

and SADC RPRC also visited the area in June 2002.

Zambia has received tremendous support for the project from the SADC region. The Frankfurt Zoological Society has a long-standing working relationship with the Zambia Wildlife Authority and is currently working under a 10-year agreement with the Zambian government to manage wildlife resources in North Luangwa National Park, including reintroducing black rhinos.

Zambia will receive an initial founder group from South Africa National Parks (SANParks) of five black rhinos: two males and three females. This follows endorsement of the North Luangwa rhino reintroduction project by both the SADC Rhino Conservation Programme and AfRSG, as well as favourable approval by SANParks scientific, veterinary and security staff to further the

conservation of black rhinos in the subregion. The plan is for the introduction exercise to take place mid-2003. The rhinos are to be released into an electric-fenced sanctuary that has already been completed.

The rhino conservation project in North Luangwa National Park is attracting a lot of attention from the government and the public. Zambia plans to re-establish a viable rhino population, and in the longer term return numbers to original levels. This is the initial step in that direction and is based on the principle of phased introduction to ensure animal safety and adaptation. The intent is to establish a viable founder population in the park in the next three years by seeking to introduce another 15 founders to bring the total founder number up to the recommended 20 animals.

Update on the status of Botswana's rhino populations

Mercy Masedi

Assistant Wildlife Officer and Rhino Coordinator, Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Gaborone, Botswana; email: Mercy_masedi@yahoo.com

Botswana's rhino population is doing well and has continued to increase from both natural growth and the reintroduction of additional southern white rhinos. Despite losing a male in a territorial fight, Botswana's rhino population has now increased to 52.

The reintroduction of southern white rhinos to the Mombo area of Moremi has continued. Following the translocation of the first five rhinos from within Botswana (with three being bought by Wilderness Safaris from Mokolodi), a further 10 were introduced from South Africa almost a year later (November 2002) as part of an exchange programme with South African National Parks. One of the introduced males was subsequently killed in a fight giving a current population of 14. In the coming months, Botswana expects to receive an additional 21 founder animals from South Africa. These are being delivered in two batches, in April and July, and preparations are being made for their arrival.

All rhino stakeholders in Botswana have adopted the rhino management strategy, which will be published soon. Two committees have been formed. The first one is the Botswana Rhino Management Committee, chaired by a representative of the private

sector and with senior representation and a secretariat from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). The DWNP and the private sector are in partnership and together have played an important role in re-establishing Botswana's rhinos. This committee acts as an advisory body to the director of Wildlife and National Parks. It will be responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing Botswana's rhino conservation programme, including approving areas where rhinos can be conserved, and dealing with associated management and periodic action plans. The committee will also be responsible for planning all introductions in unfenced areas.

A second committee, established in Maun, comprises the Botswana police service, the Botswana defence force and the DWNP. Its focus is mainly on the security of the rhinos at Mombo in the Moremi Game Reserve.

Good news has just been received from Khama Rhino Sanctuary, which has reported the birth of a white rhino calf. Its sex has not yet been confirmed.

The anti-poaching unit is doing a good job. We have not lost any rhinos to poaching since 1993, and we hope this situation will continue.