

A tribute to Blythe Loutit

Blythe Loutit, co-founder of the Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), renowned conservationist and artist, passed away on Tuesday 14 June 2005 aged 64 after a long illness. Blythe was the leading force in the conservation and protection of the desert-dwelling black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) in the Kunene Region, northwest Namibia. SRT was set up to stop the slaughter of the

desert-adapted black rhino surviving in the Kunene Region (former Damaraland and Kaokoland). It was never easy - the early days were marked by much frustration, many tears flowed over the failure to stop the poaching, the difficulty in raising funds and criticism levelled at the Trust over the way it was being run. But if one could choose the qualities that most reflect Blythe's personality, they would probably be her sense of humour and her stubbornness - a strong combination. She never gave up.

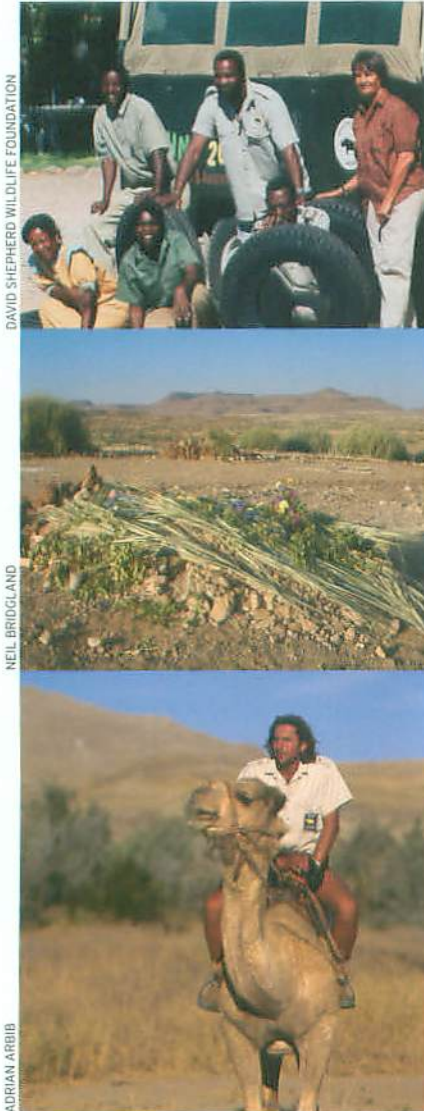
SRT became the first non-governmental organisation actively to involve the local community in their conservation efforts. Tourism, craft making, guiding and direct employment benefited the area and SRT became a household name. Over the years, SRT developed a system of monitoring and established a rudimentary computer database for each individual rhino. Today the black rhino population in the north-western regions of Namibia is one of the best documented in the

world. While in 1985 only 56 rhinos were counted during the first census, there are now well over 130 records of individual rhino.

Seven rhino generations have been monitored, loved and respected in Damaraland. Blythe has moved on, but her spirit of dedication and her love of rhino and all other animals will remain. On behalf of all rhino lovers and conservationists, we wish her peace, knowing that she has done during her lifetime what few people could ever have achieved.

Her husband Rudi survives her and is continuing her work.

Pierre du Preez,
Conservation Scientist,
Ministry of Environment
and Tourism



In the spring 2005 issue of *The Horn*, we reported the death of Mike Hearn, Research Director of Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) in Namibia, at the tragically young age of 32. Donations in his memory now total just over £11,100, and we have made an initial grant from that of £4,500 to SRT to support the camel monitoring team's work. The rest of the funds needed to cover this for one year have come from the Desert Trek Namibia.

Mike Hearn's legacy

Information and results derived from the monitoring patrol teams will be coordinated and documented by a local SRT consultant for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), with special input from local communities. SRT will design methodologies to assess habitat within the range area, and explore the possibility of expansion of the current range area for the rhino. The use of a GIS will be investigated to assess the role resource abundance has on ranging patterns, limiting density, breeding performance and health of the rhino population across the entire range area. This should enable SRT better to understand the role of density-dependent and density-independent factors in regulating population performance of the desert rhino, which live in such arid rangelands. The project will extend to include an assessment of seasonal fluctuations in the resources.

The second component of the project will determine the most effective sites

to for monitoring human and vehicular access into the rhino range areas i.e. safari tours and self-drive tourism. These points will focus on gathering data on routes used by tourists, and the frequency and movement of livestock, allowing the role of human disturbance in the current range area to be quantified. These findings will contribute to a feasibility study being undertaken by the MET following a Cabinet submission to expand Namibia's protected area network beyond the Skeleton Coast and Etosha National Parks to include the rhino area.

The other £6,600 was held as restricted funding for SRT, and we have sent that over with the next installment of the Desert Trek Namibia funding. We will ask SRT to inform us how they use the money.

Cathy Dean, Director