

SENSE AND SCIENCE-ABILITY

Rhino conservation is full of thorny issues these days: the Dallas Safari Club auction of a black rhino trophy hunt; how to tackle the escalating demand for rhino horn in Vietnam and China; whether it's OK to shoot-to-kill poachers; the validity (or not) of injecting poison into rhinos' horns to deter poachers; or whether to legalise the trade in rhino horn. The challenge for us, and for other responsible rhino conservation organisations, is to consider all sides of any particular argument, to base our decisions on the best scientific advice available, and to apply a wee bit of good, old-fashioned, common sense.

Cathy Dean | Director

Take the poisoning horns issue. SANParks is currently conducting detailed research into how well injected poisons diffuse throughout the horn, and how potent they are after a given period; we expect the results to be made public around Easter time.

**Sabi Sands Game Reserve
poisoned its rhinos' horns
but it didn't deter the
poachers from killing**

Meanwhile, Sabi Sands (one of the private game reserves adjacent to Kruger National Park) had poisoned its rhinos' horns and widely advertised the fact. Yet that didn't stop poachers from targeting their rhinos; in fact, some of Sabi Sands' horns were

recovered from poachers in Kruger and these are the ones now being tested.

Why, you might ask, didn't the fact that the poachers probably knew that the rhinos' horns had been poisoned deter them from poaching these rhinos? Well, imagine you're a poacher: unscrupulous, keen for a quick buck. You've killed a rhino. When the middleman comes knocking on your door one night, keen to hand over the cash for whatever you've got, are you going to tell him that you'd love to sell him the horns but you can't, because they've been poisoned and might harm someone living thousands of miles away that you've never met? Seriously?

Our website has a whole section called 'Thorny issues'. We cover a wide and complex range of themes that crop up frequently; we revisit these from time-to-time and review and update them to take account of the latest findings. See www.savetherhino.org/rhino_info/thorny_issues and post your comments.

Meanwhile, in this issue of *The Horn*, we asked field programme managers to write about how they use science in their everyday work. You'll read about different methods of ensuring that you have counted your rhino correctly (harder than it sounds), how to ID them, how to mix tourists with rhinos so that all are happy, and about zoos' efforts to breed both black and white rhinos. And perhaps unexpectedly, you'll read that for all the talk of drones and high-tech equipment, nothing can beat a well-equipped, motivated and trained ranger force. Common sense really.




Events schedule 2014



Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture 2014	Tuesday 11 March 2014
'The Science of Harry Potter' by Roger Highfield and 'The Mathematics of The Simpsons' by Simon Singh	
Virgin Money London Marathon	Sunday 13 April 2014
Rhino Mayday	Thursday 1 May 2014
Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100	Sunday 10 August 2014
World Rhino Day	Monday 22 September 2014
Save the Rhino 21st anniversary dinner	Date to be confirmed: autumn 2014
Rhino Climb Kilimanjaro	Dates to suit 2014 and 2015
UK challenges	Various dates throughout 2014
Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture 2015 , by Neil Gaiman	To be confirmed

For more information about any of these events, please visit www.savetherhino.org/events or email laura@savetherhino.org or call +44 (0)20 7357 7474