

## 7 Recovery For Africa's Threatened Rhinos?

Courtesy: [WWF](#)

Africa's critically endangered black rhino could be on its way to recovery if present trends continue. That's according to new estimates announced by the African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and WWF. The white rhino also appears stable at much higher numbers than the black rhino. The black rhino suffered a drastic decline from about 65000 in the 1970s to only 2,400 in the mid 1990s. The latest findings show black rhino numbers have increased to just over 3600, a rise of 500 over the last 2 years. The white rhino population, down to just 50 individuals 100 years ago, now stands at 11000. While the continuing increase in continental black rhino numbers since the 1990s is encouraging, 2 African rhino subspecies still face a high risk of extinction. The northern white rhino has been reduced to a single, small population of just over 20 animals in DR Congo. It is highly vulnerable because of the emergence of organized poaching. In Cameroon, the western black rhino is in an even worse state with only a few animals scattered widely. "One of the greatest challenges facing the future of rhinos is maintaining sufficient conservation expenditure and field effort," says Taye Teferi, WWF's African Rhino Coordinator. "Illegal demand for horn, high unemployment, poverty, demand for land, wars, the ready availability of arms and internal instability also pose a threat to rhino populations." At its recent meeting at Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, the AfRSG addressed security issues and poaching as well as improved biological management to enhance population growth rates. Although overall rhino populations are recovering, there are also growing signs of increased poaching affecting particular populations in a number of countries.

The single most important cause for the catastrophic decline of rhinos in the last quarter of the 20th century has been the demand for their horn in the Middle Eastern and Eastern Asian markets. In medieval Europe it was fashioned into chalices believed to have the power of detecting poisons, in the Far East, and in the many East Asian communities elsewhere, the horn is used as a fever-reducing ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine; and in the Middle East it is carved and polished to make prestigious dagger handles.

The meeting, co-sponsored by WWF and the SADC Regional Program for Rhino Conservation, concluded with an appeal to the international conservation community to increase funding support to African rhino management authorities. "Despite concerns that conservation funding is also declining at the very time when it is needed the most, the increasing spirit of cooperation among all those involved in rhino conservation is good. It has resulted in improved management of our populations and in the restoration of rhinos in countries where they had been lost," said Dr. Martin Brooks, Chairman of the AfRSG.

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## 8 News From Africa

### Angola

Pedro Vaz Pinto (Catholic University of Luanda) accompanied by Brendan O'Keeffe and two microlights piloted by South African Bateleur pilots left for central Angola mid September. The expedition will use sophisticated technical equipment to finally "re-discover" the remaining herds of the Giant or Royal Sable (*Hippotragus niger variati*). Funded by hunter-conservationists from around the world, in particular the Shikar Club (UK) and [Dallas Safari Club](#) (USA), the expedition will remain in the area for approximately 3 weeks. We will keep our readers informed!

### Botswana

We have been informed that the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment has stated in Kasane in August that the Statutory Instrument banning the killing of PAC (problem animal control) lion is to be revoked

### Botswana

A 25-year-old guide at Nxabega Lodge in the Okavango Delta was killed and devoured by a lion in July. He was with clients on a game drive when the incident occurred. The guide had stopped the vehicle and went into the bush to relieve himself when the lion attacked.

### Botswana

Former Botswana president, Sir Ketumile Masire, agreed to serve on the Board of Trustees of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). AWF is an international conservation organization headquartered in Washington, DC but exclusively focused on the African continent. The organization's program is not just about wildlife but also about the broader context of sustainable human development, using wildlife as one of the continent's most unique resources. Over 80% of AWF staff is African. The AWF office in Kasane is staffed by 7 Botswana conservationists and serves as a regional head office for offices in the neighboring countries. "I support the African Wildlife Foundation because AWF has believed from the beginning that Africans are the ideal stewards of Africa's natural resources," said Masire.

### Mozambique

The provincial government of Niassa is concerned over what it should do about the 5 tons of ivory it has in stock. Environment Minister John Kachamila deferred a decision to the outcomes of CITES CoP 13.

### Mozambique

Poaching in Mozambique's Limpopo National Park (PNL) is now "under control", according to the park administrator Vicente. The PNL is Mozambique's contribution to the Greater Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park, alongside the Kruger National Park in South Africa, and the Gonarezhou Park in Zimbabwe. Vicente said it was coordinated work between the PNL's own game wardens, wardens in the Kruger Park, and South African and Mozambican border police that had cut down the number of poachers operating in the PNL. Meanwhile the plans to restock the PNL with animals from South Africa are continuing. By the end of August the number of animals moved from South Africa into the PNL will have reached 3,000, and it is planned to raise this number to 6,000 by 2008. 10 white rhinoceros were introduced into the PNL. Currently the most common large mammals in the park are zebra, impala and wildebeest. Plans are also under way to remove the people

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# AFRICAN INDABA

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Dedicated to the People and Wildlife of Africa

## Dear Reader

The 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of CITES starts debating on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The African lion will – quite undeservedly – stand in the limelight of the delegates' attention, although there are many more pressing issues to be resolved. Kenya's proposal to move the lion from Appendix II to Appendix I has been opposed not only by African lion range states like South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, but also by a majority of lion researchers and last not least TRAFFIC. To stay informed, please read not only the lion articles in this issue, but also those of past issues.

Kenya has certainly the least reason for "lecturing and imposing" to/on other African nations about wildlife conservation in general and lion conservation in particular. Dr. Loeffler's article "The Rhetoric and the Reality" and Kenya's dismal records of wildlife and habitat loss are conclusive enough.

**African Indaba** had some foresight in this matter and we raised the issue of lion conservation and sustainable use of this charismatic member of the Big Five already in 2003 in our very first issue and continued bringing in-depth articles. Together with John Jackson III of Conservation Force and Dr. Phillippe Chardonnet of IGF, we started to seed the idea of a comprehensive **AFRICA-WIDE LION SYMPOSIUM** already in the last quarter of 2003. This initiative has now become more concrete and we are in the final planning stages of this **LION SYMPOSIUM**, which will be held in Johannesburg in March 2005. Prominent lion researchers from Europe and USA and of course from Africa have already signalled their willingness to participate, as well as representatives of the various national African Professional Hunting organizations. The symposium will also have resource economists, government representatives, delegates from national wildlife authorities and most importantly of rural communities of the lion range nations participating in the deliberations. Representatives of international and national conservation organizations will also sit at the tables.

Although we are still in the preparatory stage one can already say that the main topics will be the *identification of the geographical areas where lion conservation is most urgent, and where actions can be taken (and should offer a good chance of succeeding, i.e. be acceptable to local government, communities, administrations, and people, in the short and long term.* The issue of "Problem Animal Control (PAC)" must be tackled as well as "best practices in lion hunting". Finally the participants should come to "*agree on a set of conservation activities that would have the biggest impact on lion conservation*".

Some articles in this issue deal with those topics. Do yourself a favor and read them – and bring them to the attention of environmental editors of the media. Too many false and totally irresponsible statements regarding the African Lion, i. e. the Nicholl/Kat myth of lions dying of feline AIDS, the myth of having a realistic benchmark concerning lion numbers (depending on the

source, 100 000 or 200 000 lion were stated as having lived in Africa less than two human generations ago), the myth that only 12 000 to 15 000 lion are living today in Africa – rumors which have been launched by armchair protectionists and have been greedily swallowed by the media !

The most vocal supporters of Kenya's proposal are people who exclude the human element from their equation. Mostly they are animal rights advocacy groups conducting campaigns (and spending their funds) in the media; groups who seem to forget that most of Africa's poverty-stricken communities can ill afford the time and money to count lions, attend meetings, or discuss whether or not to allow hungry lions to devour their cattle.

There is no doubt that we have considerably fewer lion today than 50 years ago – but there is even less doubt that we have several more hundred millions of Africans living on the continent and that suitable lion habitat is disappearing fast. Those lion living in Africa today need a pragmatic approach to save and conserve them and their habitat. Therefore, tangible economic values must be attached to the lion and the African people must receive a direct benefit. The African land- and humanscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is different from the situation found in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – there is no way to turn back the clock.

Gerhard R Damm, Editor

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