

H.O.R.N.



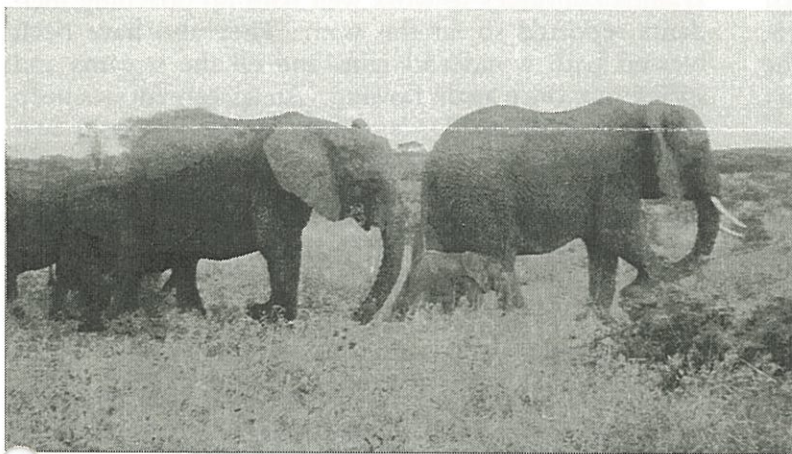
Volume 7, Issue 1

Help Our Rhinos Now

The Official Newsletter of the Ngare Sergoi Support Group

INTRODUCTION

Since our last Newsletter in December we have received the most wonderful rain for many, many years. The Conservancy today is a sea of bush, green grass and coloured flowers, a great contrast from the dry dust bowl of February. The wildlife and vegetation have responded accordingly and we can certainly look forward to a year of recovery in the vegetation and substantial breeding within all the wildlife species. The down side of the heavy rain was that many of the roads and fence lines were heavily eroded and in many cases



totally washed away, a price we are very happy to pay. The newly purchased grader from South Africa will now be busy for several months re-aligning and restructuring the entire road network within the Conservancy.

On the 8th of April, an armed Somali poacher was intercepted by one of our game guards as he entered the Conservancy. He was clearly intent on shooting two White Rhino about 400 yards away. The man was challenged, but only responded by raising his rifle at our game guard. The latter, acting in self-defense, had no option but to open fire and the intruder was shot dead. This is the first serious poaching attempt made on our rhino inside Lewa.

This incident is a clear indication of the renewed interest in rhino horn. We have received irrefutable information that there is a market and a new threat on the rhino. This has been expected and we are boosting our men on the ground and putting more effort into

training our armed groups, we will also increase the flying surveillance of the entire Conservancy. We are confident that we do have a highly committed team of game guards, but this recent incident has clearly shown that no reduction in the security system can ever be considered and that only by maintaining a technological advantage and by operating with highly motivated staff can we expect to hold the situation stable for our rhino.



Wildlife

There have been no rhino births during the start of the year, although we anticipate three Black Rhino and two White Rhino will calf within the coming year. We sadly lost a male Black Rhino (Simba) during the rain. We were unable to identify positively how he died, but he was washed down a steep 'lugga' during a very heavy rainstorm and was either badly hurt or drowned. He was only found ten days after the incident and so it was impossible to see exactly what happened. His horn was recovered. The Black Rhino in the Ngare Ndare forest fared very well through the prolonged dry period from November to March. This has clearly shown how the rhino have benefited from the expanded area of 225 sq. kms. and the threat of droughts has certainly been reduced. In the coming years we expect a marked increase in the rate at which our rhino breed, as the animals born within the Conservancy, used to the conditions and vegetation, reach maturity.

We completed a game count in May and wildlife numbers continue to grow. The small chart below shows how some species have increased from 1977 to date:

These numbers speak for themselves and reflect the policy of the Lewa's Board of managing the Conservancy's wildlife as a whole, yet with specific attention to the Black Rhino and Grevy's Zebra.

	1977	1997
Beisa Oryx	7	165
Buffalo	78	236
Eland	94	273
Greater Kudu	24	50
Impala	270	821
Warthog	15	272
Waterbuck	59	300
Burchel Zebra	200	1647
Grevy Zebra	106	470
Black Rhino		20
White Rhino		23

During the first six months of this year, a successful translocation operation took place, whereby ten Greater Kudu and six Grevy's Zebra were moved to Kongoni

Game Conservancy. In addition, three Grevy's Zebra have been moved to the adjacent Borana Ranch to establish a new breeding population. In March KWS moved eight bull elephants from Lewa to Kora National Reserve. These animals had been under close observation for a long period and had been identified as the main culprits inflicting unacceptable damage to yellow thorn trees along the Lewa river. Funding has been found to move up to 25 giraffe in October/November from Lewa to the Mathews Mountains for the Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust. If donors can be found, it is hoped that this will develop into an annual operation.

Research

Thanks to the generosity of a private Foundation in Switzerland, we have been able to take on a full time Staff Ecologist for the next three years. One of his principal tasks will be monitoring Lewa's Elephant population, and studying their impact on the Acacia Zanthophloca and Acacia Seyal forest. The last Honours student from Pretoria University has completed her year's field work on the competition between browsers (specifically Black Rhino, Reticulated Giraffe and Elephant) on Lewa and has returned to South Africa to write up her findings. The results of the first student from Pretoria University, who left in 1995, should be available in late August when the Conservancy's Scientific Advisory Committee will next be meeting.

In late September/early October, Lewa will be hosting part of AFARI - 97. This acronym stands for 'African Fire - Atmosphere Research Initiative'. A group of some 18 scientists from Kenya, South Africa, Germany, USA and Canada will be studying the atmosphere effects of fires occurring on East African savannahs.

Internal Development

This year we estimate that our total running costs will come to approximately U.S. \$670,000. Further progress has been made towards achieving our goal of becoming financially self-supporting, and in 1997 we are hopeful that the proportion of our annual recurrent budget made up by revenue actually generated on the Conservancy itself will have risen to about 55%. This should be compared to last year's figure of about 40%. The main sources of income this year will be tourism (61%), wildlife utilisation (22%) and farming (6%).

A comprehensive Management and Development Plan for the next five years is being written, and should be completed by September. This document will clearly spell out why and how the Conservancy plans to progress over the next five years. This will cover all aspects from Rhino Security, Tourism, Staff Housing, Road Construction, The Planning of water storage and distribution to the development of affiliated community wildlife schemes such as II Ngwesi and Namunyak

also the improvement to an acceptable standard of the four Primary Schools assisted by the Conservancy. This will become a key document, not just for helping us plan the Conservancy's future direction but also in securing institutional funding from such organizations as the World Bank and the European Union.

Community Development

The Conservancy continues to make a considerable effort to provide assistance to two neighbouring Community Wildlife Schemes.

II Ngwesi lodge, built on the adjoining II Ngwesi Group Ranch is now up and working. During the first four months' of operation it ran at 60% occupancy, generating \$17,000 for the community. We can confidently say that this has all the makings of an untold success and will have a major impact on how wildlife is seen by the Ngwesi community. Where once it was an asset to be used, subsequently through Government legislation this was no longer allowed and the wildlife numbers declined. This process is now reversed, and through the major support of the Government, the adjacent Borana Ranch, and Lewa, this project will establish wildlife as a valuable resource for the foreseeable future.

The Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust in Wamba continues to work well with no poaching incidents reported so far this year. They also have been blessed with wonderful rains and all the streams and springs are once again flowing. An agreement has been signed with Acacia Trails to build a 10 bed camp near the Sarova river. This is the first tourism in the area and will be operational by December. The Trustees are both pleased and proud of this arrangement as it will be the first major source of income generated by the wildlife.

Conclusion

We have been exceptionally fortunate with the rains so far this year and this will have a most beneficial effect on our wildlife. We are moving ahead (although not quite as quickly as we would wish) towards our objective of becoming self-sufficient financially. The growth of environmentally friendly tourism on Lewa is assuming ever greater importance in this respect. Our major concern remains the security of our rhino and the first six months of this year has been a general deterioration in the security situation in this region, in particular on our northern boundary. We cannot afford to drop our guard for a moment, and increased resources have accordingly been directed towards reinforcing and re-equipping our security staff. The next few months will be crucial in defeating any further attempts made on the lives of Lewa's rhino population.





RHINOS DIE ON WAY TO CHINESE ZOO

On 21 July 1996 two southern white rhinos being shipped by the San Diego Zoo, California, USA from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, to the Chengdu Zoo, China, died horrible deaths after prolonged mental and physical suffering. The story was successfully kept secret from July-December 1996 when the US weekly news magazine Newsweek, after receiving a tip-off, exposed the horror story to the world.

The unfortunate animals were sent as a gift from the San Diego Zoo to Chengdu Zoo. Chengdu Zoo has a large collection of pandas which many US zoos covet (they also covet many of China's rare primate species).

Instead of sending rhinos from its own collection to China, the zoo bought two surplus animals from the Pittsburgh Zoo. Unfortunately for the rhinos, neither zoo sent an escort to take care of the animals on their long journey.

On arrival at Shanghai Airport, the two rhinos were loaded on an open bed truck in 99 degree fahrenheit (37 degree centigrade) heat for the 1,650 trip from Shanghai to Chendgu.

After five days of truck travel, the animals died at Qinling, apparently from heat-stroke and dehydration. They were still two days away from their destination. Apparently Chengdu Airport is too small to accommodate Boeing 747's the only planes with doors large enough to get the rhinos' cages through. Instead of going by plane, the rhinos were supposed to have travelled by rail, but their cages were too large for the rail cars. So they were shipped on an open truck, and they died.

According to the Associated Press:

Once dead, the shippers bought huge blocks of ice to preserve at least one of the two-ton carcasses...Until it can locate another rhino, she said, the zoo wants to stuff the dead rhino for display.

One reason for the "cover-up" may have been the 12 year loan of two pandas by China to San Diego Zoo. The pandas are a huge "hit" at the zoo and people have lined up to see them and purchase souvenirs.

Tom Hanscom, speaking for San Diego Zoo, told the press that the zoo had no legal obligation to report the incident because it happened at a zoo outside the United States. Many might argue that he had a moral obligation to disclose the truth. Hanscom denied that the zoo had hushed the scandal up for fear of upsetting its panda deal which many suspected.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service took no action against the zoo, claiming in an Internet post that the Chinese took possession of the rhinos at Shanghai, from which point on the San Diego Zoo was no longer legally responsible for them. Some zoos send staff members to accompany animals they ship, but this was not done in this case. The Chengdu Zoo is looking for replacement rhinos.

IPPL would be interested to learn what happened to the horns of the dead rhinos as many Chinese use rhino horn for traditional medicine purposes.



Reprinted with permission from International Primate Protection League News. Vol. 24, No. 1 April 1997.

LIFTING OF THE IVORY BAN by Andy Lodge



Confiscated Ivory from poached elephants in the 1980's

After hearing the results of the CITES conference, in which the U.N. eased the ban on the sale of ivory, I contacted Lewa Downs for a comment. The easing would allow Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to sell 59 tons of stockpiled elephant tusks to Japan.

Ian Craig informed me he had given considerable thought to the outcome of the conference and was hoping to see a full analysis of the meeting from KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service). Until he had seen a report from KWS, Ian felt any comment would be premature. However with that proviso, and on the basis of published accounts, he issued the following statement:

"I believe any commercial value placed on ivory increases the threat to the Elephant in Northern Kenya due to the region's remoteness. However we support

the stand of KWS and if Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana can comply with the very stringent rules imposed by CITES, then for the continent as a whole the decision of CITES is correct. I understand from Dr. Western [Head, KWS] that this was a very good outcome from the meeting, and for the long term makes CITES a much stronger body."

H.O.R.N will keep abreast of this change in the ivory market and inform readers of future developments.



CHILDREN'S COLUMN

by Missy Betcher

As the new school year approaches, this is a good time to think back to past successes and look forward to new challenges, not only for ourselves, but also for our planet. One of the endangered species success stories in the U.S. is that of the Peregrine Falcon.

Peregrine can be found on all continents except Antarctica. Other names for peregrines species include kestrel, gyrfalcons, and merlins. The adult peregrine is about the size of a crow and has a 3 ft. wingspan. Peregrines have a dark head, white throat, gray back, and a pale breast with dark brown flecks.

Unlike most birds peregrines don't build nests, they just scrape out a hollow in the gravel to make their eyrie nest on cliff ledges where two to three eggs are usually laid in the spring. Young chicks learn to fly at about six weeks. By late summer chicks can fly well enough to hunt for themselves.

Peregrine's are excellent hunters. They dive at speeds up to 186 miles per hour and kill their prey, usually small birds, while in flight. A peregrin's body is especially designed for fast dives. It has a smooth, streamlined body. Peregrines use their wing feathers as brakes, and they can fan out or fold their tail feathers to slow down or hold steady during a dive. A falcon's eyesight is six times better than a persons. This makes it easy for a falcon to spot prey in the distance. The black stripe under its eyes absorbs light and reduces glare. Football players have copied falcons and use black makeup for the same reason.

And why are pergrine falcons considered an environmental success story? There have never been a lot of peregrines in the U.S. But in the 1940s there were around 350 pairs east of the Mississippi river. Twenty years later there were none. Farmers had been spraying their crops with DDT to kill insects, and as birds ate the insects, and as peregrines ate the birds they too were contaminated by the poison.

Scientists found out that birds who eat DDT lay eggs with very thin shells. When the mother bird sits on the eggs, her weight causes the eggs to break. Also chicks in eggs containing DDT often die before they are ready to hatch. It was not until the early 1970s that the government began to regulate pesticides. But no one knew if the pesticides, shrinking natural spaces, and people collecting the eggs had doomed the peregrine to

extinction. When the Endangered Species Act was passed in 1973, peregrine falcons were on the list.

In 1970 scientists began programs to save the falcon. In Canada, a biologist began tricking peregrines into laying more eggs. Eggs would be taken from the nest, put in an incubator and the chicks raised by humans.

Meanwhile the falcons would lay more eggs. In the U.S., Project Peregrine was also begun in 1970. Four pairs of peregrines were placed in a specially built Hawk Barn. In 1974 twenty three chicks were born as part of Project Peregrine. That year the first captive bred peregrines were released into the wild. Some were released into wild areas and some were released into cities. Similar peregrine programs also exist in Idaho and Santa Cruz.

When the first peregrines were released in the wild there were only 60 known nesting pairs in the lower 48 states of the U.S. In 1993, there were about 800 pairs, including 75 in cities.

Cities are logical places for peregrine falcons to nest. Skyscrapers and bridges are similar to mountain ledges where the falcons nest. And there are plenty of sm birds for falcons to eat. The peregrines who have been released in cities have adapted well. About 50 cities now have resident peregrines including Los Angeles, New York, Washington and Baltimore. In Ohio, five major cities have a nesting pair of falcons.

Because of the increasing number of peregrine falcons they may be reclassified on the endangered species list from endangered to threatened. But this does not mean we can take them for granted again. They should remain cherished as the beautiful creature they are. And if you are lucky, perhaps you'll see a peregrine gliding through the air--in either its natural surrounding or in a city canyon.



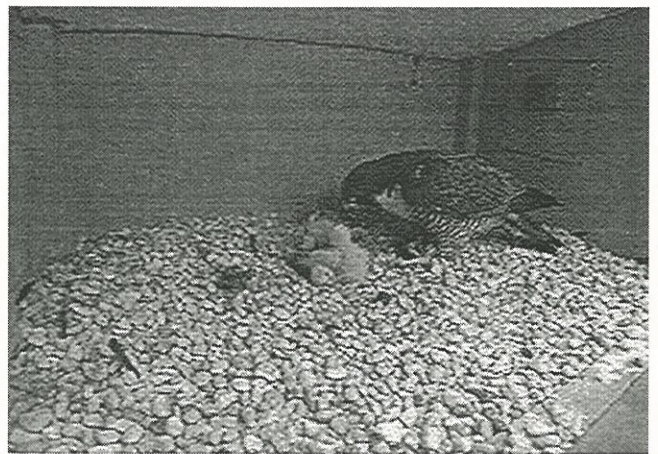
Further reading:

Arnold, Caroline, Saving the Peregrine Falcon, 1985 (3-6)

Funston, Sylvia, Peregrine Falcon, 1992 (k-2)

Rowell, Galen, "Falcon Rescue" National Geographic, April

1991 (8-12) Silverstein, Alvin, Virginia and Robert. The Peregrine Falcon, 1995 (4-7)



Falcons nesting in Columbus, Ohio reared four chicks in 1997.