

Recommendations

Study tours to countries with successful rhino conservation need to be done to develop capacity. For any programme to be successful there should be trained personnel to execute it. Botswana has in the past lost its rhinos due to poaching. We are now trying to prevent history from repeating itself. Therefore the need for capacity building is paramount.

Discussion

- Mr du Toit expressed concern over size and capacity of Khama RS for black rhino. Mr Theophilus said that there were negotiations with land holders to exchange land and extend the sanctuary to reach 80 sq km in total. There had been no follow up from management of KRS, and DWNP were encouraging them to move fast on this. Mr du Toit said that Khama RS could be used as part of a rhino metapopulation, but there was need to link the sanctuary with the Moremi release site. The extended sanctuary would still only be suitable for handling small numbers animals (e.g. orphans) and was not prime breeding site. Rhinos from Khama RS could be used to populate other areas. Mr Theophilus anticipated much moving of rhinos between populations in Botswana. At present there was a very lonely female at Khama RS, moved from Chobe area. Dr Emslie suggested the possible use of Khama RS for surplus males.
- Ms Masedi said that Botswana's needs from the SADC RPRC included sponsorship of study tours, and facilitation for the acquisition of black rhinos from other SADC countries.

2.6 Malawi (Roy Bhima)

Introduction

Malawi has one population of black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis minor* that is located in fenced sanctuaries in Liwonde National Park. Three pairs of male and female were introduced from South Africa in 1993, 1998 and 2000. The first pair produced two male calves in 1997 and 1999. The second pair produced a calf in early 2000. Another calf was born in October 2001. Two deaths have since occurred. In 2000 the first male adult died and a pregnant female from the third pair died. The rhino population is currently seven. During a three-day water hole count from 18 to 21 October 2002, observers noted that they saw all seven. There were no indications of newly born calves.

Prior to the introductions in Liwonde National Park, the species had been declared extinct in 1990. In the 1980s the species was confined to Kasungu National Park and Mwabvi Game Reserve only. Kasungu National Park had between 10 to 20 individuals in 1984 (Jachmann, 1984) while Mwabvi had 6-7 individuals. In 1990, these animals were not seen anymore.

Strengths

The introduction of the rhino in Liwonde National Park is intended to build a strong population in the country. As a critically endangered species worldwide and in the country, the rhino was declared a protected species soon after it was introduced in the country. This meant that the species would be accorded appropriate management priority. This ensures adequate protection to the species. The population is kept in a fenced sanctuary and protected by a team of six scouts. The park has one Warden, a Research Officer and five scouts' camps. These will ensure that the rhino are given the right attention in all areas of management.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife has been attempting to construct a boundary fence at Liwonde National since the rhino were introduced, but this has not been possible due to limited funding and vandalism to the small fence that has been constructed. The Malawi Government introduced the Pro-Poor Expenditure (PPE) funds for Government activities intended to minimise poverty amount local people in July 2000. One of the major activities in the Department of National Parks and Wildlife under this programme is to purchase fencing materials for the Liwonde National Park perimeter fence. It is hoped that the entire park (about 250 km perimeter) will be fence by 2005. The will reduce wildlife/human conflicts around the park. A wildlife public awareness campaign around the fence will also be funded under the PPE budget to minimise vandalism of the fence.

There has been the Malawi Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) Project in the park that has conducted scouts training programmes. These have assisted with the patrolling of the park to ensure that poaching is controlled. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife has recently signed a new ten-year contract with FZS to assist it with various areas of management, and a new FZS project manager has started work in the park. The project will improve some infrastructure of the park that will be beneficial to the management of the rhino. The project is already working on the upgrading of the management plan of the park through a consultant Dr R Malpas. A participatory approach involving senior members of staff at Headquarters and at the park is being used. The project will improve other resources such as radio equipment and roads. It will also enhance community-based management to improve relationship with neighbouring communities. The presence of the project in the park will definitely be of great importance.

Ecological work in the park has been carried since the park was established. The vegetation was first mapped in the 1970s and has been monitoring the vegetation inside and outside the rhino sanctuary all along. We intend to improve on the monitoring of the vegetation because there are intentions to release the rhino from the sanctuaries to the greater park and there are fears of are still going on.

Weaknesses

The major weakness affecting development of rhino conservation is funding. Although the DNPW has provided a rhino scouts team to protect the rhino, it has not provided any extra funding to the Liwonde National Park recurrent budget for the Park Warden and the Research Officer to undertake other routine work such as inspections, monitoring movements and controlling fires. The Warden and the Research Officer are located 30 km away from the rhino sanctuary and often, they have not been able to visit the sanctuary because of lack of funding. Because of the same problem, the focal point has not been able to visit the sanctuary as well.

The Department has relied a lot on the support it has received from the "J&B Circle of Friends". This is a group of businessmen who have voluntarily supported the rhino project. Although the J&B Circle of Friends has supported that the project all along, their support is not guaranteed to continue forever. Some times, there has been little collaboration between these people and the Park Warden.

The rhino population is currently very small. Its recovery rate is very low and would be affected by inbreeding. Translocation costs have been paid by others such as the South African Parks Board and the J&B Circle of Friends. The DNPW will not afford to pay any translocations and will continue to rely on others. This is a major weakness. Contact with SANP has not been maintained.

Opportunities

The South African National Parks Board and the Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife have had a very good relationship that has led to the transfer of some rhino from South Africa to Malawi. The South Africans provided the rhino and did the capturing and transfers. It is hoped that this relationship will continue to exist.

The J & B fraternity which includes the 'Care for the Rare' (UK) Programme and the 'Circle of Friends' have contributed some funding. The 'Care for the Rare' Programme funded some of the transportation from South Africa while the "Circle of Friends" have funded transportation from Chileka Airport in Blantyre to Liwonde National Park and have supported the rhino on a daily basis in the park. The role that the FZS Management Project will play has been pointed out under "strengths" above.

The Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi WESM has provided some expertise to the management of the rhino in Li r. C.O Dudley who is a member of the Society has done some ecological monitoring in the park and the sanctuary in particular. Prof. Dudley has continued to render his time to undertake some ecological surveys in the park, although travelling from Blantyre to the park has become expensive.

Threats

The heavy reliance of the Liwonde Rhino Project on external funding as has been shown ' above is an issue of concern. This cannot be relied upon completely as the donors may provide their funding on an ad hoc basis and the DNPW may not have a say on how the funding would be used. It is important that the

DNPW must have its own rhino funds that it may use as it so wishes. Poaching is a threat. Many wire snares intended to kill animals have been recovered from the park. None have been collected from the rhino sanctuary yet. It is important to maintain strict anti-poaching activities both in the rhino sanctuaries and in the park at large. Any laxity may lead to the poaching of a number of rhino individuals before the law enforcement team realises. Poachers have also set the park on fire. Fires have gone into the sanctuary causing a threat to the lives of the rhino. These illegal fires can be controlled by firebreaks and early burning programmes.

As the rhino numbers increase, the rhino sanctuary may become too small resulting into stress. There would be need to increase the size of the sanctuary. Dudley (2002) suggests a carrying capacity of 8-10 adults for sanctuaries 1 and 2 and 4-6 adults for sanctuary 3. There is pressure to limit the building of additional sanctuaries as this may hinder east-west movements of elephants in the park. The present rhino number for the whole sanctuary is 7. With new translocations and reproductions, the sanctuary will soon reach its capacity. It is therefore important to start thinking seriously about how the rhino will be treated as the population grows.

SADC Rhino Programme Activities

The SADC rhino project has supported work on the rhinos in Liwonde. Support has been given to undertake some ecological work. A report titled "Institutional and Ecological evaluation and development of guidelines for future management of black rhino in Liwonde National Park, Malawi (Chafota, Dudley & Labuschagne 2002) was from Chafota, Dudley & Labuschagne (2002) produced with funding from SADC rhino project. It is hoped that another project to establish a Rhino Stakeholders Committee and to monitor the vegetation of the park will be funded.

References

- Bhima, R. & Dudley, C.O. (1996) Observations on two introduced black rhinos in Liwonde National Park, Malawi. *Pachyderm* (21) 46-54.
- Chafota, J., Dudley C.O. & Labuschagne, R. (2002). Ecological and institutional evaluation, and development of guidelines for future management of black rhinos in Liwonde National Park, Malawi. SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation. 67Pp.
- Dudley, C.O. (2002) Ecological evaluation for Liwonde National Park, Malawi with respect to the development and management of a viable population of black rhino (*Diceros bicornis minor*). 25pp.
- Jachmann, H. (1984). Status of the Mwabvi rhino (*Diceros bicornis*). *Nyala* 10(2): 77 -90.

Discussion

- Dr Bhima said that observations in Liwonde NP by stakeholders had checked on and confirmed the numbers reported (7). There were problems with sustainable funding for the park. In past year funding had been secured from Poor Expenditure Fund. This government programme had funded construction of 50 km of perimeter fencing around Liwonde NP. There had been much vandalism in the past, and snaring using wire derived from fence. People were now learning about importance of fence with an education programme. Liwonde NP had received new funding from Frankfurt Zoological Society, with a 10-year contract signed for support to the park (12 months ago) including a project manager based at LNP. The project was assisting Liwonde NP in all areas of management, including improvement of infrastructure, and development of a management plan. The project had deployed Dr Malpas from FZS to look at management plan for Liwonde NP. The J & B circle of friends are still supporting the rhino project, and the Malawi Environmental Endowment Trust were helping with construction of boundary fence. There had been no communications with SANP who provided Malawi with rhinos in years past. Past support from SADC included the ecological and institutional evaluation (Dudley, Chafota and Labuschagne) which had provided important guidelines for future management. Dr Bhima had submitted a revised proposal to SADC RPRC for funding of a stakeholders meeting, including the different organisations mentioned with the objective of developing a plan for rhino management in the park. Vegetation monitoring costs were also requested.
- Mr Chafota said that Liwonde is an interesting ecological system. There was need to strike a balance on management of the park for rhino or other species. He asked of other parks were available for translocation of other species from Liwonde NP.
- Mr du Toit suggested that, in order to avoid future vandalism of the fence, mesh wire be used for construction of the perimeter fence, which cannot be used for creating snares.