

Botswana (Moremi Tjibae)

Introduction

Botswana like many other countries of Africa experienced the extinction of both black and white rhinos in the 19th century. Rhinos currently found in Botswana are remnants of rhino introduced into the country from south Africa between 1960 and 1980, and recently in the last decade.

Conservation measures taken to protect the remaining white rhinos

In the past both the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and the Botswana Defence Force mounted anti-poaching patrols in the northern parks especially in Chobe NP and Moremi GTR to protect the few rhinos that were present in those respective areas. Unfortunately those attempts were not successful as carcasses of poached rhinos were spotted during patrols and some poachers arrested. Between 1992 and 1996 the Department of Wildlife captured rhinos from Chobe NP and Moremi GR and relocated them to the newly established Khama Rhino Sanctuary. More rhinos have since then relocated to Botswana from South Africa with some on loan basis.

There are currently thirty-two (32) rhinos in Botswana at the following areas:

Khama Rhino Sanctuary	16
Mokolodi Nature Reserve	9
Tholo Ranch	3
Moremi Game Reserve	3
Gaborone Game Reserve	1

Trust organisations and private individuals own most of the above rhinos, only a few loaned to Khama Rhino Sanctuary are owned by the government. Compared to the past, there is maximum security, and rhinos are monitored on a daily basis.

Rhino Conservation Strategy

Botswana's current draft of the Conservation and Management Strategy covers both the black and the white rhino. Through the assistance of SADC, a workshop was held at Khama Rhino Sanctuary on the 15th January this year to try to finalise the draft of the Rhino Conservation and Management Strategy. All stakeholders of the rhino management in Botswana attended the workshop. Through the assistance of the SADC rhino coordinator, the contributions from the workshop were incorporated into the former Rhino Management Strategy. The draft is currently circulating among Rhino Stakeholders for comments. The intention is to have it finalised and approved by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks before the end of June this year. Besides sponsoring the above workshop, SADC will also sponsor four people from Botswana for training in rhino monitoring/surveillance methods. Two people will be from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, while the other two will be from Khama Rhino Sanctuary and Mokolodi Nature Reserve.

Botswana has two projects that require assistance from SADC which are as follows:

- Assessment of future management options and carrying capacity of Khama Rhino Sanctuary for black and white rhinos
- Assessment/feasibility study for a rhino IPZ in Moremi GR, and if possible adjacent areas (initially for white rhinos, but with potential for black rhinos later) based on opportunities for partnership for security and monitoring of rhinos between the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and private concessionaires.

It is important to carry out assessments in the two areas, as an increase in rhino population is anticipated. It is hoped the assessment will come up with a well-defined programme for rhinos that will guide us in future to avoid mistakes of the past. It should also be noted that there are probably three to four rhinos in Moremi GR according to reports received from the area, and this makes the place ideal for future rhino release. Besides rhinos in the above-mentioned areas, reports of migrant rhinos from Hwange NP in Zimbabwe have been received. In January this year a hand raised black rhino strayed into Botswana from Hwange NP. The rhino was captured and relocated back to Zimbabwe. A few days later two (2) white rhinos were seen in the area and driven back to Zimbabwe.

It should be noted that the private sector or non-governmental reserves have played an important part in the management of rhinos in Botswana; only a few rhinos are managed by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. It is the intention of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to build up a viable population of both black and white rhinos that will be managed by avoiding mistakes that have led to rhino extinction as in the past.

Discussion

Mr Tjibae said that two rhinos had recently been sighted in Moremi GR. Mr Brooks said that the problem in the past in Botswana had been security. He asked if there were any plans to increase capacity for DWNP to protect rhinos (e.g. in Moremi GR). Mr Tjibae said that the Maun Anti-Poaching unit was based 70 km from Moremi, and BDF were also available for assistance. All rhinos released would be fitted with radio-collars. Mr du Toit said that it had been easy for the SADC programme to engage with the rhino conservation process in Botswana. Strategic planning was being followed by Assessment and Implementation. Mr Nzima asked if Botswana had plans for any transboundary rhinos. Mr Tjibae said that there was no clear provision in the rhino strategy apart from monitoring. Ms Msipa said that the area south of Hwange NP was not suitable for rhinos, hence the rhino movements observed. Mr Tjibae said that there was a plan to supply 10 + 10 white rhinos to Botswana in the next year, available from SANP and NWPTB. Negotiations were underway for custodianship by Jwaneng and Orapa Game Reserves.

Malawi (Roy Bhima)

Introduction

The black rhino, *Diceros bicornis minor*, became extinct in Malawi in 1990. Today the country has one introduced population in Liwonde National Park. A pair (male and female) was introduced in 1993 and was released in a fenced sanctuary of 13 km². A second pair was introduced into an 18-km² sanctuary in 1998 and a third pair was introduced in a 7-km² sanctuary in 2000. All were introduced from South Africa. The first pair has reproduced twice and the second pair has reproduced once. The first calf to be dropped was exchanged with one of the two introduced in 2000, and the second bull died in a fight with the first bull when their sanctuaries were combined. The population today is seven rhinos.

Management

The rhinos are patrolled by a team of six scouts. Two scouts patrol the rhino in turns, 24 hours every day and exchanges after five days. The first team in 1993 went to Kruger National Park in South Africa for training in field techniques. The J & B Circle of Friends has supported the rhino programme with construction and maintenance of the electric fence around the sanctuary. Since the rhinos were first introduced in 1993, there has been no security problem.

The rhino sanctuary is located in the middle of the park. Its area has been increasing as more and more rhinos have been introduced. It now is about 38 km² and it is almost dividing the park into two, blocking the movements of other animals, particularly elephants. A management plan is being planned to consider how best to overcome this problem.

The SADC Rhino Coordinator, Dr Rob Brett, visited the Liwonde rhino sanctuary in February 2001. Two members of staff from Liwonde National Park have been nominated to participate in the forthcoming rhino monitoring workshop organised by the SADC Rhino Programme to be held in South Africa. It is hoped that this will enhance the management programme in the park.

Discussion

Dr Emslie asked about the animals brought into Liwonde in the last years (a female from South Africa and the male from NWPTB). Dr Bhima said that one of the animals moved in had been exchanged with a male calf born in Liwonde (moved back to Kruger NP), making the sex ratio at Liwonde biased heavily towards females. Dr Brooks asked about security for the whole park. Dr Bhima said that there were four scout camps and that more scouts would be brought in. There was concern about the viability of the area without complete fencing of the park. Dr Knight said that the presently fenced area was a maximum of 44 km². The original sanctuary had been necessary for the donation of rhinos, and was a pragmatic option, necessitating sequential stocking of the park.