

Namibia:

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE'S A RHINO WANDERING THROUGH YOUR VILLAGE

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But what if the wildlife is not in an NP? What if it's wandering through your village? Or your back garden? And we're not talking hedgehogs here, or the shadow of a solitary, graceful fox. We're talking several tons of it in the shape of an elephant seriously interested in your well. We're talking a black rhino grazing the same sweet grass plains as your goats and the place where you've traditionally hunted game for your pot.

Much of Namibia's wildlife species regard NP boundaries as inconvenient. The majority of cheetahs here (30% of the global population) live outside NPs.

And in the rugged Kaokoveld, in northwest Namibia, where Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) works, the uniquely adapted "desert rhinos" and "desert elephants" live in a vast area with no legal conservation status at all.

How should we keep them safe? How do we maintain biodiversity?

Enter the concept of Community-Based Conservation (CBC). When Blythe Loutit, founder of SRT, saw the appalling slaughter of rhino in the Kaokoveld back in the early 1980s, she also saw the tremendous skills the local people possessed and the potential wealth that wildlife offered them. "Poacher turned gamekeeper" as the English saying goes. That was her idea. Get the locals involved, not in killing, but in conserving. Here was an extraordinary natural asset that could, if well managed, assist in significant and sustainable development.

For a long time some conservationists in Africa relied on the "fines and fences" approach. It worked in many scenarios but in SRT's territory, involving the local communities was the obvious way to go. Fencing 30,000 square kilometres of mountains, desert, arid, flash flood river valleys...well, no. Not feasible.

SRT's CBC has been flagged as a success. From the first, the regional governor, local chiefs and local people were involved. This support was instrumental in saving a rhino population that had declined from 300 in 1970 to only 50 animals by 1982. SRT's recently completed census indicates that the population has now increased nearly three-fold.

However, these CBC approaches could never have worked in isolation. Conservation here has relied on a "suite" of different approaches to the declining populations of charismatic megafauna; rhino, elephant, also oryx and the springbok herds. Law enforcement by government rangers from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and by officers from the Protected Resources Unit of the Namibian Police, who are responsible for policing the illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn, has been vital.

What of the local communities? SRT has assisted in establishing a thriving eco-tourism industry that brings direct benefits to the people who share their land with the rhinos and other creatures. Nothings perfect. Tourism here is dependent on the whimsy of human actions, politics and market forces, very often outside of the local people's control. To take one example, in Namibia's Caprivi Strip, tourism and crafts are only now



beginning to recover from the overflow of the war in Angola, just over the border.

Finally, what have we learnt? Well, there is no blueprint for successful CBC approaches; they are organic processes that need constant study to understand how livelihoods and conservation intervention strategies interact. Second, education in schools and developing new, sustainable livelihoods for the people that share habitat with wildlife are vital, but these must run alongside conventional enforcement. Resource managers at the local level or within government agencies are still a long way from finding the

appropriate means of sharing benefits and responsibility for biodiversity management, and identifying who is accountable. However, CBC approaches offer hope that reconciling both conservation and development objectives can be possible.

Save the Rhino has made a three-year grant totalling £73,000 to SRT, which helps pay for patrol vehicles, salaries, camping and monitoring equipment. The last installment is due at the beginning of 2004.

Zimbabwe:

Fuel for thought

Cathy Dean

Save the Rhino has provided emergency funding for equipment for rhino monitoring teams in Bubiāna and Save Valley Conservancies, where our funds have helped pay for cameras, binoculars, new uniforms and boots, backpacks and camping equipment. We have also paid for anti-poaching patrols in Sinamatella Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ) in Hwange National Park and in Matusadona National Park.

Despite all the bad news stories in the press, there are some successes to report. In Matusadona IPZ, the UK Rhino Group's IPZ Emergency Fund (to which Save the Rhino has contributed £5,000) has paid for an enhanced protection

programme. Over the last six months the rhino patrol teams have made 119 sightings of spoor, 105 of middens, 24 of feeding stations and 9 sightings of rhinos. As Adrian Wilson of the Zambezi Society reports, "We have managed to accomplish a significant amount of data collection and ground patrol coverage, and these activities have become part of the fabric of the station management, and contributed to a greatly enhanced field profile. However



one cannot afford to be complacent; this level of operational visibility will need to be apparent for the foreseeable future."

Much has been written in the newspapers about the problems facing Zimbabwe: escalating fuel prices, food shortages and the deteriorating infrastructure, let alone the political situation.

By providing regular, albeit small, grants, we hope that we can help the IPZs and conservancies to keep operating. Zimbabwe's wildlife will be vital to the future of the country.