



TIM JACKSON

rhinoWATCH

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WHITE RHINOS DESTINED FOR THE DELTA

In the first-ever private game reserve donation of rhinos, luxury travel company &Beyond has earmarked six white rhinos to be translocated from the Phinda Private Game Reserve in South Africa to Botswana's Okavango Delta. Facilitated in partnership with Rhino Force, this conservation coup has been funded by Motorite Insurance Administrators.

'South Africa has already lost more than 400 rhinos to illegal poaching this year and Botswana currently has an excellent security system to protect the species. Translocations are fundamental to securing the ongoing survival of rhinos for future generations,' says Les Carlisle, &Beyond's conservation manager.

After years of negotiation and planning, the translocation process is set to begin in February 2013. From October 2012, game scouts from Botswana will travel to Phinda to undergo intensive tracking and monitoring training, as they are not familiar with white rhino behaviour in the southern part of the delta. Capture and release bomas will be built in South Africa and Botswana respectively, permits obtained and various conservation initiatives set in place to ensure that the six carefully selected rhinos arrive at their destination safely. www.andbeyond.com

The &Beyond conservation team subdues a tranquillised rhino in order to take DNA samples. Six of the reserve's white rhinos have been donated to the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

Debates looming at CITES meeting in 2013

4 October saw the deadline for submissions to the Conference of the Parties to CITES in March 2013 (CoP16) pass without an application from South Africa to open the trade in rhino horn. In an article published on the Anti-Poaching Intelligence Group Southern Africa's website, Edna Molewa, the country's minister of Environmental Affairs, wrote: 'With specific reference to national and/or international trade, I would like to emphasise that trade in rhino horn has been banned in accordance with ... CITES. To permit trade in rhino horn would require not only South African government approval, but the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the state parties at CoP16. The preparation process for such a move would require the thoughtful and comprehensive preparation of all the materials and systems that CITES requires in order to consider an application.'

Among those requirements is persuasive evidence that such a trade could be properly controlled, not only by the source country, but also by its end-use markets. Recent evidence coming from Vietnam, the destination of the overwhelming amount of illegal horn, suggests that this country's current commitment to enforcing environmental laws leaves much to be desired.

Nonetheless, the Department of Environmental Affairs' decision has drawn vitriolic criticism from some pro-trade advocates. The South African Hunting and Game Conservation Association (SAHGCA) dismissed Molewa's caution as 'just a cover-up for the government's and her department's ineptness to deal decisively with the gruesomeness of rhino poaching and the continued loss of human life', while Pelham Jones, from the Private Rhino Owners' Association, said that the actions of the anti-trade lobby were actively aiding and abetting the poaching syndicates.

Kenya, however, has made a submission on rhinos, proposing that 'Hunting trophies from South Africa and Swaziland shall be subject to a zero export quota until at least CoP18'. (The move was not unexpected; we flagged the possibility in the April issue of *Africa Geographic*.) Rest assured, we'll be following events next March very closely indeed.

Read Edna Molewa's full statement at <http://www.antipoachintelligence.co.za/DEA+Latest+Rhino+War> and go to the CITES website for a full list of proposals submitted for consideration at CoP16 <http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/prop/raw/index.php>

FACTS & FIGURES

(as at 16 October 2012)

455 rhinos killed in South Africa in 2012 (↑ 74 from 12 September 2012).

207 arrests made in connection with rhino poaching (↑ 8 from 12 September 2012).

179 of the arrested individuals are at the level of poacher, 10 are receivers and 18 are couriers.

0800 205 005

The number to call to report tip-offs or incidents of rhino poaching.

Source: Department of Environmental Affairs

Falling for rhinos

'We said we were going to do it, and we did!' said our very own Judy Beyer and Janine van Eeden, who successfully completed a fundraising skydive event for rhinos. On the weekend of 22–24 September, the skies above Robertson in South Africa's Western Cape province were filled with parachutes as people gritted their teeth and plunged from a plane to do a (tandem, of course) skydive. Most were novices – some shrieked, some descended in wide-eyed silence and others took it all in their stride. (Judy and Janine aren't saying which category they fell into.)

The jumpers came from all walks of life, but their goal on that day was united: to raise funds to help protect vulnerable rhino populations. Skydive for Rhino functions have been held across South Africa, and at the last count around R6-million had been raised. (The first event, which took place in 2011, generated R500 000.) And, according to the organisers, there are big plans afoot for next year.

It was a giant step into the unknown for Team Africa Geographic's Janine and Judy, and a very small step in the battle for our rhinos. Would we do it again? Heck yes! www.skydive4rhinos.org



South African music legend Ray Phiri with the rhino sculpture he helped to design.

EMMA GATLAND

Cause célèbre

The plight of rhinos continues to attract the attention of high-profile people. The Durban leg of the Wildlands' Rhino Parade, based on the internationally renowned Cow Parade concept, kicked off this month at King Shaka International Airport. Three South African stars – cricketer Shaun Pollock, rugby player Pat Lambie and musician Ray Phiri – unveiled the three-quarter-sized rhino sculptures they had helped to design. The works of art will be auctioned on 29 November to raise funds for the Wildlands Conservation Trust, which supports rhino tracking as well as aerial, investigation and prosecution support projects.

Lambie, who grew up visiting nature reserves around the country, is outspoken about the rhino poaching crisis. 'The butchering of rhinos for their horn is something that makes me very angry and sad,' he said. Speaking about the project, Pollock was upbeat. 'It is fantastic to be part of something that is trying to protect our country's heritage and what makes us unique – our wildlife,' he commented. 'I hope that my children's children will be able to see a real live rhino and for this reason saw the need to get involved with the Rhino Parade.' Music legend Ray Phiri described how rhinos had become part of his personal 'heart song'. 'I am determined to leave a lasting legacy for both my fans and the generations to come. I hope I can do this through the Rhino Parade,' said the 65-year-old.

To find out more visit www.wildlands.co.za



SKYDIVE4RHINOS

Africa Geographic's Janine van Eeden makes jumping out of a plane look easy.



Rhino calendar
Josie Borain, photographer and ex-model, poses for the Shamwari Group's Celebrity Ambassador Rhino Calendar. Proceeds will go to the Wilderness Foundation's Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative. The calendars are on sale at Shamwari's properties, or contact reservations@shamwarigroup.com

ANDREW BROWN