
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: AFRICAN RHINO SPECIALIST GROUP

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The second meeting of the African Rhino Specialist Group (ARSG), held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 23 - 27 May 1994, brought together 31 members and observers from 13 different countries.

The main aims of the meeting were to review the status and trends of the rhino populations throughout Africa, to assess the progress of those projects rated as priorities by the ARSG, to develop strategies through a number of working groups and to set priorities for the Group for 1994-95. This forum also provided an opportunity to learn about new developments in rhino conservation and to debate a number of pertinent issues. To this end, the first two days of the meeting concentrated on reports on rhino populations in the range states, and trade and related issues such as CITES, the Pelly Amendment and the US Rhino Conservation Bill.

RHINO POPULATION SIZE AND TREND

The 1993 population estimates for black and white rhino presented in the table indicate an encouraging overall trend.

The black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) population appears to have remained fairly stable since 1992, with the population now estimated at about 2,550. This is extremely significant, representing as it does the first time that a population decline has not been recorded since population estimates were first available more than 20 years ago. This may be attributed to the fact that although poaching pressure remains intensive in many areas, most of the rhinos are now confined to populations which are fairly intensively managed. With the exception of Zimbabwe (381), the largest populations, which occur in Kenya (417), Namibia (583) and South Africa (897), all recorded increases. The northern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) population increased from 31 to 32, while the southern white rhino (*C.s. simum*) increased from an estimated 5,789 in 1992 to 6,752 in 1993, of which

more than 6,300 occur in South Africa. While some of the increase of the latter subspecies can be attributed to improved accuracy of the estimates, it is clear that the population continues to grow in real terms.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

The progress achieved with the 25 projects rated as priorities was assessed, and although funding remained a problem for many, particularly good progress had been made with the projects earmarked for special ARSG attention during 1993.

Cameroon black rhino

An action plan for this threatened *D.b. longipes* population has been drawn up and funding secured. Implementation is scheduled for late 1994.

Tanzanian black rhino

An action plan has been drawn up and funding secured for some components of the programme.

ARSG Scientific/Programme Officer

Funds have been secured, and it is hoped to be operational by the final quarter of 1994.

African rhino survey techniques

This project remains unfunded.

Economics of rhino horn trade

This project began in early 1994 and should be completed by the end of the year.

CITES RESOLUTION ON RHINO CONSERVATION

The ARSG was requested at the 31st Standing Committee of CITES, held in Geneva in March 1994, to draft a resolution on the conservation of rhinos, incorporating the variety of available management options. This was achieved through one of the

Population estimates for black and white rhino for 1993.

COUNTRY	WHITE RHINO		TOTAL	TREND	BLACK RHINO				TOTAL	TREND
	<i>C.a. Simum</i>	<i>C.a. cottoni</i>			<i>D.b. bicornis</i>	<i>D.b. longipes</i>	<i>D.b. michaeli</i>	<i>D.b. minor</i>		
ANGOLA					5*			5*	10	?
BOTSWANA	18+		18+	Down				4	4	Down
CAMEROON						27*			27*	Down
ETHIOPIA							5*		5*	?Down
KENYA	87		87	Up			417		417	Up
MALAWI								2	2	New pop.
MOZAMBIQUE	Extinct ?		Extinct ?					45*	45*	Down
NAMIBIA	98		98	Up	583				583	Up
RWANDA							10*		10*	Down
SOUTH AFRICA	6376		6376	Up	23		34	840	897	Up
SUDAN		Extinct ?	Extinct ?							
SWAZILAND	33		33	Down				4	4	Down
TANZANIA							26	106*	132*	Down
ZAIRE		32	32	Up						
ZAMBIA	6		6	New pop				33*	33*	Down
ZIMBABWE	134		134	Down				381	381	Down
TOTALS	6752	32	6784	Up	611	27	492	1420	2550	Stable

* > 70% Guestimate
+ 50 - 69% Guestimate

working groups in Mombasa and the draft forwarded to the CITES secretariat for consideration. The ARSG firmly believes that standardized indicators of success need to be developed to measure the effects of illegal killing, and that trade bans alone will not eliminate poaching. The long-term goal for range states should be to become self-sufficient in rhino conservation.

NORTHERN WHITE RHINO STRATEGY

The ARSG Chairman chaired a meeting in Geneva, March 1994, at which various management options to enhance the survival of the northern white rhino were discussed with the conservation authority of Zaire. One of the working groups in Mombasa clarified the objectives of the initiative, identified some of the technical, political and economic considerations involved and drafted recommendations.

STRATEGY FOR RANGE STATES WITH SMALL POPULATIONS

It was agreed that interaction should be improved with those range states that are not currently represented on the ARSG, and that the group should encourage the undertaking of baseline surveys and the drafting of conservation plans where these are lacking.

FUNDING STRATEGY

It was agreed that the ARSG should not get directly involved in fund-raising, but rather that it should collaborate very closely with the newly-established Elephant and Rhino Facility at UNEP, one of the major tasks of which is to secure funding for these species.

At the formal meeting of the members on the final afternoon, recommendations for expanding the representation of range states on the ARSG and for including additional rhino experts were made, and goals set for 1994-95. The latter were to see the rhino programmes in Cameroon and Tanzania through to full implementation, to develop and facilitate the acceptance of a strategy for the northern white rhinos, to complete the rhino economics study, to complete a handbook on rhino survey techniques, to promote the principles inherent in the draft CITES resolution and to compile an Action Plan for African Rhinos.