

Kenya:

Phase Two of the Chyulu Hills rhino project

With the help of the IRF and Save the Rhino International, an application to the US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) was successfully granted for a total of US \$42,690 to procure the necessary equipment for water provision and running costs.

Richard Bonham, Chyulu Hills rhino project

This funding covers the following:

- Payment of salaries and rations for some of the community game scouts
- Purchase of binoculars, GPSs (delivered in February 2005) and night vision scopes (on order from the USA)
- Procurement of a tractor and 8,000-litre water bowser
- Running costs for the above
- Construction of water tanks and water pans within the rhinos' core area
- Construction of a water tank at the KWS rhino unit headquarters

We had hoped that, by now, the water pans would have been built, removing the need for the rhinos to travel out of the National Park into the community grazing lands in search of water. But as one of the conditions of the USFWS's grant for building the water pans, the KWS had to agree to increase the number of rangers deployed, in order adequately to protect the rhinos. The ramifications of the sacking of the KWS Director (see the Tsavo East story) has meant that all new ranger recruitment and training was also put on hold. It will be several months before the new intake is ready. So the decision has been made to go ahead with the construction of water pans on the community land, where our Community Scouts are sufficient in number. Construction of the water tanks and drinking troughs will also happen within the National Park boundaries, but only when the new KWS rangers are actually in place will those troughs be filled. In 2004 we confirmed two rhino deaths, both due to poaching. One was a skeleton found by

the Community Scouts, which we believe was snared in late 2003 or early 2004. The second was a rhino bull found dead by KWS rangers, but still with its horn. Examination of the carcass, which was approximately 4-5 days old, indicated that it had stepped on a nail trap, which had caused septicaemia. A further, though unconfirmed, report came in via informers that a third rhino had been shot by bows and arrows and the horn sold. No carcass has been found, so the information is yet to be verified.

The KWS and Community Scouts made a total of 81 arrests within the rhino area during 2004. A total of 130 snares were recovered, of which approximately 80 were considered to have been specifically set for rhino. Meat poaching continues in the proximity of the rhino habitat and illegal harvesting of wild olive for the curio trade is rampant. Charcoal burning, which has always been a problem, is much more in control as a result of regular patrolling; this activity is much harder to hide due to the telltale plumes of smoke from the kilns.

On a brighter note, there were two births in 2004. One calf's tracks were first seen in September, and the other's in November.

Phase Three, which is yet to be costed or feasibility tested, will be the construction of an electrified fence on the east side of the Chyulu Hills. This will, we hope, prevent incursions from Makindu and the inhabited areas on the main Nairobi-Mombasa road.



ALL IMAGES: CATHY DEAN



In January 2005, Save the Rhino transferred approximately £4,000 raised from the Chyulus-Selous party to the Chyulu Hills. This will be used to pay for fuel for the patrol vehicle and for salaries and rations for the Community Scouts.