation might be to harvest rhino horn under anaesthesia and to market it in the same way as deer antlers are sold.

"Telling a Chinese person to use aspirin instead of his traditional medicine would be like expecting a Westerner to have acupuncture before visiting the family doctor and using Western medicine. We do not really know about traditional Oriental medicine and the use of rhino horn. We do not know what rhino horn, ginseng, and deer antlers have in common. We do not know if a legalised trade in rhino horn would eventually save the rhino from the extinction that is predicted. If trade was possible, with whom do we trade - the middlemen, the conservation authorities of the Far East, the governments in Beijing, Seoul in Korea or Taipei, or directly with

the traditional healers?" Dr Ebedes said answers were wanted for many questions such as:

□ Who needs and who uses rhino horn?

□ How much horn is needed annually to supply the traditional medicine trade in the Far East and every part of the world where Orientals have settled?

There was much misunderstanding and ignorance about traditional Oriental medicine. In a recent book written in English on traditional Oriental medicine, rhino horn was prescribed for heart conditions and fever. "Whether rhino horn works should not be our concern because we are too late to change traditions. We should not question other people's beliefs and traditions".

Dr Ebedes said that the people he met in China did not know that rhino horn could be harvested under anaesthesia. Deer antlers from live deer were harvested and they had a flourishing pharmaceutical industry producing deer antler products.

New Zealand, Australian and Russian deer farmers exported profitably hundreds of tons of deer antler to the Orient.

Why can't the same be done with rhino horn? Perhaps it is not too late", says Dr Ebedes.

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Jan van der Walt

Mr van der Walt wrote in the Comment Column of the SA Game & Hunt magazine (Jan - March 1997) that SAGO (South African Game Organisation) supports the proposal that the present restrictions on trade be lifted. Not only because many game ranchers already own rhinos in South Africa (20% white rhinos in SA, 1477 out of 7370, are privately owned), but also because many of the principle of sustainable utilization of wildlife which receives so much prominence in the ongoing rhino debate.

It is a simple biological fact that game breed and that their numbers have to be limited in accordance with available food sources. The majority of rational people don't need any further clarification than that. The same principle is involved in cattle or sheep farming. Judicious culling of game is best done by hunting. In this way the habitat will not be over exploited and further production can take place in a sustainable manner. The proof is there already. Today there are more game, including scarce species, on private land than 100 years ago. So much so, that the white rhino can be hunted in South Africa. What an achievement!



Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Parks: *Rhinos are breeding well*

A British newspaper reported last year that 800 rhino had "gone missing" from the Hluhluwe/Umfolozi complex.

The Natal Parks Board denied, however, that this announcement was true and stated that the rhinos have bred well during the past two years. No rhinos have been killed by poachers and only 60 deaths have been reported during this time. NPB head of Scientific Services Dr Martin Brooks said: "We have removed 213 rhinos since 1994 for management reasons and this would account for a slight reduction in numbers. The average decrease of 28 percent in other species counted (except zebra) supports the view that count variability is the major factor involved".

In an article, *The Citizen* newspaper reported that a biennial game count in the parks during September and October showed figures which were generally lower than those in 1994. The NPB scientific staff confirmed that the differences (between the 1994 and 1996 game counts) were well within the norms for statistical interpretation of game count data. Comparing the white rhino count of 1 800 in 1994 with the figure of 1320 in 1996 did not suggest a decline. Dr Brooks said that the estimates are not precise figures and that there is no indication that anything untoward has happened.

Rhino horn dealers fined

There may be discussions and proposals at CITES to lift the ban on trading in rhino products, but in the meantime rhino horn dealers are still being severely punished for their illegal crimes.

The Daily News reported that four people convicted of dealing in a rhino horn and an elephant tusk were ordered to pay fines totalling R117 000 or face imprisonment. The Durban Regional Court Magistrate, Mr Theo Reed, ordered that the guilty parties, Ms Ngubane, Ms Mbongwa and Mr Mkhize pay a fine of R25 000 each for the possession of the rhino horn and if they were in default of payment they would be jailed for 1 000 days. They were given a further R10 000 fine or 400 days for dealing in an elephant tusk.

Another guilty party, Mr Mpanza was fined R10 000 or 400 days on the rhino horn charge and R2 000 or 100 days on the charge involving the elephant tusk.

Mr Reed said that it must be clear to people who do the actual illegal hunting that the court will not find it difficult to imprison them. He said that what counted against each accused was that each acted in terms of greed and not need.

He ordered that the rhino horn and elephant tusk be handed to the Natal Parks Board.

Moratorium on bow-hunting lifted

The Professional Hunters Association of South Africa (PHASA) has lifted the moratorium on the hunting of rhino with bow and arrow. The decision lies, however, with the nine provinces to decide if they will allow the hunting of the Big Six - elephants, rhinos, buffalo, lions, leopards and hippos - with bow and arrow.

The committee that investigated bow-hunting determined that strict measures must be adhered to:

- * The hunter must be accompanied by an armed professional hunter and nature conservator.
- * The weight of the arrow must be at least 850 grams and the bow tension must be 105 vt per pound.
- * When an animal is wounded with an arrow, the professional hunter must shoot it immediately.

The ethics of bow-hunting have been questioned by the Elephant Management and Owners' Association (EMOA), as well as the African Rhino Owners' Association (AROA). The following was also said in an article by Walter Mangold: "... I found the local acceptance of this new-found money spinner another blow to the decency of humanity and the dignity of animals ..."

Mr Cobus Schoeman, Deputy Director of Gauteng's Directorate Nature Conservation, is however of the opinion

that the animals do not suffer when they are hunted with bow and arrow. He says that if the animal is hit correctly, the arrow will cut directly through the lungs and other intestines. The animal bleeds to death within a few hours.

He says that only skilled hunters must hunt elephants, rhinos and hippos. A shoulder-blade shot is the only way to kill these animals with their thick skins.

According to him there are in America alone four million registered hunters who will be willing to pay up to R55 000 to kill a white rhino. The money can mean a lot for nature conservation.

Natal Parks Board refutes allegations on rhino poaching

The NPB refuted in a news release on 25 February 1997, all allegations that have been made in the press regarding alleged involvement of game guards in rhino poaching in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park. "There is no evidence of our game guards being involved in this. There has been neither rhino nor elephant poaching in the park since May 1995", says Tony Conway, Chief

Conservator for Zululand. "Only two arrests have been made over the last 12 months for minor illegal hunting cases in the area, he continues.

According to the Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU), indications are that the rhino horn was taken from an animal outside the province. This may only be confirmed once a 'trace element' and 'isotopic' analysis has been conducted. This will reflect the chemical signature of the horn. The Board has also refuted claims that elephant tusks would have been taken from animals in any of its protected areas, as it would not be viable to poach the elephants of their size and youth.

"The existence of a syndicate operating in the park is also refuted," says Mr Conway. The current modus operandi of poachers is erratic and ad-hoc which does not suggest a syndicate type operation. Our supervisor levels and patrol densities are of a high degree and the Board has a full-time law enforcement officer and an anti-poaching unit in the area to ensure that these high standards are maintained," he continues.

Newsflash

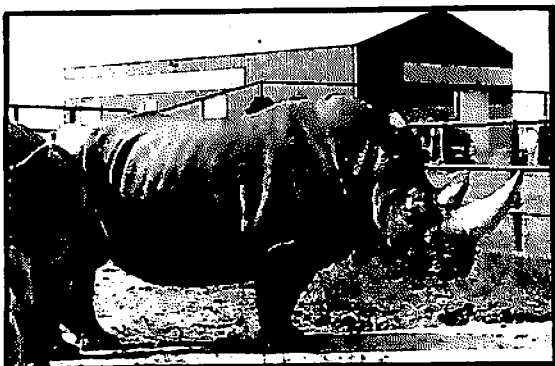
The first Nordic born rhino

The first rhino to be born in a Nordic Zoo, made his acquaintance with the world on Wednesday, 15 January 1997. He was born at the Kolmarden Zoo, outside Norrköping, 140 km west of Stockholm in Sweden. The gestation lasted 17 months.

Two years ago, the calf's mother, Natala, had another calf which died soon after birth.

Letters

I have five rhinos in my charge at our Wildlife Conservation Centre in Kansas, America. I am also adding an additional male "Milton #755" from the "Wilds" (Ohio). We are very committed to these species.



Wagasa #467, born in Natal in October 1972



Jaun pur (Indian) #180, born in January 1990

I have travelled to Africa the last seven summers to do behavioural studies in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe (with Norman English in Sinamatello) and Botswana. Next summer I am spending two weeks in Kenya and an additional ten days at Ngorongoro Crater. I have also been nominated to become a member of the North American Rhino Tag recently!

I would very much like to meet and talk to Mr Clive Walker on one of my trips.

I enjoy your newsletter very much - it is very informative. Steven Kaup, Rhino Specialist

Impeccably researched book for sale with 10% discount to AROA members

On the Clover Trail

Dr Eugène Joubert highlights the plight of the world's rhinos in his latest book, *On the Clover Trail*. Dr Joubert is a leading authority on the Black rhino. His book is full of amazing stories and anecdotes on his lifelong experiences with wildlife in Namibia.

Although the book reads like an adventure story, it also contains a great deal of scientific information. The social structures and activity cycles, amongst others, of rhinos are discussed in his books. He gives an overview of the paleontology, taxonomy and biology of the white and black Asian and African rhinoceros and traces the factors giving rise to the decline of the rhino population.

Many pages of rich images, as well as maps, sketches and graphs are included in this fascinating book.

On the Clover Trail, The Plight of the World's Rhinos is published by Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

The price of the book, inclusive of the 10% discount, is R81. Please contact Lucinda Scholtz at (011) 453-9834 if you are interested in purchasing a copy.

New Chief for WWF South Africa

The Chairman and Board of Trustees would like to wish the outgoing Chief Executive of WWF - SA since 1990, Dr John Hanks, the best of success with his new endeavours. He has been tasked with the full-time investigation into the viability of trans-frontier conservation areas, also known as 'peace-parks', between South Africa and its neighbours.

We extend our congratulations to Dr Ian Macdonald, former Director of Conservation for WWF - SA, who will be succeeding Dr Hanks.

Editor: Lucinda Scholtz