

Yemen Acts to Halt Rhino Horn Daggers; Scientific Tests Fail to Show Rhino Horn Effective as Medicine

The highly threatened African black rhino may have been given a new lease on life by the recent decision of the Yemen Arab Republic to ban the import of the animal's horn.

Yemen is the world's single biggest market for the poacher-supplied horns, which are carved into elaborate dagger handles. Considered a status symbol, these *janbiyyas* are proudly worn at the waist by 80% of the adult males and may cost up to a thousand dollars.

According to Dr Esmond Bradley-Martin, who made a fact-finding mission to North Yemen on behalf of WWF/IUCN in 1978, North Yemen imported 22 645 kg of rhino horn between 1969 and 1977, equivalent to the deaths of 8000 rhinos, one of the world's most threatened large land mammals. Perhaps half the dagger handles are fashioned from rhino horn; the rest are made from buffalo and wild cattle horns.

Surprisingly, a 1981 mission by Faisal A. Izzeddin, Deputy Director of Al Areen Wildlife Park in Bahrain, advised WWF/IUCN that most traders and manufacturers of rhino horn dagger handles did not know which animal produced the prized horn and were unable to identify the source when shown photographs depicting a rhino, giraffe and antelope.

Diplomatic efforts by AWLF (African Wildlife Leadership Foundation) were instrumental in bringing about the government decision. International public awareness of the issue was generated by the recent WWF/IUCN 'Save the Rhino' campaign which drew world attention to the plight of the black rhinos, whose numbers have plummeted to some 10–15 000 today, with a slaughter in the last decade of over 90% of the most concentrated populations in Kenya, Uganda and northern Tanzania.

HE Hussein M. Almagbaly, Ambassador to international organisations in Geneva of the Arab Repub-

lic of Yemen, noted that the Government's decision is "in keeping with its endeavour to protect endangered species throughout the world and that the Government of Yemen fully supports the conservation activities of WWF and IUCN which have drawn attention to such important issues".

Pharmacological tests

In action to stem trade in rhino horn for its popular use in Asia as a pharmaceutical, WWF/IUCN have just released details of a special pharmacological study of rhino horn carried

out for them by the international pharmaceutical concern Hoffmann-LaRoche & Co, which found no evidence that rhino horn has any medicinal effect as an antipyretic and would be ineffective in reducing fever, a common usage in much of Asia.

Tests also showed that rhino horn, which, like fingernails is made of agglutinated hair, has no analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmolytic nor diuretic properties, and no bactericidal effect could be found against suppuration and intestinal bacteria.

"This proves that rhino horn is of no use to anyone except the original owner", noted Dr Arne Schiotz, WWF Director of Conservation. "You would get the same effect from chewing your own finger nails".

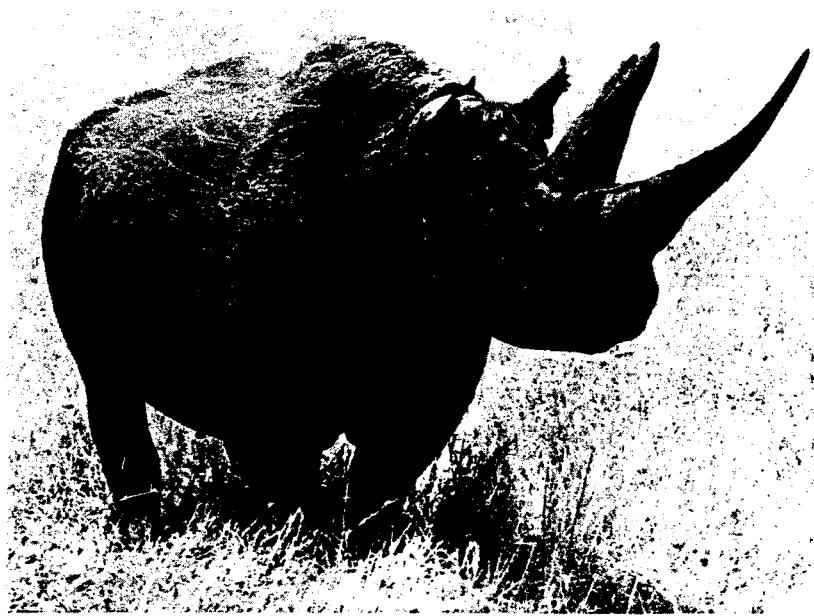


Fig. 1. *Diceros bicornis* – Black Rhino "Horace", Ngorongoro Crater. (Courtesy: WWF/ Patrick Macartney.)

Top Level Appointments at WWF*

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has announced several key appointments aimed at strengthening its senior management at international headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

The appointments, ratified at a meeting of the International Board of Trustees, chaired by WWF's President, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, are:

– Mr Louis Franck (Belgium) and Dr Luc Hoffmann (Switzerland), as Vice-Presidents of WWF-International

– Mr Frank Schmidt (Switzerland) to the new post of Assistant Director-General.

– Dr Conrad von Ulm (Germany) to the position of Director of Finance and Administration.

Announcing the new appointments, WWF's Director-General, Mr Charles de Haes, said Mr Franck and

*Courtesy WWF/IUCN News Release.

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