

The African Elephant and Rhino Group Nyeri Meeting

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A meeting of the African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group was held in Nyeri, Kenya from 17 to 20 May 1987. The main objectives of the meeting were to: critically review the numbers, distribution and trends of elephant and rhino populations in Africa; exchange information on current research on elephants and rhinos in Africa; examine resources available for the management of protected areas containing rhinos and/or elephants; review aspects of trade in ivory and rhino horn; establish priorities for the conservation of Africa's elephants and rhinos, using information from the above sessions; and discuss AERSG's draft continental conservation strategy for black rhinos.

The costs of the meeting were largely met by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and additional financial contributions came from the African Wildlife Foundation and the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife. The recommendations of the meeting do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these organisations or of IUCN.

Permission for the meeting was obtained from the Government of Kenya through the Kenyan Department of Wildlife Conservation and Management, which participated actively in the meeting. Apart from IUCN staff, considerable assistance in arranging the meeting was provided by Ed Wilson (WWF Regional Office for East Africa), Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne.

The proceedings of the meeting are being published by IUCN, but the action plan priorities agreed upon by the group are given below.

Political Action

Reports and discussions on trade raised the following key issues and priorities for political action as of May 1987.

Burundi and the United Arab Emirates are now the major entrepot states for ivory and rhino horn. Burundi has not yet joined CITES and the UAE is about to withdraw from CITES. International diplomatic pressure on these two states to control trade in illegal ivory and rhino horn is urgently required and the forthcoming CITES conference (July 1987) is an opportune time to raise the issue.

Corruption within countries in Africa emerged as a common underlying factor associated with rhino and elephant poaching and the continuing illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn. Poached ivory is entering the international market with legal documents issued by corrupt officials. Governments and heads of state need to be made aware of the problem, to be provided with specific information or illegal activities and to be urged to bring the matter under control. Conservation action in the field will continue to be compromised as long as corruption within official circles is tolerated.

Key individuals involved in the illegal trade in ivory should be identified through the involvement of professional investigators, and governments should be asked to take action to halt their activities.

IUCN and other appropriate organisations should place the issues of elephant and rhino conservation and illegal trade in their products within the forum of the Organization for African Unity. This with a view to more fully informing OAU member states and their governments about the problems of ivory and rhino horn trades and the conservation of these species.

Trade

Rhino horn

Close the Lusaka connection/conduit The major poaching pressure on the Zambezi Valley population is from neighbouring Zambia and the operation is being directed from Lusaka. Action to close this conduit is urgently required. Similar considerations apply to Burundi.

Close internal trade in India and China The manufacture and trade in traditional medicines containing rhino products is still permitted in China and India, among other countries, and there is a need to seek the cooperation of these countries in closing down

this aspect of the rhino horn trade. Although strictly speaking outside the purview of CITES, the matter should be raised in a draft resolution to be placed before the conference of the parties in Ottawa in July 1987.

Continue work on substitutes in consumer countries The initiatives to encourage the use of substitutes to rhino horn in consumer countries should continue.

North Yemen The entry of rhino horn into North Yemen has not ceased despite official bans on the import of rhino horn. Earlier partially successful initiatives to close this trade should be pursued.

Ivory

Investigate illegal trade within Africa There is little concrete information on the illegal trade in ivory within Africa and a comprehensive undercover investigation of the form and extent of this trade is required if effective controls are to be introduced.

Investigate consumption of raw ivory within Africa While reasonably good data are available on the amount of raw ivory leaving Africa, only fragmentary data are available on the levels of production and use of ivory within the continent. Without this information it is not possible to establish the full extent to which elephants are being harvested in Africa.

Analysis and assessment of the ivory quota system The Ivory quota system was introduced in 1986 at the request of the African states which effectively constitute the producer countries for ivory in Africa. The system has been criticized by conservationists and those involved in the legal trade in ivory. There is a need to analyse the statistics on ivory quotas, trade in ivory and trends in elephant populations in Africa and to report on this matter to the forthcoming CITES meeting in Ottawa. The evidence available to AERSG at the Nyeri meeting makes it clear that the present annual continental harvest of elephant is not sustainable.

Field Action

Black rhinos The Continental Conservation Strategy for black rhinos being prepared by AERSG should be completed and published. In order to establish field action priorities for the conservation of wild populations of black rhinos some 37 populations of black rhinos were examined and scored for biological importance, the likelihood of external assistance being successful and the urgency with which such assistance is needed. The priority areas and the field actions and support required in each are listed below.

Zambezi Valley - Zimbabwe This area lies downstream of Lake Kariba and includes a number of components of the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife estate, which cover an area of nearly 12,000 sq km. The Mana Pools National Park and the Chewore and Sapi Safari Areas comprise a World Heritage Site within the complex. The Zambezi Valley carries the largest remaining coherent population of black rhinos left in Africa and the only population of more than 500. The population is under threat from Zambian-based poachers, who have accounted for a minimum of 300 rhinos over the last three years. Requirements are for a helicopter to assist in the rapid deployment of anti-poaching forces, a light aircraft for surveillance, and an effective research and monitoring programme to accurately estimate the size of the population and, secondly, to develop monitoring techniques both to assess rhino population trends and the effectiveness of anti-poaching strategies and tactics.

Kaokoland/Damaraland (Kaokoveld) - Namibia A population of approximately 90 black rhinos live in desert or near desert conditions outside protected areas in Kaokoland and Damaraland. There is a need for additional support for patrols and possibly the recruitment of additional auxiliaries who, drawn from the local communities, assist the authorities in patrolling the area. Additionally, there is a need to maintain the existing monitoring programme, which depends on the regular identification of individuals and to support public relations and extension work amongst the pastoral communities living in the region.

Cameroon/Chad These small populations lie on the western extremity of rhino distribution in Africa and represent the only remaining black rhinos in the region. There is no recent information on the number and status of the small population which resided in the Bouba Njida National Park and a thorough reconnaissance survey is required of the park population and reported sightings of rhinos in Chad.

Tsavu National Park – Kenya The population has declined over the last two decades from several thousand to less than 200. There is a need to enlarge the fenced and protected sanctuary created within the park to hold black rhinos. Anti-poaching activities require support and there is a need to establish the numbers and distribution of rhinos remaining in the park.

Selous Game Reserve – Tanzania The Selous Game Reserve of 55,000 sq km. has the potential to hold some 18,000 or more black rhinos. Numbers in the reserve have declined from more than 3,000 in 1980 to less than 300 in 1987. There is a need to review the management of the reserve, establish effective anti-poaching operations and conduct intensive ground surveys and censuses in appropriate areas. The staff of the reserve are urged to collect data on rhino sightings and sign in a systematic way to facilitate these exercises.

Gonarezhou National Park – Zimbabwe Rhinos were introduced into this park of 5,000 sq km in 1971. The 72 animals introduced increased to over 150 but poaching over the last three years had reduced this to less than 50 rhinos. Anti-poaching efforts are complicated by the Mozambique civil war and the movement of refugees through the park. Staffing levels need to be improved and some equipment, particularly vehicles, is needed to support anti-poaching.

Luangwa Valley – Zambia The rhino population of the Luangwa Valley has declined from several thousand to less than 100 within this decade. Support is required for the Zambian Government proposal to establish a protected sanctuary within the Luangwa South National Park. There is also a requirement to strengthen anti-poaching efforts and to further involve local communities in the conservation effort.

Sebungwe Region – Zimbabwe The Sebungwe region of some 15,000 sq km lies to the south of Lake Kariba and comprises a complex of protected areas and communal farming land. The parks and wildlife areas are the Chizarira National Park and contiguous Chirisa Safari Area, the Chete Safari Area and the Matusadona National Park. The rhino population of at least 500 is dispersed between the four protected areas with some animals still living on communal farm land. Major requirements are for extension and public relations work to involve local communities in the conservation of rhinos in the region, establish a highly mobile and efficient anti-poaching unit to pre-empt any poaching threat and to accurately census and monitor the population.

Laikipia Ranch – Kenya This private ranch of 400 sq km contains a rhino population of 47, within an unfenced area of about 190 sq km. A private anti-poaching force of 35-40 men, funded in part by WWF, patrol the ranch and poaching has been negligible over the past six years. Rewarding research on rhino social behaviour and reproductive patterns is being undertaken on the ranch. The anti-poaching work, monitoring and research should receive continued support.

Aberdare National Park – Kenya The rhino population is estimated to be about 60 but no systematic survey has been undertaken over the complete area. A survey is therefore necessary, and requirements for increasing protection for the rhinos must be identified and acted upon. If the intensively-managed rhino sanctuaries in Kenya are successful in breeding rhinos, Aberdare National Park may be important as a release area to absorb and allow continued rapid breeding of rhinos from these sanctuaries.

The above constitute the 10 areas of highest priority for black rhino conservation action. The next five areas on the priority list, in order of importance, are: Mount Kenya National Park–Kenya (est. 40 rhinos); Rubondo National Park–Tanzania (20-30 rhinos); Ngorongoro Conservation Area–Tanzania (20-30 rhinos); Akagera National Park–

Table 1: Estimates of African elephant population sizes between 1981 and 1987 by country within regions.²

Country by region	1981 Estimate	1987 Estimate
West Africa		
Benin	1,250	2,100
Burkina Faso	3,500	3,900
Ghana	970	1,100
Guinea	800	300
Guinea-Bissau	0	20
Ivory Coast	4,800	3,300
Liberia	2,000	650
Mali	780	600
Mauritania	40	20
Niger	800	800
Nigeria	1,820	3,100
Senegal	200	50
Sierra Leone	500	250
Togo	150	100
Sub-total	17,610	16,290
Central Africa		
Cameroon	5,000	21,000
Central African Republic	31,000	19,000
Chad	?	3,100
Congo	10,800	61,000
Equatorial Guinea	?	500
Gabon	13,400	76,000
Zaire	376,000	195,000
Sub-total	436,000	375,800
Eastern Africa		
Ethiopia	?	6,650
Kenya	65,056	35,000
Rwanda	150	70
Somalia	24,323	6,000
Sudan	133,727	40,000
Tanzania	203,900	100,000
Uganda	2,320	3,000
Sub-total	429,521	190,729
Southern Africa		
Angola	12,400	12,400
Botswana	20,000	51,000
Malawi	4,500	2,400
Mozambique	54,800	18,600
Namibia	2,300	5,000
South Africa	8,000	8,200
Zambia	160,000	41,000
Zimbabwe	49,000	43,000
Sub total	311,000	181,600
Total	1,194,331	764,410

²1981 population estimates are questionable. 1981 estimates for Cameroon, Congo, Gabon and possibly Botswana are much too low; precipitous declines in Central African Republic, Zaire, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia are more realistic (see page 5 for explanation).

