

## Relocating rhinos: part three

*Previous issues of The Horn have told the story so far of the return of black rhino to Zambia.*

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**A**s new project leaders with Frankfurt Zoological Society's North Luangwa Conservation Project (NLCP), Claire Lewis and Ed Sayer are starting to get their feet under the table with everyday operations and administration. But neither of them is new to Zambia or the National Park...

Ed was born in the UK but spent many years growing up in Lusaka in the 1980s and many weekends visiting Zambia's National Parks. These family visits left a deep impression and, after dutifully completing studies in the UK, he returned to Zambia in 2000 to fulfil his childhood dream of working in the Zambian bush. The easiest route into the industry began through leading walking safaris in South and North Luangwa National Parks, interspersed with long stints of voluntarily assisting the Zambian Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), through the South Luangwa Conservation Society, with law enforcement work.

I was also born in England, but chose a slightly less conventional route, beginning

my African adventures travelling the continent independently and then leading overland truck trips. This developed into a more sedentary life as a guide and manager in the safari camps of the Luangwa Valley, where Ed and I met.

In 2005 we were offered the opportunity to manage a wildlife conservation project in Tanzania and in 2007 successfully repatriated two zoo-bred East African black rhino to the western Serengeti. However, to be part of a greater rhino conservation programme and, more specifically, back in Zambia, was always a goal Ed and I shared.

In December 2007 we returned to Zambia and received a warm welcome from old friends and new. The sight of the Luangwa valley reaching its first flush of green after the long parched dry season brought back many happy and soggy memories of life in the bush in the rains.

There are 16 rhino already enclosed within the well-protected chain of electrified sanctuaries - two of the females have successfully delivered the first Zambian-bred rhino calves for decades, named by local communities Twatasha (meaning "we thank you") and Bunyantanshi (meaning "progress"). NLCP has 19 staff, all of whom have been with the project for many years. As the project progresses into its next phase, the expertise and experience of these men will be key. The wealth of knowledge they bring to the operation cannot be underestimated.



ALL IMAGES: DURICAN PURCHASE

Claire and Ed

Twenty-four rhino monitoring scouts form the core of the biggest ZAWA law enforcement unit in the country; they are protecting and monitoring the rhinos at the heart of a greater law enforcement effort. With an effective project management area of almost 17,000 km<sup>2</sup>, including the Park and surrounding Game Management Areas, the scale of the work ahead can seem daunting. Maintaining a sense of pride and improving morale among the scouts is vital to ensuring the rhino re-establishment programme in Zambia remains the flagship conservation effort for the whole country.

In the next few months we will concentrate on working with ZAWA in stepping up law enforcement activities, rhino monitoring and training before the arrival of five more rhino in May 2008. Teams will be used to refurbish and construct new holding bomas for the rhino and the conservation education programme is being expanded to include 20 schools in the local communities. Successful breeding is only part of the story, however, and following the last and final translocation in 2009, the project can only truly be deemed a success when the fences are removed and the rhino once more roam free in the Luangwa Valley, on Zambian soil.

IMAGES: NLCP

The ZAWA rhino law enforcement unit

### Support needed

The EAZA Rhino Campaign awarded £11,273 to NLCP in October 2006 for rhino monitoring work and education programmes. We now need to help Ed and Claire raise US \$6,000 for an intelligence and informer network, and another US \$15,000 to replace worn out uniforms and monitoring equipment. Anyone interested in helping with this should contact [cathy@savetherhino.org](mailto:cathy@savetherhino.org)