

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

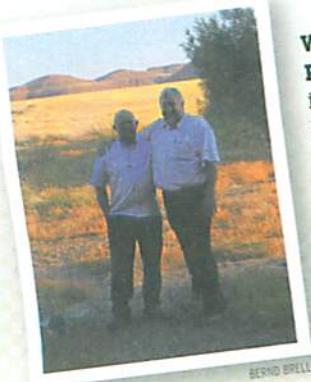
Wêreldsend, a place so remote that the nearest shop is about 180km away, was buzzing. Police tape cordoned off a suspicious-looking patch of grass. Bones lay scattered around. A metal detector emitted a gentle hum as it was carefully hovered over the area. And around 30 expectant Namibians watched as the course leaders, Rod Potter and Wayne Evans, explained what to do.

Cathy Dean | Director

No, this wasn't an investigation into Tory party funding, but a series of Scene of the Crime training courses developed by Wildlife Investigators Rod Potter and Wayne Evans, especially for wildlife managers who have to deal with suspicious deaths of animals, particularly rhino and elephant, on their turf. Over the course of three weeks, Rod and Wayne taught groups of staff from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the Protected Resource Unit of the Namibian Police, Save the Rhino Trust and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, what to look for, how to collect evidence and how to present the best possible prosecution should the case come to court.



A session on practical exhibits demonstrated items that might be found at a crime scene, ranging from weapons (axe, handgun, snare, bullet cartridges etc) to things that the poachers might have discarded (clothing, drinks cans)



Wayne Evans and **Rod Potter**, the course instructors, in the beautiful setting of Wêreldsend

"I can only say keep up the good job – without what you taught us I can see rhinos dying and criminals winning in most cases"

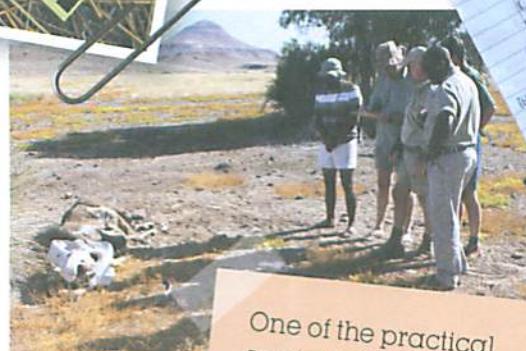
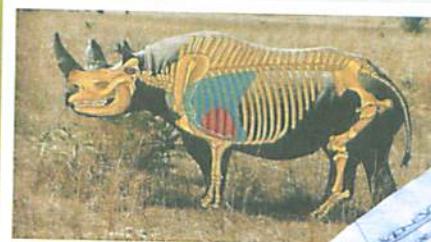
"The way of integrating practical and theoretical work was good and made it enjoyable"

Participant

Trainees learned how to take plaster casts of footprints found at the scene, which might later link a suspect to the crime



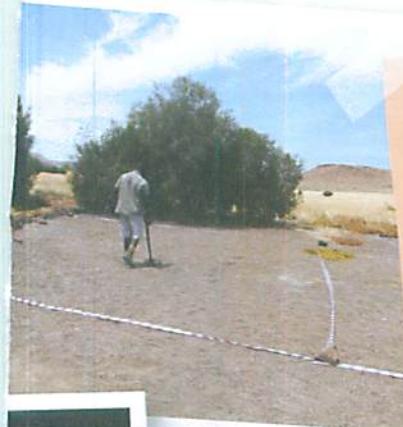
A model of a black rhino is used to demonstrate anatomy, and to illustrate where to look for bullets



One of the practical sessions: the participants study a pretend crime scene before the start of the training course and discuss what sort of things they might be looking for at the site



All those who might encounter a wildlife crime scene should carry an incident or pocket book, in which they can record details of the investigation. These notes will be invaluable when they come to present the case in court



Using a metal detector to look for bullet casings and bullets requires careful scanning of the entire area



Rod and Wayne showed trainees how to identify elephant ivory and how to distinguish real rhino horns from fake ones



Simson Uri-Knob, (far right) Director of Capacity Building at Save the Rhino Trust, puts into practice his newly learned Train-the-Trainer skills



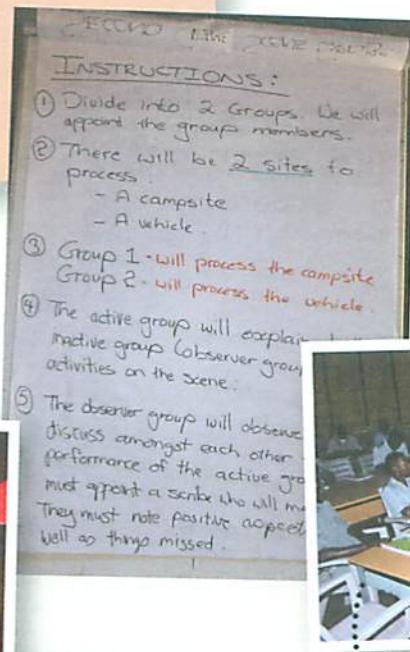
One of the groups at work on planning how they would inspect a suspect vehicle



Each Advanced course participant received a detailed course handbook, which included all the references and material taught



ALL PICS ROD POTTER UNLESS NOTED



"We need to expose the court to the importance of Wildlife crime and their impact so they prosecute effectively"

Participant

A second practical exercise saw participants divide into groups to examine two suspicious sites – a campsite and a vehicle – and record evidence. Each group then reported back on their methods and procedures, followed by critique and discussions



The **Basic courses** were aimed at anyone who might encounter a carcass in the course of their normal work: Save the Rhino Trust's trackers, MET's national parks staff etc



Having learned how to carry out crime scene investigations on the **Advanced Course**, seven of those who qualified went on to take part in the Train-the-trainer course, so that they could teach further groups of people via two Basic courses for up to 30 people each



Bernd Brell (left), Director of Field Operations at Save the Rhino Trust Namibia; **Rod Potter** (right) presenting Bernd with his well-deserved Advanced course certificate

Thanks

We would like to thank: USFWS and the Game Products Trust Fund, which awarded \$24,585 and \$20,655 respectively towards the cost of the Advanced, Train-the-trainer and Basic courses; IRDNC, for hosting the training courses at Wéreldsend; Bernd Brell of Save the Rhino Trust for organising the logistics; and of course Rod Potter and Wayne Evans, the trainers.