

# Cash and the rhinoceros

As Director of Save the Rhino, my main responsibility is to raise as much cash as possible for rhino conservation projects. (The collective noun for rhinos is a "crash" - if we don't raise more funds there'll be no longer be the need for such a charming collective noun.)

Cathy Dean

One of the things that fascinates me - or perhaps I should say "gets my goat" - is how the British public decides to whom to give its hard-earned money. Of course, it's admirable when anyone makes a charitable donation, and I think it's even better when the cause chosen is wildlife or environmental conservation. So the news in a report produced by NCVO/GAF (National Council for Voluntary Organisations/Charities Aid Foundation) on charitable giving in the UK in 2002, that animal charities come third, after medical research and children or young people, can only be good. Can't it?

I've had a look on the Charity Commission's website at some of the most obvious charities to see how much each received in income during the last published accounting year. So, for those of you who share my curiosity, here are a few statistics: the Dogs Trust, £20.7 million; Cats Protection League, £19.2 million; the Donkey Sanctuary, £16.2 million. Try counting the number of greyhound or rabbit charities.

Let's compare these with a few charities focusing on endangered species or habitats. Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, £910,000; Save the Rhino, £480,000; Galapagos

Conservation Trust, £290,000. Well, that puts it in perspective. Saving donkeys is perceived by donors as 56 times more important than saving the Galapagos. Finding homes for an unwanted litter of kittens appeals to more people than ensuring the survival of the mountain gorilla or the northern white rhino.

Why do people give more to charities that focus on domestic animals or pets? By and large, these species aren't threatened. Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised. We usually tend to care about causes with which we have a personal relationship, or direct experience. Not everyone can afford to go to Africa and issues like human-wildlife conflict must seem rather far away and irrelevant.

Charities like Save the Rhino, zoos and other NGOs must work to ensure that the importance of wildlife and habitat conservation is better explained and understood. Otherwise, in 30 years' time, when our children or grandchildren are growing up, we might have to watch reruns of old David Attenborough films because the real animals have died out. Unless, of course, we've succeeded in turning them into pets.



## Events Schedule:

Borneo Rhino Challenge  
Rhino Mayday  
Edinburgh Marathon  
Chester Zoo Rhino Weekend  
Woburn Rhino Run  
Rhino Climb Kilimanjaro  
New York City Marathon  
Chyulus-Selous  
Third Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture  
Flora London Marathon  
Desert Trek Namibia

Saturday 1 - Friday 14 May 2004  
Thursday 20 May 2004  
Sunday 13 June 2004  
Saturday 10 / Sunday 11 July 2004  
Sunday 18 July 2004  
Friday 1 - Monday 11 October 2004  
Sunday 7 November 2004  
Friday 12 November 2004  
Thursday 10 March 2005  
April 2005  
Saturday 4 - Monday 13 June 2005