



TIM JACKSON

THAI NATIONAL GETS 40 YEARS!
Chumlong Lemtongthai, who pleaded guilty to 52 counts of trading illegally in rhino horn, was sentenced to 40 years in jail at Johannesburg's Kempton Park magistrate's court in early November 2012.



Congratulations

The Africa Geographic Skydive for Rhinos team has selected the winners of the terrific posters that were on offer to anyone who sponsored the effort. Judy Beyer and Janine van Eeden managed to raise R10 000 to support anti-poaching measures, and are thrilled with your support and generosity. The winner of the five black-and-white A2 posters of the Big Five (the rhino is featured here) is **Albert Cornelissen** and the A3 colour poster of a rhino goes to **Caryn Jacobs**. Well done!

COUNTING THE COSTS IN KRUGER

It's no secret that South Africa's Kruger National Park is home to more white rhinos than any other conservation area in the world. With 10 000 or so individuals, the park contains about half of the estimated world population of the species – a fact that hasn't gone unnoticed by the illegal wildlife trade. As of 30 October 2012, 296 rhinos had been poached in the Kruger this year alone. That's 61 per cent of the total number of rhinos poached in South Africa.

'The incidence of white rhino poaching was relatively low from the 1960s until 2006,' says Sam Ferreira, SANParks' large mammal ecologist. 'Since then it's increased exponentially every year.'

But what is the real impact of these mortalities on the park's white rhino population? And how do they affect SANParks' conservation efforts? While the conservation authority remains officially mum on all things rhino (statements are released instead by the Department of Environmental Affairs), the Kruger's managers and scientists continue to work with the population. A recent paper published in the Public Library of Science (www.plosone.org) under the auspices of SANParks' Scientific Services and the Rhino Action Group Effort (RAGE) provides some insight.

'Park managers introduced 351 white rhinos between 1960 and 1972 and started to remove rhinos for donations to

other conservation areas and zoological gardens during the mid-1980s,' Ferreira says. Figures dating back to 1998, when systematic counts first began, point to an increase in white rhinos until 2008. The subsequent trend suggests no directional change in numbers.

'During 2010 we estimated that about 10 621 rhinos lived in Kruger – we're 95 per cent confident there were between 8 767 and 12 682 individuals,' he continues. 'Since the late 1990s, a large fraction of the white rhinos removed by SANParks were sold to generate conservation revenue.' To date more than 1 500 rhinos have been removed from the population – 85 per cent were sold and the remainder translocated to other national parks. In 2009 alone, 252 rhinos were taken from the Kruger in this way.

Two key objectives of these removals were to establish new rhino populations elsewhere (range expansion) and to profit from sales. 'Our rhino management model predicts that rhinos should be removed at a rate of 4.4 per cent of the standing population size at any time,' explains Ferreira. 'Poachers now eliminate as many rhinos as our management models seek to remove.'

This means that the funds raised from rhino sales have effectively dried up. 'In 2009 we generated about R151-million [US\$17-million] from rhino sales,' says Hector Magome, chief scientist at

SANParks. 'Now that's a lot of money. We were able to plough the funds into buying more land for rhinos and other conservation efforts within SANParks. With the increase in rhino poaching, we took a policy decision to reduce our capture quota by the amount that poachers take. So after 2009 we started to take fewer rhinos from the Kruger – which is very bad news for SANParks.'

In addition to the loss of rhino lives (and their potential to contribute to the future of the species), poaching is having a ripple effect on conservation. 'Poaching in 2012 has already removed opportunities to contribute to range expansion and gain financially for the Kruger,' admits Ferreira. 'If poaching continues we predict the rhino population in the park will decline significantly by 2016,' he warns.

Tim Jackson

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FACTS & FIGURES

(as at 30 October 2012)

488 rhinos killed in South Africa in 2012
(↑ 22 from 16 October 2012).

214 arrests made in connection with rhino poaching (↑ 7 from 16 October 2012).

0800 205 005

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

Source: Department of Environmental Affairs



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Located in the heart of the 9 000-hectare, Big Five Karongwe Private Game Reserve, Indlovu River Lodge is built on the banks of the Kuvjename River, near Hoedspruit, South Africa. From the deck of the luxurious Shingwedzi chalet or the cool oasis of your private pool, enjoy unsurpassed peace and experience timeless sights, sounds and sensations of Africa. For more information, please visit www.irl.co.za



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Africa Geographic and Masixhasane Literacy Project have teamed up to bring you a competition with a difference. Simply send us an e-mail with the words 'Gift of reading' in the subject line to competitions@africageographic.com and you could win three nights at Shingwedzi, one of the luxurious chalets offered by Indlovu River Lodge in South Africa's Karongwe Private Game Reserve. You will also get to nominate a school to receive a mobile library worth almost R100 000.

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The library that Masixhasane Literacy Project will donate on your behalf is made of steel, completely mobile, powder-coated and will be branded with Africa Geographic, Masixhasane and your name. It includes 800 books, complete with plastic covers and library cards, a 32-inch flat-screen TV, a DVD player and 30 DVDs. There are also three laptops with various software loaded, a library-card holder and two padlocks.



Masixhasane Literacy Project

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LET READ

Terms & conditions 1. Entries close 31 March 2013. 2. The winner will be contacted directly. 3. Employees and families of Africa Geographic (Pty) Ltd, Masixhasane Literacy Project, Indlovu River Lodge and their agencies may not enter. 4. Prize is subject to availability at the time of booking and may not be exchanged for cash. 5. Prize consists of three nights at Shingwedzi, Indlovu River Lodge, and INCLUDES accommodation for two adults and two children; flights for two adults within South Africa to Nelspruit (children's flights for your own account); morning and evening game drives; breakfast, lunch, dinner and all drinks; and EXCLUDES car hire and personal purchases. 6. Prize is valid for one year from date of notification, and may not be used in conjunction with any other promotions. The validity period may not be extended.

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