

# Khama Rhino Sanctuary Update

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the fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Khama Rhino Sanctuary came to a grand finale on May 1st at the President Hotel Gaborone, when a gala dinner was held to announce the winners of

the raffle tickets and when big cheques were handed over to the sanctuary by Barclays Bank and Segwana.

Just over P64 000 was raised in the raffle for the sanctuary, which is situated just outside Serowe. We would specially like to thank OWLS members for supporting this project - SA raised R18 000 of the total!

Guest of honour, Lady Ruth Khama, drew the winning tickets. First prize was won by *Macleane Letshwiti of Gaborone* and comprised a 10-day Island Safari Lodge safari for two, including return Air Botswana flights to Maun and an Elgon Air flight over the Delta. *Mr J.M. Visser of South Africa* won the second prize of a weekend for two at Chobe Game Lodge and *Mr and Mrs Bell, also of South Africa*, won the third prize, a weekend for two at Cresta Mowana Lodge.

During the evening, an auction of an original rhino painting and three sketches by artist Rene Walkin and vintage Cape Times raised additional funds.

Patron of the sanctuary and guest speaker, Lieutenant-General SKI Khama, said: "All funds raised will go towards implementing various projects at the sanctuary. We wish to thank each one of the numerous sponsors and individuals who made this fund-raising effort such a success. As a non-profit

organisation, KRS relies solely on the support and generosity of people like this." Lieutenant Khama also only had praise for the work that OWLS has done in re-introducing rhinos to Botswana.

Main sponsors of the raffle included Afro Ventures, Air Botswana, Chobe Game Lodge, Cresta Hotels, Elgon Air and Island Safari Lodge.

Progress at the sanctuary to date includes three successful boreholes, thanks to Global Environmental Fund and Boart Drilling.

Mr Plant Hire have provided trench-digging machines to enable reticulation to the rhino bomas and a natural pan in the sanctuary.

Five bomas (holding pens) and three paddocks have been completed and two more paddocks are being constructed. Donations from Anglo-American, Debswana and De Beers Centenary also contributed to the fencing of the boundary. Housing has been provided for the sanctuary managers in the thatched rondavel. Additional accommodation is still needed for fieldworkers.

The sanctuary is still faced with the major task of raising P280 000.00 for compensation to the Serowe Brigades for developments on the ranch to which the current land owner of the sanctuary land will be relocated.

Donors appear to be under the misapprehension that these funds are to purchase land. Although the ranch is on tribal land, the Serowe Brigades have a 50-year lease on the property.

This situation has proved a major hurdle in the establishment of the sanctuary. Once this obstacle has been overcome, there is no reason why, within a period of six months, a fully operative, albeit basic, sanctuary, could not be presented to the nation of Botswana, say the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trustees.

OWLS members are most welcome to visit the Sanctuary on their way to the swamps. Travel to Serowe and ask for directions.

There are no facilities as yet, but KRS Trust hope to provide camping facilities soon.

## A First for the Department of Wildlife

At the end of May the Department of Wildlife conducted the first Rhino capture in Botswana entirely staffed and equipped from within its own ranks.

This is the first rhino capture since four were captured in the Chobe National Park in February 1993 and taken to the Khama sanctuary. One of these rhino subsequently died of poacher-inflicted gunshot wounds.

At that time, the Natal Parks Board provided the equipment and qualified personnel for the capture.

After the 1993 capture, it was not known how many rhino there were in Botswana, but in September of that year an aerial survey was conducted and other rhino were sighted.

A decision was taken that they weren't safe and plans for their removal were begun. It was, however, necessary for the department to create its own infrastructure.

In the past year, the government has allocated funding for a helicopter for the Department. "It is commendable to note that we are the only conservation organisation in Africa with a helicopter purchased by the government for its use," said a senior member

of the Department

The helicopter has a forward-looking infra-red system (FLIR) which picks up animals' heatwaves.

However, critical equipment for parts of the capture operation are still lacking and they have had to borrow radios from the anti-poaching unit as well as the unit's trackers.

This particular rhino was fairly docile on the rope and after he had been darted it was possible to walk him around instead of having to turn him over every half an hour to stop the onset of pins and needles.

The convoy escorting the trucks to Serowe included two Landcruisers and several senior members of the Department. This was to ensure the safety and security of the rhino at all times. The rhino is said to be settling down well. "The other rhinos were very curious about the new arrival but gave him a good welcome," said a spokesman for the Department.

The capture team comprised two custom-made trucks with four specially trained drivers, nine officers specifically trained in problem animal control and capture, a consultant from Namibia who was a helicopter expert, and one expert from Natal Parks Board to assist with the training of citizen staff.

"In total we had about 15 senior officers from the Department heading up different functions of the capture", said a spokesman for the team, who also commended the government for their commitment to conservation as demonstrated by the purchase of the necessary sophisticated equipment.

We wish the new rhino a jolly happy stay in Serowe and a fruitful future!

