

Chairman's Report

The problems surrounding the conservation of elephant and rhinos in Africa are daunting and will no doubt remain so. The major underlying causes of the problem are human population growth and requirements for land. While these are not our direct concern they are overriding realities and impose severe constraints on the opportunities for conservation. We have to work within the limits of those constraints and to do so with any measure of success requires firstly that we have accurate information and a good understanding of the problems which beset rhino and elephants. Secondly, whatever action we advocate or support must, if it is to endure, be politically acceptable and enjoy support in the areas where rhinos and elephants live. This requires that we have within the Group a diversity of talents and expertise and particularly those of scientists, conservationists, and administrators. In convening the Group for the present triennium I have borne these needs in mind. It is one matter to monitor, study, define and advise on effective conservation measures; it is quite another to successfully implement conservation programmes. As David Western pointed out in his last report (Pachyderm No.4), AERSG cannot tackle both parts of this equation. We need to focus on what we can do best and it seems to me that that is to provide needed scientific and technical information, assist in defining problems and priorities and advise on how they might best be tackled. Without a sound basis of information and informed analysis conservation action is very likely to founder or be wasted on the wrong things. This has been a recurrent problem in Africa and one which is in no small measure due to an enthusiasm for conservation action whether or not sufficient data exist or the underlying causes of the problem are understood. Like my predecessor I see our major function as that of providing good information on the status and trends of elephant and rhino populations in Africa, and stimulating the research and analyses necessary to generate new ideas and new approaches to the problems we face. If we can achieve this then not only will we provide a very necessary service to Government and NGO conservation effort but we will be using our expertise in the most effective manner for the conservation of elephant and rhino. Which, after all, is the major function of this group.

The change in Chairman of the Group and the change in the location of the Group headquarters from Nairobi to Harare has inevitably interrupted progress in the Group's activities. The AERSG office is now partially established in Harare. The Department of National Parks & Wildlife Management has provided office space and associated facilities. The Foundation to Save African Endangered Wildlife, SAVE, has generously provided for a secretary, some office expenses and equipped the office with microcomputers, printers and an electronic typewriter which can also be linked to the microcomputer. Wildlife Conservation International, WICI, who bore the major costs of the Group during the previous triennium is meeting the costs of publication and distribution of Pachyderm. World Wildlife Fund has undertaken to fund the Scientific/Executive Officer to the Group and meet some travel costs. Funds for travel to meetings will be provided for by UNEP through IUCN. Needless to say it has taken some time for these aspects to fall into place. The secretary was appointed at the beginning of June, the scientific officer has still to be appointed and the Group, particularly for the West African region, has still to be fully convened.

Since the Botswana meeting the Chairman and the two Vice Chairmen (Esmond Martin and David Western) met in Nairobi in February and further elaborated the priorities agreed upon at the Gaborone meeting. The current action plan for elephant and rhino is outlined below. It will form the basis for a further examination of priorities at our next meeting which is scheduled to be held at the

Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe on the 21st and 22nd September, 1985.

CURRENT ACTION PLAN

(As defined at the Botswana Meeting in September 1984 and at a meeting of the Chairman and Vice Chairmen in February 1985)

FIELD PRIORITIES

1. Northern White Rhino.

1.1 Draft a position statement on the northern white rhino following the undertaking by President Mobutu of Zaire to ensure the protection of the species in situ. The draft would be put to the group at its next meeting.

1.2 Encourage efforts to coordinate the breeding of existing captive northern white rhino.

1.3 Re-examine the evidence for the sub-specific status of the northern white rhino. This is a key factor in decisions relating to the conservation of the northern white rhino and it is essential that better evidence is available on which to judge the present stand taken on its conservation.

2. **Forest elephant.** Promote censuses of forest elephant by supporting Barnes' studies and by encouraging primate researchers to include elephant in their census work.

3. **West African forest elephant.** Establish an active arm of the AERSG in West Africa.

4. Black Rhino

4.1 **National Rhino Conservation Strategies.** National rhino conservation strategies would be encouraged initially in Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia. (A national rhino conservation plan is already underway in Kenya).

4.2 **Sub-specific status of black rhino populations.** Pan African and national rhino conservation plans need to rest on sound information on the subspecific status of black rhino populations and on sound data on the genetics and management of small isolated populations. Research on both of these aspects of the conservation biology of black rhino would be encouraged and hopefully much of it can be tackled by the AERSG Scientific/Executive Officer.

5. **Desert elephant and rhino.** Continue to monitor status of populations in Namibia, Mauritania and Mali and to urge appropriate conservation action.

6. Central African elephant and rhinos.

6.1 Promote an aerial census of elephant and rhino populations in the Central African Republic.

6.2 Investigate the legislative and administrative arrangements relating to the ivory trade in central African states since it seems likely that many conservation problems and problems relating to the control of the ivory trade may stem from an inadequate legal base.

7. **Selous Game Reserve and Luangwa and Garamba National Parks.** Promote close monitoring and improved conservation in these protected areas.

TRADE PRIORITIES

1. Rhino horn.

1.1 Investigate the source of rhino horn reaching South Korea.

1.2 Investigate the movement of rhino horn within Africa.

1.3 Examine and compare information on the decline of rhino in Africa with information on rhino horn entering the trade.

2. Ivory.

2.1 Complete surveys of the ivory trade and ivory carving industries within Africa.

2.2 Complete the computer modelling of ivory yields and harvesting strategies undertaken by Pilgram and Western and add an economic model to the population models.

Since the Botswana meeting there has been progress on some aspects of the action plan. Richard Barnes has started his studies on forest elephant in Gabon. An aerial census of elephant and rhinos in parts of CAR has been completed by Iain Douglas Hamilton and the reports indicate greatly depleted elephant populations and an absence of black rhino in areas where they were formerly abundant. Recent reports from Jean-Marc Froment and Clive Spinage suggest that black rhino may very soon be extinct in the CAR. The only other populations of the subspecies **Diceros bicornis longipes** are those in the Cameroun. Aerial surveys in the Luangwa valley have been conducted by Gilson Kaweche and Dale Lewis and these reveal further declines in the elephant populations of the Luangwa valley. On trade issues Esmond Martin has completed his study of the ivory trade in Malawi and has started a study of the ivory trade in Zambia. World Wildlife Fund have allocated funds for a project to alert doctors and pharmacists in the Far East to the plight of the rhino in an attempt to persuade them to stop prescribing rhino horn. This programme will be conducted by Esmond Martin in his capacity as a consultant to WWF.

A major development since the Botswana meeting has been the initiative taken by Governments in Africa Who, in collaboration with the CITES secretariat, have agreed to establish a quota system for the export of ivory. They have also endorsed a proposal to establish a unit within the CITES Secretariat which will monitor all international transactions in ivory. These two major developments follow the consultancy completed by Rowan Martin for CITES and in which many members assisted with information and advice. The new system only comes into operation next year and we have still to see to what extent it will serve to promote the conservation and legitimate utilisation of one of Africa's major wildlife resources as well as curb the continuing elephant poaching and illegal trade in ivory.

The preservation of viable populations of rhino in the wild in Africa remains a dominant challenge. Black rhinos in Africa now probably number less than 9 000. The catastrophic decline of black rhino in the CAR and the recent upsurge in international commercial poaching for rhino horn in Zimbabwe is indicative of the threats that persist. Since the article by Dick Pitman and Glen Tatham was written a month ago the tally has risen to 51 rhino killed by poachers since January this year. White rhino have become extinct in Mocambique for the second time and their numbers in the wild outside South Africa are not showing any great increase. The formulation of National Strategies for the conservation of rhino is more important than ever. Equally important are the studies on illegal trade and the political initiatives proposed by the Wankie (now Hwange) meeting in 1981 some of which have still to be actioned.

David Cumming

The aim of PACHYDERM, the AERSG Newsletter, is to offer members of the group, and those who share its concerns, brief research papers and factual articles on conservation matters of topical interest related to elephant and rhino conservation in Africa. Brief items of news on recent developments in the conservation of elephant and rhino are also welcome.

Readers are reminded that material published in PACHYDERM does not necessarily reflect the views of IUCN, SSC, AERSG, nor those organisations supporting AERSG and the publication of the Newsletter.

We will welcome articles of up to 3 000 words for the next two issues of PACHYDERM. Deadlines for submission will be the 6th December, 1985, and the 16th May, 1986, respectively. We will publish suitable black and white photographs and graphics and may edit articles. Research papers may be refereed.

David Cumming
Editor

The Elephants of Burkina-Faso, West Africa

C.A. Spinage

Project UPV/82/008, c/o UNDP, B.P. 575, Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso.

Burkina-Faso, formerly Upper Volta, is a country of 274 200 km² situated in the centre of western Africa surrounded by Mali, Niger, Togo, Benin, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Approximately 10% of the country lies in the sahelian zone with a rainfall of 500 to 600 mm per year during normal years; 59% is in the soudanian zone with a rainfall of 600 to 1 000 mm per year, and 31% is in the soudano-guinean zone with a rainfall of 1 000 to 1 200 mm per year. There is a long dry season from October to April. For the most part the country is flat, covered with a woodland vegetation dominated by **Terminalia** species and fire-induced grasses such as **Hyparrhenia** species. The fauna is typically West African, characterised by roan antelope, western hartebeest and Buffon's kob.

There seems to be scanty information on the previous history of elephants in this country. Formerly a French territory comprising part of the A.O.F., or Afrique Occidentale Francaise, the first game law, dated 14.11.1913. provided for the control of elephant hunt-

ing, allowing expatriate hunters a maximum of five elephants on licence per year. The next law was not until 1925 when a general hunting and wildlife law was passed, which also made provision for the first parks in the A.O.F. In November 1973 elephant hunting was forbidden for five years, the ban being renewed for a further five years in June 1979. This was superseded by a law in December 1980 banning all hunting until further notice. No reference in these laws was made to any ban on trade in ivory or other elephant products.

The elephant is the savanna elephant, the country being outside the tropical forest zone. Those that I have seen appear to be large, but the tusks are always small. This is probably due to a long history of hunting pressure which does not allow the elephants time to mature. The area is in the West African "firearm zone" where firearms and elephant hunting have probably existed since well before colonial times. Roure (1968) states that the elephants in the south-eastern area, in the region of the 'W' National Park, were heavily