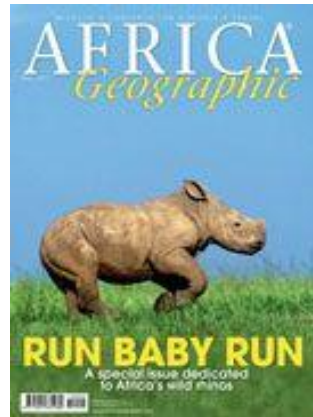


AFRICA GEOGRAPHIC

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April 2012: All about rhinos

Special issue - rhinos & the poaching crisis

80 and counting...

That's the number of rhinos killed in South Africa in the first two months of 2012. We dedicate this entire issue to finding out about rhinos and their precious horn, establishing exactly what is driving the poaching onslaught and examining the pros and cons of suggested solutions.

features

All about rhinos

Find out what we know about Africa's rhino species – how many there are and where they live – and about their horns, the unique evolutionary attribute that arguably makes them the most controversial and written-about animals of our time.

A chequered past

Prior to colonial times, Africa's rhino population across all species is thought to have numbered in the hundreds of thousands, possibly over a million. From the 1800s to the present, our summary tells their story. Rhino numbers, however, remained guesswork until the 1960s – and even today there is an element of uncertainty that is compounded by secrecy for security reasons.



The crisis

Crisis? What crisis? After all, rhino numbers for both species in southern Africa are actually increasing. It sounds crazy given a poaching scenario that is seemingly so out of hand, but it is true. It doesn't mean that rhinos in the wild aren't in trouble though – they are. We unpick the inner workings of the poaching syndicates and look at what we know about the Vietnamese and Chinese consumers who are driving the demand.



The solutions

We know rhinos are in trouble. We know we want to save them. But how do we do this, in the face of such seemingly overwhelming odds? The proposed solutions are as hotly debated as they are numerous. Do we increase security and penalties, should we stop legal trophy hunting or focus our efforts on changing mindsets in Asia? We evaluate every one, including the hottest potato of them all: calls to legalise the trade in horn.

Find it here:

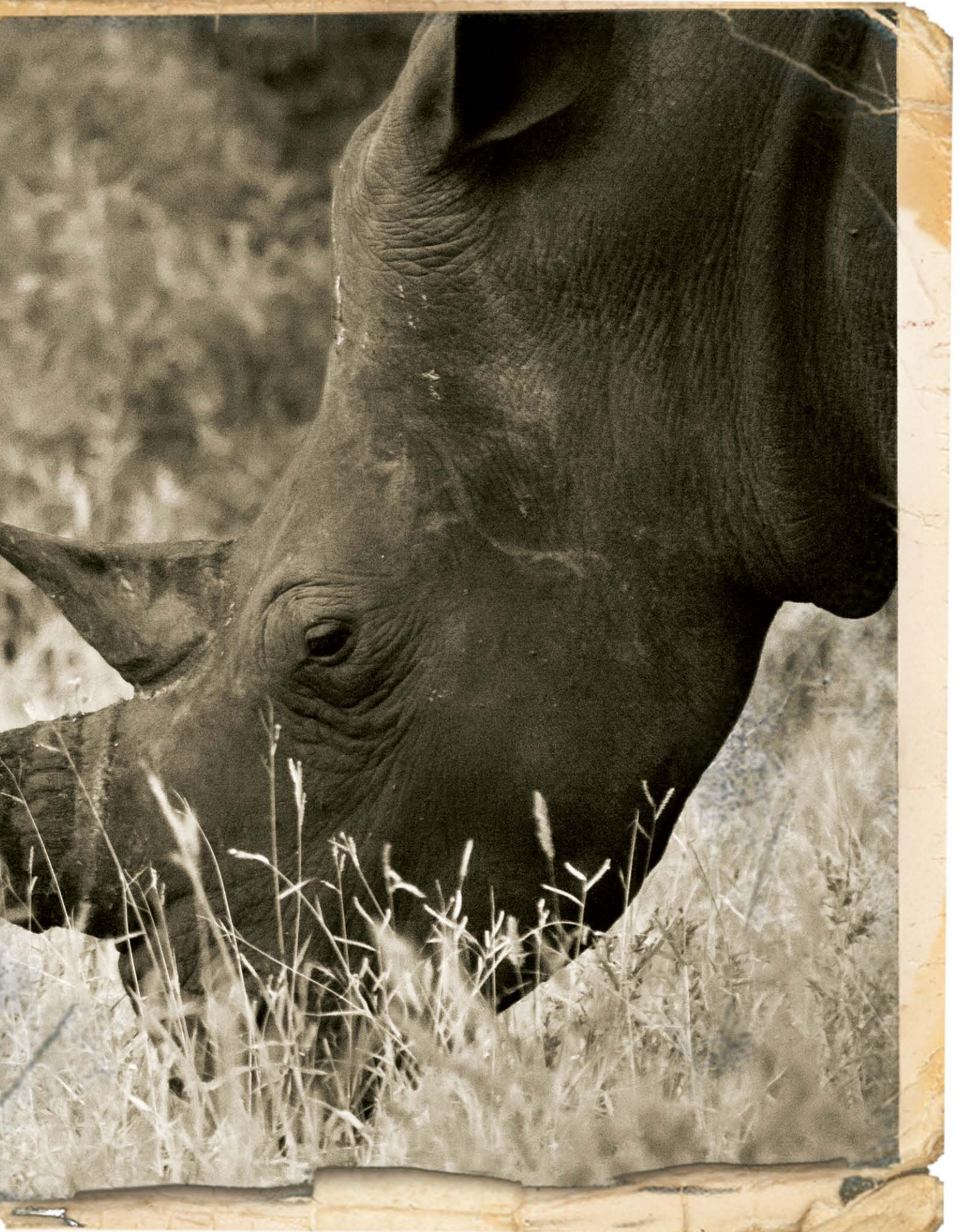
<http://www.africageographic.com/magazines/africa-geographic/>

Peter Borchert
Founder

We chose our engaging little model for the cover of this issue for two reasons: relief from the brutal images that inevitably accompany so many stories about rhinos these days, and as a message of encouragement: for as long as there are rhinos being born that will grow up in the wildest of possible circumstances, there is hope for the species. Our exhortation 'RUN BABY RUN' is, therefore, as much a call for our baby pachyderm to be the essence of what it is, as it is a call to run for its very life.

a chequered past

Prior to colonial times, Africa's rhino population across all species is thought to have numbered in the hundreds of thousands, possibly over a million. From the 1800s to the present, our summary tells their story. Rhino numbers, however, remained guesswork until the 1960s – and even today there is an element of uncertainty that is compounded by secrecy for security reasons. ►





TIMELINE

NORTHERN WHITE RHINO

1903

The northern white rhino is reported to the scientific world and is described as 'locally common within a limited area'. It is considered to be significantly more numerous than southern white rhinos, which are close to extinction. The type specimen was shot by Major Gibbons on the White Nile.



Early 1900s

Northern white rhinos are fairly numerous throughout their range, including Sudan (above and left).



1800

1812

1817

1842

1880

1893

1894

1895

1900

1903

1912

1933

1938

SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO

1812

On 16 October British explorer William John Burchell discovers (from a scientific perspective) a new rhino north of Kuruman in South Africa. He promptly shoots two and sketches them. (Below: J.A. Wagner's 1846 drawing 'Rhinoceros simus Burch', a reference to Burchell.)



J.A. WAGNER

1817

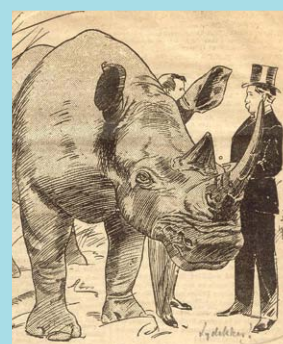
Burchell describes these rhinos to science in a letter published in a French journal. Seventy years later the species would be hunted almost to extinction. (Below: an 1851 illustration by Gordon Cumming.)



GORDON CUMMING

1894

Six white rhinos are hunted and killed at the junction of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers in Zululand. Until now few people know that white rhinos occur in this area of South Africa. The mounted specimens draw huge interest in the UK (right).



ROWLAND WARD

1842

Adulphe Delegorgue secures the only specimen of a white rhino from Zululand [KwaZulu-Natal], South Africa (hunters and zoologists rarely visited the area during the 19th century). Shot close to the Umfolozi River, it is later donated to the Natural History Museum in Paris.

1893

What is thought to be the last pair of white rhinos in northern Zimbabwe is shot to secure the remains for museums in England. Reports of their extinction prove to be premature as scattered accounts of white rhinos in remote areas of Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe continue until the 1930s. By the end of that decade, however, southern white rhinos have been exterminated everywhere outside Zululand.



1800

1812

1817

1842

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1903

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1933

1938

Early 1800s

The black rhino is the world's most numerous rhino species, with a total population estimated at several hundred thousand.

1880

The species is driven to local extinction in the Cape (South Africa).



WILLIAM DANIELL



JAMES CHAPMAN

1800s

Throughout this century and into the next, black rhinos are hunted relentlessly as European influence strengthens across the continent. On 13 May 1862 James Chapman takes the first-ever photograph of a black rhino, which he shot in central Botswana (above).

BLACK RHINO



JACQUES VERSCHUREN

1938

Garamba National Park is established in Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), primarily to conserve the 100 or so northern white rhinos living there. Through its range the species is hunted for its hide, meat and horn (above).

1960

There are an estimated 2 230 northern white rhinos across five countries. They are more numerous than their southern cousins. This group was photographed in Nimule National Park, Sudan, in 1957.



P.G. MOLLOY

1963

Guerrilla forces occupy Garamba, which has a rhino population of 1 100–1 300.

1972

An estimated 900–1 000 rhinos are killed in Garamba during the guerrilla disturbance.

1978

Another wave of poaching hits Garamba.

1984

The northern white rhino only survives in the DRC, where 15 individuals remain in Garamba.

1975

The northern white rhino is listed on CITES Appendix I.

1946 1960 1961 1963 1970 1972 1973 1975 1977 1978 1979 1980 1984

1895

Conservationists in Zululand petition government for the protection of the remaining rhinos, leading to the proclamation of the Umfolozi Junction Reserve on 30 April 1895. There were reportedly between 20 and 50 animals alive (with some estimates of up to 200) at the time. In hindsight, the lower estimates are thought to have been a deliberate ruse to convince politicians of the gravity of the situation.

1960

The white rhino population is estimated at 650.

1961

For the first time translocation techniques allow for the transportation of southern white rhinos from today's Hluhluwe–Imfolozi Park to establish new populations within their former range: 'Operation Rhino' (see page 28) has begun.



©REG GUSH 'MKHUZE – THE FORMATIVE YEARS'

1973

Southern white rhinos are introduced to Livingstone Game Park in Zambia – there is no evidence of them living in Zambia beforehand. By 1989, however, they have all been poached.

1977

The southern white rhino is listed on CITES Appendix I, the classification used for species most at risk. Trade in such animals is permitted only under exceptional circumstances.

1979

The Natal Parks Board sells rhinos to the private sector for the first time at a fixed price (of R760) on a first-come, first-served basis.

1912

The white rhino is included in Schedule C (Royal Game), meaning it can only be captured or killed under permit from the colonial administrator.

1946 1960 1961 1963 1970 1972 1973 1975 1977 1978 1979 1980 1984



W. ROBERTSON

1933

Only two breeding populations of about 110 black rhinos survive in southern Africa, estimated at about 0.1 per cent of the continent's numbers. (Above: a rhino shot in Zimbabwe in 1935.)

1960

Africa's black rhino population is estimated at 100 000.

1970

Despite the critical situation in southern Africa, there are still thought to be about 18 000 black rhinos living in Kenya – the species' stronghold at the time – and some 65 000 across the continent. (Kenya's tally includes Gertie, famous for her long horn, photographed here in 1965.)

Poaching escalates throughout this decade and the next to feed the demand for rhino horn in Asian and Middle Eastern markets. Political and economic instability in a number of rhino range states exacerbates the decline.



MICHAEL DENIS

1975

The black rhino is listed on CITES Appendix II. Two years later, it is upgraded to CITES Appendix I, a reflection of its worsening status.

1980

Tanzania, Zambia and the Central African Republic (CAR) are the major black rhino range states, with their collective population of 9 500 representing two-thirds of Africa's population. Within years, though, they will become locally extinct in both CAR and Zambia, with severely depleted populations in Tanzania.

1946–48

As an example of the century's assault on wildlife, a game control officer and his colleagues in Kenya shoot approximately 1 000 black rhinos (right) to prepare land for agricultural settlement.



K. STOTT



NORTHERN WHITE RHINO



FRASER HILLMAN-SMITH

2005

Yemen allegedly remains the main recipient of rhino horn from Africa, the bulk coming from the northern white rhino. In Yemen's capital the price of horn rises to around US\$1 500 per kilogram. Heavy poaching by Sudanese and Congolese nationals reduces Garamba's rhinos (left) to 10.

1987

1992

1994

1995

1997

1999

2000

2003

2004

1987

The price for selling live rhinos is 6.5 times lower than the price obtained by trophy hunters, meaning that many are sold into the hunting industry to be shot and do not contribute to the species' conservation. In fact, the controversial 'Buys Report' reveals that only 931 of the 1 440 rhinos sold to private owners still survive.

The Natal Parks Board moves to auction rhinos instead. This increases the purchasing price and is thought to encourage private owners, who currently hold 20 per cent of the country's population, to breed rhinos.

1994

South Africa's white rhino population is down-listed to CITES Appendix II, which allows for trade in live animals and the hunting of trophies.

1997

South Africa now has 8 440 white rhinos in 247 wild populations, with an additional 650 animals in captivity. It is the world's most numerous rhino species – and is proclaimed a great conservation success.

2003

For the first time, South Africa issues CITES permits for nine rhino trophies and two rhino horns to be exported to Vietnam.



2005-07

Vietnamese nationals reportedly conduct 203 white rhino hunts in South Africa.

2005-10

State conservation bodies in South Africa sell 1 118 white rhinos, generating funds to the value of US\$29-million.



SOUTHERN WHITE RHINO

1987

1992

1994

1995

1997

1999

2000

2003

2004

1992

The black rhino is estimated to have suffered a 96 per cent reduction since 1970, falling to fewer than 2 500 animals.

1995

Black rhino numbers reach an all-time low across the continent – 2 410.

1999

The sole remaining western black rhinos are thought to live in Cameroon. Groups are widely scattered and the chances of them breeding are poor.

2003

Black rhinos are re-introduced to Zambia and released under close protection into North Luangwa National Park (left). In 1980, it was still home to the third-largest population of the southern-central sub-species on the continent.)

1994

The last recorded incident of poaching in the arid Kunene Region of Namibia. The subsequent recovery of this population will be remarkable – by 2012 it will represent the largest free-ranging population of any rhino species outside formal protected areas.

1997

South Africa and Namibia, which in 1980 held only six per cent of black rhinos, account for two-thirds of the remaining population. This is attributable to both a decline in numbers throughout the rest of Africa, and an almost doubling of the population in these two range states.

2000

The last recorded sighting of a live western black rhino in the wild (Cameroon).



ZAWA/FZS NORTH LUANGWA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

BLACK RHINO

2007

The last-ever sighting of northern white rhinos in Garamba. They are now thought to be extinct in the wild.



TIM JACKSON

2009

The remaining four potential breeding animals from Dvur Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic are moved to high-security enclosures in Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya, in the hope that they will breed (left).

2011

Breeding attempts are currently under way.

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012



2007

In South Africa, 28 per cent of white rhinos are now in private hands (below) – that's more than the rest of Africa combined. In the Zimbabwe Lowveld, poaching rises considerably, marking the onset of the current surge.

2008

The poaching wave moves south. The recorded number of rhinos poached in South Africa rises to 83, up from 13 in 2007.

2009

South Africa imposes a national moratorium on the sale of rhino horns within the country in a bid to ensure that no legally obtained horns end up in the illegal trade.

2011

The South African Army is called into the Kruger Park to help combat rhino poaching.



FOTO24/CRAIG NIEUWENHUIZEN



GEOFF YORK

2009

Non-traditional rhino hunters (from South-east Asia, especially Vietnam) now make up 90 per cent of rhino hunts in South Africa. Traditional big game hunters (from the US and Europe) are driven from the market as rhino prices soar to three times their 2005 value.

2010

The total population is estimated at 20 160 wild animals. As the poaching wave increases in South Africa, there is a marked decrease in poaching in Zimbabwe's Lowveld.

The number of white rhinos on private land in South Africa is about 4 500, or 24 per cent of the country's population of 18 800. They reside on a total land area of 22 274 square kilometres – roughly the size of the Kruger National Park.

2012

Although white rhino numbers continue to grow (at about 6.6 per cent in 2009), it is predicted that if poaching continues to increase at the present rate, deaths will outnumber births for the first time in 2016. SANParks predicts that Kruger's population will experience negative growth in 2016, should the present situation continue.

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012



2004

Namibia and South Africa are given special permission by CITES to shoot and export five black rhinos per year.

2006

An extensive survey for the western black rhino is conducted in Cameroon.

2007

In Kenya, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Namibia black rhinos are managed by private landowners and communities on a custodianship basis. Throughout Africa 21 per cent of black rhinos now fall under such an arrangement, while seven per cent are privately owned.

2007

Unlike Namibia and South Africa, where populations are increasing, poaching and snaring are a major concern in Zimbabwe (below). The country, home to 28 per cent of the southern-central subspecies, posts a slight decline in rhino numbers.



2008

South Africa now conserves two-thirds (1 550) of the continent's southern-central black rhinos, as well as the only population of south-western black rhinos outside Namibia.

2010

Black rhinos are made available to the private sector. By 2010, 45 landowners account for 446 black rhinos, or 23 per cent, of South Africa's population of 1 916.

2011

The western black rhino is declared extinct.