

THE GEORGE ADAMSON WILDLIFE PRESERVATION TRUST

THE MKOMAZI PROJECT

FIELD DIRECTOR'S REPORT

AND

TRUSTEE'S REPORT OF THE FRIENDS OF MKOMAZI VISIT

OCTOBER 1993

THE RETURN OF THE ELEPHANT

In this day and age, there is no greater pointer to the progress of a conservation project than the numbers and behaviour of the African Elephant. It has been most rewarding this year in Mkomazi to see a vast increase in the number of elephant and their young and to see their sense of humour returning.

Murdered in their thousands from the mid 70's until 5 years ago, it seemed as if the species were doomed in East Africa, in spite of the efforts of many dedicated people in the field. Thankfully, world media pressure, a responsive and caring public and the appointment of Richard Leakey to head the Kenya Wildlife Services in Kenya, plus the reorganisation of the Tanzanian Wildlife Department and the reconstruction in that country, stemmed the slaughter, stopped the trade and gave the elephants a chance to breed up. The people in the field were reorganised and motivated in the protection of this magnificent creature.

On February 3rd in Mkomazi I saw a herd of more than 300 elephant on the plains in front of the camp. They stayed for more than a week and were in the reserve for several months.

On August 19th, still one herd of about 100 elephants were close to the Umbo River in the south of the Reserve where there was water.

In mid-April, with photographer Peter Beard and Abercrombie and Kent manager Sandy Evans, we saw, from a small kopje close to camp, a herd of breeding females with their young aged from 2 weeks to 3 years old. They were moving slowly up the koronga below camp to drink from a small pool. In the background grazed a herd of 50 buffalo and all the countryside was still green. The elephant were nervous, there were obviously lions hiding in the bush somewhere, but we could not see them. They drank tentatively before heading off through the thick bush, climbing up into the Hifino Hills.

It was a glorious sight at sunset with the golden rays of the sun on them, the buffalos ignoring everything and the visible result of a four year moratorium on the ivory trade being played out happily in front of us. Peter Beard, the eternal cynic, even wrote on the dedication at the beginning of his book, under the title "The End of the Game" "or is it just the beginning". Sandy Evans just commented that there were a lot more elephants in Tarangire. He's dead right, but we're getting there.

The three herds of buffalo are all increasing and number between 250 - 500. When they come together in the breeding season they number over 1000 - obviously with back up from Tsavo animals.

As the countryside dries out and the dams dry up, the elephant have to move to where there is permanent water and grazing. Some go down to the Umba River but mainly they move into Tsavo National Park in Kenya across the border. Here the seasonal water pans hold up longer and there is a permanent water supply in Lake Jippe.

However, for several months after the water in Mkomazi is finished, I have seen herds of elephant that move up to drink at Lake Jippe at night and come back to graze in Mkomazi during the day. We do need, however, a JCB front-ended shovel to clear out all the dams and increase the size of the seasonal water pans.

Vegetation is plentiful and the elephants preference for Mkomazi these days demands that we help them with a larger supply of water. Hopefully during the next rainy season we will see nearly 1000 elephants in Mkomazi and be able to plan the distribution of extra water pans in the reserve.

By mid - August, 2 male elephants had taken up station near the Kisima camp and played a daily game of AMBUSH with the labourers and vehicles going up to dig the trench for the new well in the valley. This was a cause for concern for some time. However, they soon showed that it was no more than a bluff and took to grazing on the airstrip in the evening and ignoring most of us.

2 days rain on April 16th and 17th, but that was the lot for the so-called long rains this year.

Leopard also have become used to our presence and one is very often close to the lower staff lines at night. One morning he walked past Zacariah and Ephata as they were digging a trash pit by the lower camp site, no more than 10 feet away. Although they were neck deep in the hole, all they got was a glance and a nod, as he continued on his way. The same leopard often comes into camp at night after I've gone to bed to chase the civet cats who are after the genet cats who are eating my leftovers. The night guard in camp has also seen him sitting outside the mess tent and wandering quite unconcernedly around the camp complex.

One morning at about 5.45 I woke to the sound of voices and looked out to see that Zacariah had been ambushed by a lioness crouching in the road, stopping him from coming up to light the fires in the morning. They played this game of stand-off for about 15 minutes until the lioness yawned and moved away. It was an odd sight to see the two of them, both of whom felt they had the right of way, but at no time did I feel any worry for either's safety.

TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA / DISCUSSIONS FOR RHINO SANCTUARY

Courtesy of the kindness of Charles Dobie, Vice Chairman of the Trust in Tanzania, I flew down to South Africa as co-pilot in his new Beachcraft Baron. Charles was taking a brief break from the rigours of Dar es Salaam and my purpose was to meet Dr Anthony Hall Martin, the Director of Southern National Parks of South Africa. The trip down was extremely arduous. We arrived in Capetown on 24th April and Charles and I met with Dr Hall Martin and his wife Catriona at the main airport in Capetown. We discussed the price for the capture, movement and holding of the East African Northern Black Rhino from Addo National Park near Port Elizabeth to Mkomazi Game Reserve.

Anthony is very keen that these animals should go to Mkomazi. I was also very keen, in spite of the huge responsibility they represent, to take them. The price was \$60,000.00 per animal.

4 rhino had been transferred from Kiboko in Kenya, just north of Mkomazi, to Addo National Park in 1961 and had now bred up to nearly 40 animals. The reason for the high price, and in spite of me drawing analogies to the Medellin cocaine cartel, is because they wish to assist in the survival of the Namibian rhino, which they are having to buy at more than twice this price.

Anthony said that he was ready to capture this September but I said that we would need more time to build the sanctuary, staff it and raise such a vast amount of money to stock it with 10.

Further correspondence between Anthony Hall Martin and myself has further confirmed the commitment between us, and although funds are severely restricted at the moment, I am planning on clearing the perimeter line for the sanctuary in mid-October. One step at a time.

Moritz Borman, one of the USA Trustees, has finalised the rhino proposal. We hope to have a brochure printed on this aspect of the Mkomazi Project soon.

The Director of Wildlife has given us both support and considerable pressure to move on this programme quickly, as Tanzania has no rhino sanctuary at present and very few surviving in the field, especially in the north of the country.

AFRICAN HUNTING DOG

The bomas are now completely ready, with underground burrows and observation hillocks, electric fencing, separate feed and crush area for innoculation, solar butchery fired up and working, and we are ready to roll.

The dens of the dogs in the Southern Masai and Masai Steppe area have been determined. They are due to start denning before the next rains at the end of November. I have alerted all the farmers in the area who have offered large rewards when dens that are in use have been found. We have been very careful not to ask for any 'stray dogs' and the area is very suitable. It is close to Mkomazi (+-100 miles) in an area of increased human activity where the dogs are, and will be, in danger of persecution and poisoning. I will be flying to this area on a more frequent basis over the next two months, following up on whatever information comes in.

The drugs for the capture, translocation and innoculation have been kindly supplied by Dr Hans Breth Hanson of Denmark, who we hope will be in Mkomazi on 8th October.

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

On 24th June, Hugh Watson arrived in Mkomazi to tidy up the Ibaya Lodge to receive a 3 month influx of scientists doing a preliminary ecological survey in Mkomazi, under Dr Malcolm Coe. Malcolm arrived a few weeks later and enthused the students from Oxford with his vast knowledge of all aspects of the Mkomazi ecosystem. During their time here it was great to see Peter Lack, who came up with nearly 250 species of birds in the height of the dry season. It was also good to see Mark Ritchie again, who I had not seen since the Kora expedition. He was looking for his bugs and also very graciously spent time in the proposed rhino sanctuary looking at the tsetse and other insects there.

His conclusion was - very little going on at present, but the bugs will move in with the rhinos and the wet season. In the Tsavo West Sanctuary, just across the border, 4 different types of tsetse have been found, but the Kenyan vets have this under control, although they are a bit worried about a fungal skin infection that the rhinos are subject to.

Susie Cox was working on satellite imagery to ground truth and I helped everybody with flights in the aircraft on their various surveys. I also put a base station radio in their camp and supplied a mobile radio set. I cleared a rough airstrip at Ibaya to be able to collect people from and for use of their camp in emergencies.

The Director of Wildlife, Mr Ndolanga, came in by road on 2nd August. I flew into Zange to meet with him and Mr Mungure before they both drove to Ibaya to meet Dr Malcolm Coe (who was his professor in Nairobi many years before) and also to sign the Memorandum of Understanding that the Royal Geographical Society needed to proceed with their extended 2 year inventory and assessment of Mkomazi.

EDUCATION OUTREACH OFFICERS

On 24th June, accompanied by Mr Mungure and Mr Msuya, we had our first official meeting in Kisiwani village with the Chairman and officers of the CCM (Chama Cha Mapunduzi), the official political party in Tanzania, as regards greater co-operation between the villagers and the Wildlife Division operating in Mkomazi Game Reserve.

It was a very mutually beneficial meeting and not something that could have happened before this. They were extremely pleased that the Mkomazi Game Reserve Football Club had been formed from mainly Kisiwani village teams, and with the help and hope that had given to the youth and village. We discussed other areas where we could help them in the future and they could help us in the Game Reserve.

Directly after the meeting, I took Mr Mungure to meet Harrie Simons and Truus Nicolaisen, the social pastoralist group leaders and lay missionaries for the Roman Catholic church. We had previously been talking about linking their skills in greater cooperation and understanding between the local people surrounding Mkomazi and ourselves. Harrie and Truus have lived in Kisiwani for 6 years, have the understanding and trust of the local villagers, sit on the Councils of the Masai and other village leaders, have initiated the Women's Group and consequently the secondary school and medicinal dispensaries. This is to name but a few of their achievements.

Mr Mungure was delighted to meet them and was very enthusiastic that they should be the Education Outreach Programme Coordinators for the reserve using their experience, under the auspices of the Wildlife Division.

Truus will continue her work with the Women's Groups and school children and she and Harrie will incorporate their work into that of the reserve. I donated a Gestetner copying machine to Harrie and Truus to help them get their newsletter out to the Women's Groups. This was not without some vested interest and purely coincidentally (?) an article on the Mkomazi Game Reserve appeared in the next and every subsequent issue.

We are hopeful to raise funds to buy a 25 seater bus for visits to Mkomazi Game Reserve by school children and for the football team to travel to away matches, fighting their way up Division 3. Funds are, as usual, limited and we hope to share the cost of this bus with Mzee Kamwala, the proprietor of the local petrol station in Same, who is a good friend.

WATER

Albert van Aarst and a crew from Kenya started drilling for water in mid May. On May 19th 1993 they found water at 21 metres, in the campsite below the lower staff lines, and drilled to 40 metres. Limited output (+- 500 litres per hour) but it should be sufficient for campsite visitors, the lower staff lines and back up for camp. Four days later they struck water again, just over a kilometre above the dried up old well that had been put in in 1966. At just over 1,000 litres per hour it should suffice for all camp needs plus some extra for the rhino sanctuary.

Knowing these semi-arid zones, I keep my fingers crossed until the next rains to see if the reservoirs and seepage holds up. A week later water was struck at Zange Headquarters at nearly 140 metres, and 15,000 - 20,000 litres per hour poured out of the ground. Its temperature is 30 degrees centigrade. Mr Mungure now hopes to provide local villages, without water at present, with a regular supply and in return to get TANESCO (the Tanzanian electricity supply company) to run a line to Zange HQ, both to run the pump and supply his newly built office reception area at Zange gate.

THE DIRECTOR OF WILDLIFE'S VISIT

On 23rd August, I flew in to Arusha to collect the Director of Wildlife, Mr Ndolanga. In spite of entreaties by some other officers, as there was a National Parks Board meeting in Dar and an elephant conference starting in Arusha, Mr Mungure and I took him back to Mkomazi in 5H-DOG. He spent the day familiarising with the Reserve, both in the camp and flying the Southern Section of the Reserve to look at the new boundary cut lines and road network that has been put in over the past few months. He expressed complete satisfaction with the progress to date and support for future plans. We have formed a trusting and solid working relationship and rely on each other's judgement in discussing the progress of the Reserve.

On this visit, the Director also met Harrie Simons in Kisima camp, where he confirmed his welcome to Harrie to the Wildlife Division and the role that he would be playing with us in the future with the Outreach Programme. Harrie's brother, Jan Simons, has enabled him to buy a Landrover Pick-Up and we are forming a branch of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust in Holland to raise money for the Outreach Programmes and assistance to the villages around the Reserve.

It was a great honour to have the Director at camp and to show him the work and progress.

FRIENDS OF MKOMAZI VISIT

It was a great pleasure to be able to welcome F(f)riends from the UK Trust to yet another walking safari within the Reserve. Bob Marshall Andrews was last seen up a tree in the northern part of the Reserve, but somehow managed to complete the report enclosed, which describes their visit far better than I ever could. We all had a lot of fun, saw a lot of game and I was extremely glad to be able to show the progress to the Friends. I was also delighted to introduce the Friends to Mr Mungure. Very many thanks to Gillian Marshall Andrews and Lucy for the smooth running and planning of the trip, and of course to Speedy of Kibo Safaris for general flexing of muscles, coordination of the trip and for setting up of all the safari camps. He is a great friend and supporter and helps on a regular basis.

YOUNG FRIENDS VISIT

If the Friends visit was adventurous and fun, then the young crew were very hard working and constructive and, I must confess, it was a great pleasure to have them. There were 7 altogether and they made themselves completely self-sufficient in the lower camp site, under the organisation of Tom Marshall Andrews.

In spite of being infected with jiggers, they achieved wonders in setting up water lines, frames for solar panels, boma for the top pump, trenches for the water lines, heavy convict work on the elephant boma and, with much enthusiasm, skill and panache, in the company of a few camp staff, took on the Mkomazi Game Reserve Football Team in Kisiwani. In a highly dignified fashion, they proceeded to lose 9 - 1, my night watchman scoring the only goal.

I was highly appreciative of all their help and company - though not of their hangovers - and would be very happy to have a repeat visit next year.

VISITORS

In Dar es Salaam in the past few months I have visited the Ministers and Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Natural Resources and the Environment. I have also met with the British Ambassador Roger Westbrook and the US Ambassador Peter Jon de Vos, the latter of whom would very much like to help us next year from one of his budgets.

John Belcher of Coca Cola in Nairobi paid a visit and expressed interest in helping to further our efforts on the outreach programmes.

David and Lillian Rechsteiner of Friends of the Serengeti in Switzerland and Burka Estates met with me in Arusha and they were their usual generous selves, in helping with a great and trusting donation towards the day to day running of the reserve.

Rupert Ingram from America, a great and well seasoned Africa traveller, was a delight to have in camp taking over some of my daily chores.

Christine Weber of the National Geographic and Bob Pool visited Mkomazi to research a proposal for a documentary film on the dog and rhino translocation.

Gaby Bustros from Paris was interested in a documentary on both the animal programmes and the working and personal relationship between Mr Mungure and myself.

Richard Lamprey, of the Planning and Assessment Unit of the Kenyan Wildlife Division was a very welcome visitor, when his aircraft fuel tank burst and he had to make an emergency but expert landing at Kisima camp. I was in Nairobi at the time and flew a mechanic down to get him back to Kenya.

Extremely welcome at the end of September was Moritz Borman, a director of the Trust in the USA. He came for the first time to Mkomazi. Moritz is an almost fanatical supporter of the project and great friend and I was very pleased to show him around. We flew to Dar to meet Charles Dobie to discuss the future of the project. We both concentrated on finalising the proposal for the rhino sanctuary, as well as prioritising future projects and immediate concerns.

I am also very grateful to Malcolm Williams for donating the submersible solar driven water pumps which have been absolutely essential to the project.

Marianna van der Waal, with her brother and a friend, came in under the supervision of the Government Veterinary Officer in Same to take blood samples from which to produce serum from the domestic dogs in the towns and villages surrounding more than 2/3 of Mkomazi. It was a daunting and difficult, if humourous, task for them which they carried out diligently and efficiently. The samples were marked and delivered to Sarah Gascoigne of the Sereregeti Wildlife Research Institute in Arusha, who is sending them to the UK for testing for rabies, distemper and other diseases.

There is always a continual flow of friends and interested parties through Mkomazi who are always very welcome and a great pleasure to see.

GENERAL

Mr Mungure is concentrating on the main south western boundary of the reserve, clearing and re-aligning roads down to the Umbo River. He, of course, has made excellent progress with incredible hard work and endurance. The boundaries in the north have also been attended to. Ranger patrols and work gangs are operating in the reserve full time, and are proving to be highly effective with their limited resources. They have pulled up hundreds of snares and brought the encroachment of stock down to a minimum, so that they can concentrate more on the meat poaching.

My head man, Elisaria Nnko, is really the man who runs the camp. He has my complete confidence and trust and is responsible for not just seeing that the work is done properly, but also for camp security and visitors, and planning and laying the foundations of all the projects. I trust his wisdom and am very grateful to have such a man of such high calibre working for and with me.

Harrie and Truus are liaising very closely with Jonas Nnko, our education officer who, after some time working with the rangers in the reserve, is now visiting local villages to assess the instrumentation of the education programme.

Fires are not as bad as in previous years but mischief makers still return, as can only be expected. The combination of early burning by myself and Mr Mungure, the making of fire breaks, for which a grader is seriously needed, plus the impact of the education programme, will hopefully reduce this to a minimum in the years to come.

The dog bomas are completed, the butchery is completed, the elephant boma is nearly completed, all with the help of Fred Decker and Franz Schatz in Mombo. The office at camp is now also completed, with the expertise of the craftsman Mr Jumeni.

There is the usual daily flying patrols, ongoing maintenance of vehicles, lorry overhauls and tractor/trailer repairs.

CONCLUSIONS

The progress is highly satisfactory on all fronts. However, the success of the return of the habitat and animals must now be balanced against the importance of the outreach programmes.

We are now at a stage where the basic pioneering leads into serious management, with all the added responsibilities and work load. A grader is needed for fire breaks, a JCB for dams and waterholes, a bus for the outreach programme and a lorry for Kisima camp. The rhino sanctuary will prove to be a massive undertaking and fund raising operation.

The day to day running costs, if all these programmes are to continue successfully, have now more than doubled. Although the Wildlife Division is putting more than its fair share of money into the game reserve, still non-revenue earning, the onus of responsibility for this funding does lie with us - the price of being successful.

I do feel that a project as prestigious as the rhino sanctuary, plus some form of revenue from a small but exclusive tourist venture in the reserve, must be forthcoming within the next year for Mkomazi to both survive as a game reserve and to stay level with the development of the Tanzanian economy.

If we are able to do this, as the Director of Wildlife remarked on his visit in August, we should both deserve and be accorded National Park status.

Tony Fitzjohn

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The Mkomazi Project

Mrs Janet Gelsthorpe
The Project Rhino Charitable Trust
Chatsworth
Rue de la Mare
Torteval
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Channel Islands

28th October 1993

Dear Janet

It was very good to talk to you today and as discussed, please find enclosed our latest newsletter. This is still in pre-production form, but still tells the same story.

Also enclosed is a copy letter from Dr Hall Martin to Tony Fitzjohn which will give you a better idea of the negotiations that are taking place between the National Parks in South Africa and Tony Fitzjohn on behalf of the Department of Wildlife Tanzania.

I will send you our rhino proposal as soon as it is finally approved by Tony Fitzjohn and Rob Brett.

I hope to meet you next week and in the meantime thank you for your time today. I look forward to talking to you in the future.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Mellotte
The George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

SECOND FRIENDS VISIT TO MKOMAZI 1993

BOB MARSHALL ANDREWS QC

SECOND FRIENDS VISIT TO MKOMAZI 1993

1. THE RESERVE

The ecology of the reserve continues to improve dramatically and is now in very good shape. During the earlier rainy season, game was prolific. To the anecdotal accounts may be added photographic evidence, including one dramatic panorama from the camp revealing several hundred elephant. That herd has now moved into the hills leaving one obstinate old bull who could be seen lurking just beyond our perimeter. Our visit took place in the dry season (again) so game was less abundant. However, four days walking saw encounters with lion, buffalo (hundreds), serval cat, giraffe (many), baboon, wart hog, ostrich, water buck and herds of zebra, oryx, eland, hartebeest, impala, and Grant's and Thomson's Gazelle. We also disturbed one enormous and agitated porcupine.

Leopard, again, were heard (subject to the usual license). Elephant spoor was everywhere but the animals themselves were seen only from the air. The weather was perfect, the mountains and hills very beautiful and Kilimanjaro was on view nearly everyday.

2. CAMP HEADQUARTERS AND PROJECTS

HQ remains an impressive centre of technology and industry. The tractor is in daily use for road maintenance and elementary cutting with an ancient (circa 1930's) tow grader which appears to have more welding than original metal and causes its operators to suffer from the equivalent of sea sickness for several weeks.

The new plane is also in daily use, stock clearing, poacher spotting and providing support for other ventures such as the Royal Geographical Society survey now taking place.

A massive, magnificent new Land Rover (the Beast) has arrived - many thanks to Malcolm Williams - and shines out among the older versions and the new Suzukis.

The Wild Dog boma is now complete, extending to several acres of bush encompassing holding areas, innoculation pens and highly desirable tunnels and dens equipped to the highest canine standards. Suitable residents are now being sought.

The elephant boma is also complete and plans are afoot to bring our first resident from a private zoo in Arusha. She will be taken on daily walks followed, hopefully, by care in the community.

The successful rehabilitation of the reserve has resulted in the return of a cheetah population recently sighted in the south of the reserve. As a result, it is thought that a separate programme is now not necessary in the short term.

Plans for the establishment of a rhino sanctuary over several square miles in the centre of the reserve have the support of the Government, but require further substantial funding to purchase (from South Africa) suitable specimens (at \$60,000.00 a head!)

We had a long meeting with the Project Director, Mr Mungure, whose energy and enthusiasm is an infectious delight. It is typical of the dedication to be found in all the wardens and Trust employees.

3. TRAVEL AND LOGISTICS

There was a consensus that Sudan Air would not be re-selected. The mixture of discomfort and temperance proved nigh-on unendurable for certain, otherwise uncomplaining, Friends. It is also recommended that future journeys begin at Kilimanjaro Airport rather than Nairobi.

Once in camp, however, the accommodation was excellent, the food first class and the facilites (including the long-drop) maintained to a high standard. In the bush we enjoyed first class fly camps (beds, long drops, haute cuisine, etc.) provided (gratis) by Kibo Safaris and 'Speedy', to whom much gratitude is due.

4. PROBLEMS

We remain in desperate need of a proper grader and a replacement for the vintage Bedford which, for all its endearing characteristics, remains hopelessly inadequate as a hot-pursuit vehicle (radiator excepted). There has been an increase in meat poaching, not yet serious but unwelcome nevertheless.

Education and outreach programmes are still needed, not least to halt the endemic and apparently mindless setting of bush fires, (from one of which we rescued two giant tortoises overtaken sprinting down the track). These programmes are now in the excellent and capable hands of Harrie Simons and Truus Nicolaisen, Dutch lay missionaries and social pastoralist workers in Kisiwani, who are also organising a new Trust in Holland.

5. CONCLUSIONS

For the present, the project remains one of the most successful, (and admired) conservation ventures in Africa and, again, visiting Friends returned with little else but commendation and zeal.

Bob Marshall Andrews QC

THE GEORGE ADAMSON WILDLIFE PRESERVATION TRUST

OVERVIEW OF THE MKOMAZI PROJECT

MKOMAZI GAME RESERVE

TANZANIA

"We need another and wiser and perhaps more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature and living by complicated artifice, man in civilisation patronizes the creatures for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren; they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth."

Henry Beston

MKOMAZI GAME RESERVE

Mkomazi Game Reserve is in the North of Tanzania, midway between Mount Kilimanjaro and the Indian Ocean. To the North of the Reserve lies Tsavo National Park in Kenya. Mkomazi Game Reserve covers 3,726 square kilometres which, together with the adjoining Tsavo, forms one of the largest continuous tracts of protected wilderness in Africa. To the south of the Reserve lie the Usambara Mountains and to the west lie the Pare Mountains. From here the land falls away to the eastern lowlands to meet the Umbo River, which forms the Reserve's south eastern boundary and provides its only naturally occurring source of permanent water.

THE PAST

Mkomazi Game Reserve was established in 1951. It was remote and inaccessible, it had always suffered from a lack of funds and had never attracted the support provided for the more glamorous wildlife strongholds such as Ngorogoro and Serengeti National Parks. As a result, until 1988 it had become badly degraded and its future hung in the balance. Heavy poaching had wiped out the Black Rhinoceros and elephant. Deliberate burning and badly controlled hunting had taken their toll. Grazing wild animals had been forced to compete unsuccessfully with the ever increasing numbers of invading livestock.

In 1988, the Tanzanian Government, through the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Tourism, decided to re-examine the status of Mkomazi, with a view to saving the remaining wildlife. The result was a courageous decision to restore the Reserve's wildlife potential by removing all resident tribesmen and their stock, thereby returning the reserve to its original state, including a full complement of large mammal species, several of which, endangered elsewhere, had become extinct in the area. The 450 seasonal grazing permits which had been issued in 1951, and severely abused, were withdrawn. The Mkomazi Game Reserve became a National Priority Project attracting full Government support.

In 1988, the Department of Wildlife invited Tony Fitzjohn, Field Director of the George Adamson Trust, to work closely with Hezekiah Mungure, the Tanzanian Project Manager and a long serving senior officer, to take on this massive task.

THE WORK

There is no doubt that the successful rehabilitation of Mkomazi is due to the mutual respect and joint cooperation that exists between Tony Fitzjohn and Hezekiah Mungure. Together they have spearheaded the operation to reinstate Mkomazi as a game reserve and return it to its former glory.

Initially the infrastructure in Mkomazi was non-existent, the poaching endemic and re-occupation of the area by stock and tribesmen a matter of indifference to the Government. Laws and negotiated mutual agreements were ignored and the remaining wildlife was under immense stress and pressure from back to back sport hunting.

The need to restore Mkomazi for future generations was of paramount importance. Hunting in Mkomazi was therefore banned in 1990 by the Director of Wildlife, as detrimental to the rehabilitation of the area and because it was recognised as being completely unsustainable. Hunting was the antithesis of the hope that within a few years Mkomazi would be a game reserve to be enjoyed and appreciated by thousands of visitors, both Tanzanians and international tourists.

It takes a long time to restore an area and a very short time to destroy it. The political and economic fragility of wildlife areas determines that misjudgements made today are unlikely to be rectified in the near future.

Road networks had to be re-opened and re-established - Mkomazi now has over 500 miles of roads and tracks. Airstrips had to be cleared in the areas in which the ranger patrols were actively operating. Regular patrols by air, sometimes even 3 to 4 flights daily, gave a clear overall picture of the status of the reserve from which the project manager was able to operate. Clearing the almost vertical road to the top of a 4,500ft mountain assisted the installation of the VHF radio system with virtually full reserve coverage. Boundaries had to be redefined and demarcated by Government surveyors. A working camp had to be built at Kisima for Tony Fitzjohn, staff, airfield personnel and security. Holding bomas were constructed for the African Hunting Dog Project, the Elephant translocation and now recently for Tanzania's first Rhino Sanctuary. Hydrogeologists were hired to locate sources of water and drilling took place after their surveys. Now both the main headquarters and Kisima work camp produce ample water. Dams still need to be desilted but two of them still hold up well into the dry season.

At all times, Mungure and Fitzjohn tirelessly persevere in the day to day management and monitoring of the reserve. There is constant maintenance of the roads, vehicles and equipment.

Morale is now at an all time high. Operations in the field have been successful and night-out allowances and bonuses are now being paid out to the rangers on a more regular basis.

With the tremendous increase in peace in the reserve, the animals populations have bred up to extremely healthy numbers. The elephant count in 1988 was 11. In 1993 just under 1000 were counted. The habitat is recovering very well, considering its former degredation. Today Mkomazi stands, if not restored, thankfully recovering.

With peace returning to Mkomazi, the time has now come to return those animals that were previously indigenous to the reserve and have since become extinct.

THE RHINO SANCTUARY

In the past 20 years, the African Black Rhino has been systematically anhilliated. It is under threat from all sides, from the ever increasing populations, the farmers and ranchers and the encroachment of nomadic herds. But the greatest threat to the rhino comes from the illegal trading and poaching instigated by the insatiable appetite of the Far East for powdered rhino horn. The rhino is now at the point of extinction.

The Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary will be the first in Tanzania. It represents a critical step forward in the plight of these highly endangered species and a momentous opportunity to renew a genetic base long lost from the area. Mkomazi is ideal rhino country. In 1968 the reserve held the largest recorded numbers of breeding rhino. By 1980 there were none left.

In 1961, four Northern Black Rhino were transferred from Kiboko in Kenya, just north of Mkomazi, to Addo National Park in South Africa. These rhino have now bred up to 40 and the South Africans regard them as exotic to the area. It has therefore been agreed that the George Adamson Trust buy these rhino and repatriate them to Mkomazi. The proceeds of this 'sale' will enable the South Africans to increase their rhino habitat, and capture, translocate and reinstate a Namibian sub-species that was historically resident in that area. This is therefore an opportunity to restock two parks with genetically correct rhino sub-species.

The Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary has been designed by sanctuary managers, veterinarians and scientists from Kenya and South Africa. A 32 square kilometre line has been cleared to encompass a 50 square kilometre sanctuary. Discussions with the National Parks Board of South Africa have confirmed the Trust's intention to buy 10 Northern Black Rhino for translocation.

The translocation will be carried out by highly experienced wildlife personnel, veterinarians and game capture units. The logistics have been carefully planned with input from the National Parks of South Africa and the advisors to the Mkomazi Game Reserve Rhino Sanctuary Project.

After two decades of slaughter and habitat destruction, it is gratifying to know that the Mkomazi Game Reserve is now ready to give them the sanctuary protection they once knew here.

THE AFRICAN HUNTING DOG

The African Hunting Dog (or Wild Dog) are a vanishing species. Mysterious, elusive, enigmatic, they are the restless corsairs of the African plains. They possess no territories. Only when the bitches whelp does the pack settle down for a few months until the pups are old enough to accompany them on their marathon journeys.

Wild Dogs are the wolves of Africa. Their heads are broad, their muzzles short. There is strength in the muscular neck, stamina in the deep chest, tenacity and endurance in the long slim legs. They seldom raise their hunting pace above 30 miles an hour, but can maintain a steady speed for miles, wearing down their prey in a remorseless and single minded chase to the death.

For years they were despised as vermin, shot and poisoned by farmers, hunters and game departments. All over Africa their history has been one of unremitting persecution. Only when more enlightened attitudes began to prevail did they appear for the first time in their own true light; not as indiscriminate butchers, but as highly intelligent social animals whose hunting efficiency actually improves the quality of the plains game, by removing sick individuals and scattering the herds to prevent in-breeding.

Sadly the change of attitude has come too late to save many packs. Despite the protection of parks and reserves, they have continued to decline throughout their range to the point where a sudden epidemic can sweep away an entire pack. It is recommended that captive breeding and translocation of these highly endangered species become a priority now that their numbers have reached dangerously low levels. Their holding bomas are completed at Kisima camp, with underground burrows, observation hillocks, electric fencing, separate feed areas, crush areas for inoculation and a solar butchery.

The project will be monitored by highly experienced veterinary personnel.

It is encouraging that Tony Fitzjohn is undertaking the difficult task of re-establishing the species in Mkomazi. After so many years successfully rehabilitating lions and leopards, his experience and expertise will offer the dogs the chance they so desperately need.

THE OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

In 1993, the Department of Wildlife employed Harrie and Truus Simons to run the Mkomazi Game Reserve Outreach Programme. They have lived in Kisiwani Village for 7 years as social pastoralist workers and have the trust, respect and confidence of the local people. They sit on the councils of the Maasai and are consultants of the village elders. Their range of work within the village is outstanding, their methods exemplary. All the projects are long-term, low budget and self-sustaining. They have initiated Women's Groups whose management courses have changed the lives and confidence of many women. The local primary schools have been assisted with the most urgent requirements, and the plans are underway to build a Secondary Day Technical Environmental / Educational College. Medical dispensaries are being equipped, and we hope to build a hospital. The Mkomazi Game Reserve Football Team carries the banner of Mkomazi Game Reserve albeit in the 4th Division. Harrie and Truus are fully conversant with the problems the reserve faces and the needs of the local communities. The programme they have initiated is both sustainable and fair and has set the precedent for similar programmes nationwide.

TOURISM

The tourism aspect and income generation of the reserve has been carefully planned and agreed upon. A comprehensive plan has been drawn up by tourism development consultants and operators, who are concerned with the long term future of Mkomazi. These plans comprise a luxury tented camp with mobile units. All tourism programmes in the game reserve will be on an involved 'eco-tourist' level, with all profits being returned to both the management and conservation projects in the reserve.

THE FUTURE

The conservation of the environment and wildlife is now the subject of many excellent projects. However, Mkomazi has a unique aspect. The rebuilding of Mkomazi, the rehabilitation of its wildlife, the endangered species programmes and the outreach programmes do not simply attempt to 'hold the line' on conservation. They are an endeavour to re-establish a complete ecosystem and thus positively reverse the damage that has been done. In the decades to come, projects such as this will assume increasing importance and significance. The political and economic state of the world dictates that environmental conditions will become worse before they become better. Therefore, in addition to limiting the damage, it is essential that we should now master the techniques of revival and renewal in order that the eco-system becomes self-sustaining. That process is the driving force of Mkomazi. For that reason it is believed to be one of the most important projects in Africa today.

TONY FITZJOHN

For 18 years Tony Fitzjohn worked and lived alongside George Adamson in Kora National Reserve in Kenya. Together they pioneered in rehabilitating lions and leopards to the wild, whilst simultaneously undertaking the management of the reserve. It is fair to say that without Tony, George could not have completed his projects in those tough years at Kora, and in return he taught Tony everything he knew about lions, wildlife and its management. During Tony's years in Kora he was invaluable, not only for his extraordinary ability in handling the lions and leopards, but also for his natural abilities in keeping the camp and reserve maintained, and his forceful determination to get the job done.

His work with George Adamson in Kora, and subsequent work in Mkomazi, has established his position as one of the foremost conservationists in East Africa today.

Mkomazi's success is his greatest testament to George Adamson.

THE GEORGE ADAMSON WILDLIFE PRESERVATION TRUSTS UK AND USA

Tony Fitzjohn and the Mkomazi Project are supported by the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust UK and the Tony Fitzjohn/George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust USA. The Trusts have no salaried staff and every penny is devoted to supporting work in the field.

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