

Chairman's Report African Rhino Specialist Group

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The first meeting of the newly reconstituted African Rhino Specialist Group which was convened at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 17-22 November 1992, was attended by 33 members and observers. It provided a forum for the frank exchange of information and ideas on a wide range of issues ranging from captive breeding and genetics to a variety of fairly controversial alternative conservation strategies, such as dehorning safaris, trophy hunting and the option for legalising trade.

The main aims of the meeting were, however, to review the status and trends of the rhino populations in Africa, to identify the most important populations,

and to identify the priority conservation projects requiring funding in advance of UNEP's Rhino Range States and Donors' meetings.

Rhino population size and trend

The 1992 population estimates and trends for black and white rhino are presented in Table 1 below.

Poaching continues to threaten these rhino populations throughout their range, and it is only in Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zaire that control is proving effective. The result is that black rhino numbers have continued to decline:

Table 1

COUNTRY	WHITE RHINO		TOTAL	TREND	BLACK RHINO				TOTAL	TREND
	<i>C.s. simum</i>	<i>C.s. cottoni</i>			<i>D.b. bicornis</i>	<i>D.b. kongipes</i>	<i>D.b. michaeli</i>	<i>D.b. minor</i>		
ANGOLA	Extinct?		Extinct?		10			40	50	Down
BOTSWANA	27		27	Down				5	5	Down
CAMEROON						35			35	Down
C.A.R.		Extinct?	Extinct?			Extinct?			Extinct?	Down
ETHIOPIA							Extinct?		Extinct?	
KENYA	74	Extinct?	74	Up			414		414	Stable
MALAWI								Extinct?	Extinct?	Down
MOZAMBIQUE	Extinct?		Extinct?					50	50	Down
NAMIBIA	91		91	Up	489				489	Up
RWANDA							15		15	Down
SOMALIA							Extinct?		Extinct?	
SOUTH AFRICA										
AFRICA	5297		5297	Up	20		28	771	819	Up
SUDAN		5	5	Down			Extinct?		Extinct?	
SWAZILAND	46		48	Down				6	6	Stable
TANZANIA							32	95	127	Down
UGANDA		Extinct?	Extinct?				Extinct		Extinct	
ZAIRE		31	31	Up						
ZAMBIA	Extinct?		Extinct?					40	40	Down
ZIMBABWE	249		249	Down				425	425	Down
TOTALS	5784	36	5820		519	35	489	1432	2475	

from 3,450 to 2,475 between 1991 and 1992, largely due to a drop of almost 1,000 in Zimbabwe. The largest populations occur in South Africa (819), Namibia (489) and Kenya (414); while there are only five discrete populations that number more than 100 animals. The northern white rhino population

increased from 30 to 31 between 1991 and 1992 and the southern white from 5,590 to 5,780, of which 5,300 occur in South Africa. Populations have declined in three of the seven countries, namely Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, all due to poaching.

Table 2

CATEGORIZATION OF KEY RHINO POPULATIONS : 1992			
CATEGORY	CRITERIA	BLACK RHINO	WHITE RHINO
A1	Population increasing or stable & N > 100 or N > 50% of subspecies	Cameroon Damaraland Etosha Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Kruger	Garamba Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Itala Kruger Mkuzi Pilanesburg Sabi Sand (P)
A2	Population increasing or stable & N = 51-100 or N = 26-50% of subspecies	Itala Midlands (P) Mkuzi Nairobi Selous Solio (P)	Loskop Manyaleti Ndumo Solio (P) Timbavati (P)
A3	Population decreasing) <25% & N > 50 or N > 25% of subspecies OR N > 100 even if population decreasing > 25%	Hwange	Hwange
CATEGORIZATION OF IMPORTANT RHINO POPULATIONS : 1992.			
CATEGORY	CRITERIA	BLACK RHINO	WHITE RHINO
B1	Population increasing or stable & N = 20-50	Aberderes Addo Bubiana (P) Lake Nakuru Lonely Mine (P) Luangwa South Masai Mara Ndumo Pilanesberg Save Valley (P) Waterberg Plateau	Borakalalo Botsalano Klaserie (P) Madikwe Manyaleti Matobo Midlands (P) Mkhaya (P) Tembe Tsolwane Warerberg Plateau Weenen
B2	Population decreasing but N = 20-50 in breeding contact in protected area	Chizarira Laikipia (P) Matusadona Ngorongoro	
B3	Population = 20 + dispersed outside protected area with good potential (or creating sanctuary	Kenya Forest Areas Zimbabwe	

(P) : Private land

Population trend (increase, decrease or stability) is based upon a 5-year period (1987-1992) Unless more current information is available to assess the 3year trend ((989-1992) and is contraventive to (he 5-year (rend. Trend is considered independent of any population change due to census improvement or management interventions, e.g. rhino removals or re-establishment.

Key rhino populations

In an effort to focus international attention on those populations considered to be the most important for the survival of the six recognised subspecies of white and black rhinos in Africa, a rating exercise was undertaken.

It was agreed that the most relevant parameters on which to judge the conservation value of populations were population size, the significance of the population in conserving the relevant subspecies, and the likelihood of protection measures being effective (as indicated by recent population trend). Two importance categories were recognised, namely “Key” [critically important] and “Important” [extremely valuable], and the reserves listed accordingly as shown in Table 2.

Priority conservation projects

The critical situation of Africa’s rhinos and the limited extent of funds potentially available from the international community required the group to be very selective when identifying priorities. Project proposals were rated as either “Priority”, “Important” or “Other”, and where possible detailed “Project descriptions and funding applications” were completed.

The “Priority” projects or programmes were those considered essential to secure the survival of the various rhino subspecies in Africa, and which required international funding. These are listed below:

The conservation of the western black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis longipes* in Cameroon. [Dr S. Gartlan, WWF].

Monitoring and protection of *Diceros bicornis* in Damaraland/Kaokoland, Namibia. [B. Loutit, Save the Rhino Trust].

Design of strategy to develop a sanctuary in Damaraland, Namibia. [B. Loutit, Save the Rhino Trust].

Upgrading of the anti-poaching unit. [Dr B. Joubert, Dept of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism].

Pilot project to evaluate a variety of highly sophisticated fencing/remote sensing security systems in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozo Park, Natal. [A. Conway, Natal Parks Board] -

Neighbour cooperation and fencing project, Mkuzi Game Reserve, Natal. [T. M. Scheepers, Natal Parks Board] -

Equipment requirements for antipoaching units in key rhino reserves in Zululand, Natal. [A. Conway, Natal parks Board].

Monthly aerial survey of specific areas in Kruger National park where rhinoceros poaching is prevalent. [D. J. Pienaar, National Parks Board] .

Development of a DNA typing method to establish individual specific DNA fingerprinting and forensic identity between rhino carcass tissue and rhino horn. [Prof. A. S. Greeff, Dept of Microbiological Pathology, Medunsa] .

The development of a reliable and repeatable ante mortem diagnosis test of tuberculosis infections in black and white rhino. [Dr J. P. Raath, National Parks Board].

Revision of the “Conservation Plan for the black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* in South Africa and Namibia”. [Dr P. M. Brooks, Rhino Management Group].

Development of an Action Plan for the black rhinoceros in Tanzania, and its implementation. [E. Severre, Wildlife Division, Tanzania] .

Supplementary support for development of the anti-poaching capability, Garamba National Park, Zaire. [F. Smith (WWF), M. Mesi (IZCN), Dr K. Hillman-Smith (WWF), Dr M. Atalia (IZCN)].

Supplementary support for rhino monitoring and research developments, Garamba National Park, Zaire. [Dr K. Hillman-Smith (WWF), Dr M. Atalia (IZCN), F. Smith (WWF), M. Mesi (IZCN)].

Monitoring and research in black rhino intensive protection zones, Zimbabwe. [R. B. Martin, Dept of National Parks and Wildlife Management] .

Analysis of supply/demand/speculation/ black market trading factors under different trading regimes. [Dr Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa].

Far and Middle East Trade Studies. [Dr Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa].

African trade studies. [Dr Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa].

Potential and realised resource value of African rhinos. [Dr Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa].

Contingency fund for dehorning expertise. [Dr M. Kock, Dept of National Parks and Wildlife Management, Zimbabwe].

Biochemical studies for black rhino management. [R. du Toit, WWF/Dept of National Parks and Wildlife Management, Zimbabwe].

Operating budget for African Rhino Specialist group. [Dr P. M. Brooks, ARSG].

Workshop and handbook on African rhino survey techniques. [Dr R. Brett, Hon. Richard Emslie - coordinators].

To be eligible, a project had to be linked to a "Key" population, unless dealing with trade or a

regional/continental concern. This linking of quality with the most valuable and protectable populations was designed to ensure the most effective use of international funds. "Important" projects, of which 16 were identified, were those considered to be of significant value to rhino conservation, but which should not be supported by the international community in preference to those rated as priorities; while those projects rated in the "Other" category were considered to be of only limited value. Further details on all these projects may be obtained from the ARSG Chairman.

The following projects were earmarked for special ARSG attention during 1993:

The conservation of the western black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis longipes* in Cameroon.

Development of an Action Plan for the black rhinoceros in Tanzania, and its implementation.

Employment of a Scientific Officer for African Rhino Specialist Group.

Workshop and handbook on African rhino survey techniques.

Analysis of supply/demand/speculation! black market trading factors under different trading regimes.