

Mammals

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Contributed by Tim Coonan (National Park Service, Channel Islands National Park) (Tim_Coonan@nps.gov), Devra G. Kleiman (Zoo-Logic, LLC) (dgkleiman@aol.com), and Peter Schuyler (Channel Islands Fox Recovery Coordination Group, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) (icspts@msn.com)

Re-introductions and translocations of large mammals in Southern Africa

Black Rhino Re-introduction to Zambia

The black rhinoceros, once extinct, returned to Zambia during 2003, when five animals were released in a sanctuary in North Luangwa NP (Re-introduction News 23). The first calf was born in 2005. During June 2006, 10 additional rhinos were flown in: three males and seven females from the Eastern Cape, Kruger NP and Pilanesberg NP. The local community attended a 'hand-over' ceremony, when the rhinos were given local names and ceremonial blessings. During the following weeks, each rhino was fitted with an implant radio transmitter and freed from its pre-release pen into a new, 150 km² fenced sanctuary, adjacent to the first sanctuary. Initially radio tracking was undertaken from a light aircraft or vehicle. Later, animals were tracked on foot, to determine their condition and the variety of browse eaten. Two monitoring teams were deployed. In the first sanctuary, they aimed to see and identify each rhino every month. In the new sanctuary, they aimed to hear the signal of each rhino every three days and to see each rhino every fortnight. Several rhinos initially lost condition after release. Even after being freed, some drank from a boma trough. But others found pools in the Lubonga River - although flow had ceased, pools in the river bed lasted the dry season.

A young cow that was not eating satisfactorily was the first rhino freed during 2006, because it was hoped that she would feed better in the sanctuary. She was monitored closely, but was never seen feeding. She was immobilized twice and examined by a veterinarian. However, she died a month after release. Her carcass was found quickly and a vet conducted a post mortem examination. She had a

large, closed, pus-filled abscess in the abdomen, many ulcers in the stomach mucosa and numerous bot parasites in the stomach. Probably she died primarily because of a gastrointestinal problem with gut stasis, possibly caused by stress and the change in diet, with the abscess as a contributing factor. The new sanctuary fence was broken often, particularly soon after construction, by buffalo, zebra and elephant. One rhino was pregnant when she arrived at Luangwa and she broke out of the sanctuary soon after release. After part of the fence was removed temporarily, she was herded back into the sanctuary using a helicopter. However, she broke out again and this time she was left where she was, while Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) officers were deployed nearby. During early October, they found the spoor of a baby rhino - only the second born in Zambia during the last 20 years. With the arrival of the second batch of rhinos and the training of Wildlife Police Officers in North Luangwa, ZAWA assigned 15 recruits to rhino security. Although poaching incidents in the Game Management Areas to the west, north and east of the park declined during 2006, cf. 2005, there was increased poaching by well-organized commercial gangs in the Munyamadzi corridor to the south.

This re-introduction is an international initiative between the Governments of Zambia and South Africa, under the umbrella of the SADC Regional Program for Rhino Conservation (RPRC). The implementing organizations include ZAWA, South African National Parks, the South African North West Parks Board and the Eastern Cape Parks Board, Frankfurt Zoological Society's North Luangwa Conservation Program (NLCP) and Frankfurt Zoo.

Large Mammal Re-introductions to Limpopo National Park

The establishment of transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) is a recent initiative in southern Africa. Their proponents hope that TFCAs will support sustainable economic development, particularly of tourism. During 2002, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) was proclaimed, with the signing of a treaty by Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The GLTP is intended to link Limpopo NP in Mozambique, Kruger NP in South Africa and Gonarezhou NP in Zimbabwe, as well as intervening communal areas, to form a single conservation area of 35,000 km², managed as a single unit across international boundaries. Formation of the GLTP is the first phase in the establishment of a larger transfrontier conservation area that will include Mozambique's Banhine and Zinave NPs, the Massingir and Corumana areas and areas in between, as well as private and state-owned conservation areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe that border on the transfrontier park.

Development of the new Limpopo NP, formerly Coutada (hunting area) 16, is important to the development of GLTP. Limpopo NP is c.10,000 km² and immediately east of Kruger NP. For many years, it was separated from Kruger by a wildlife-proof fence. The Mozambican civil war saw the elimination of many animals from Coutada 16 and its occupation by numerous people and domestic livestock. Now the Peace Parks Foundation is assisting the National Directorate for Conservation Areas to develop this park. Activities have included de-mining, a