



He is standing in an open patch of ground, not too far from the lakeshore. Once the drug cocktail has been prepared, the vet and helicopter are airborne. Rapid communication between the aircraft pilot and the helicopter pilot mean that the helicopter and vet reach the rhino within minutes. With the helicopter and plane working together, the trigger is pulled and the rhino is darted. It's been only three minutes since the helicopter took off.

This rhino is called Pfumbe. He is a large male bull. He will be de-horned and have a radio collar fitted so that we can continue to monitor his movements - and thus afford him maximum protection.

Although we return to the airstrip, the vet and field crew work on Pfumbe for another 45 minutes. At 9:50 a second report comes in, this time from a different call sign, 3 Romeo; they also have a rhino visual. At 10:15 another call sign, 3 Mike, reports a rhino and during our response to 3 Romeo we spot a fourth rhino from the air! It has been a very busy, but extremely successful first day of the Matusadona rhino ops.

A lot of work over the last nine months has led us to this point. With funding from Save the Rhino International, the Zambezi Society has carried out an intensive

monitoring project - going into the field with experienced trackers and visually locating as many rhino as we can. We use this information during the ops, so we know in which areas we need to look for the rhino.

Once the ops have been completed, our task is to continue the monitoring. Rhino with radio transmitters either in their horn or on a collar can be located quickly and easily, which means we can contribute to their protection with great efficiency. We also have to locate and monitor the rhino that haven't been immobilised, so that we can organise a follow-up operation to further improve the monitoring.

It is thanks to the financial support from organisations like Save the Rhino that the Zambezi Society and its dedicated field staff (Godwin - Field Coordinator, Daniel, Twoboy and Bekithemba - trackers) can carry out the essential pre- and post-op monitoring required for a comprehensive protection strategy.

£10,000

Save the Rhino International gave £10,000 to help fund the recently ended immobilisation operation, and is also funding the post-op monitoring.

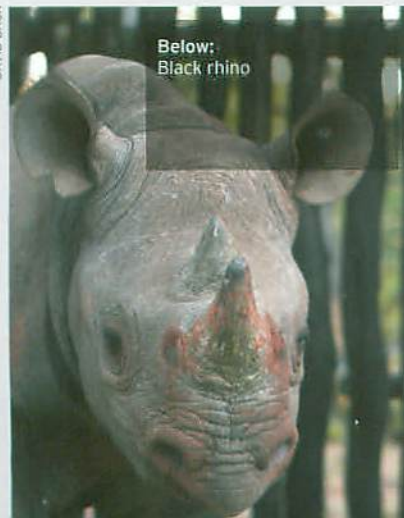


Zambia:

Relocating rhinos

David Back

DAVID BACK



Below:
Black rhino

David is one of a group aiming to raise £300,000 for rhino projects in three years

I have been in love with Africa since I was a photographic guide in Zambia during the 80s, and encountering black rhino there left a lasting legacy. They became my favourite animal. Saddened and horrified, I watched these once abundant creatures disappear as they were poached to extinction here over a four-year period.

With my 50th birthday looming on the horizon, I decided that it was time to put something back. Targeting one species a year, we plan to raise £100,000 a year. Three projects will benefit from this money. The first is a programme to reintroduce black rhino into the North Luangwa in Zambia. The second is a similar reintroduction programme but with indian rhino, possibly moving rhino between Kaziranga and Manas National Parks in Assam, India. And lastly, we will select a yet to be identified project to support one of the two rarest rhinoceros species, either the Javan or Sumatran.

This June I witnessed the fantastic sight of ten South African rhinos arriving (by a huge Hercules aircraft!) in North Luangwa National Park, knowing that funds raised by us had helped to pay for their air transport to the Park. A gift from South Africa, the rhinos were destined for a 147km² sanctuary adjacent to the already successful 55km² area home to five rhinos brought to Zambia in May 2003. Swelling the rhino population to fifteen, with further possibility to bring five more animals, I felt immensely proud to be part of such an exciting project. I am so glad to see the animals back in their natural home, and to have raised a significant part of this year's total fund is a dream come true.

€16,000

North Luangwa National Park's rhino reintroduction programme will also benefit from the EAZA Rhino Campaign, which aims to raise €16,800 for enhanced security and an expansion of the environmental education programme.