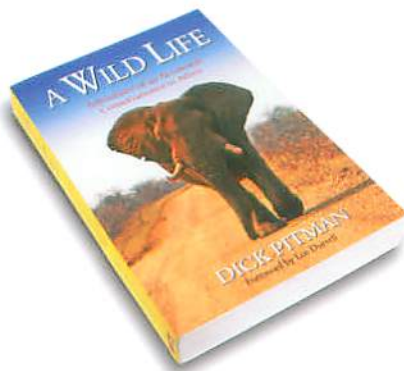


## Book review: **A Wild Life** by Dick Pitman

**Cathy Dean**  
Director

Dick is the former Director, and now Board member, of the Zambezi Society, whom I met in February 2006 after a visit to Matusadona National Park in Zimbabwe.



Perhaps it's not surprising that I feel I know Dick better now, having just read his immensely amusing autobiographical account of his life as an accidental conservationist. Dick first turned up in Rhodesia (as it then was) in 1977 and then progressed, in haphazard fashion, through careers as a journalist, military duty, magazine editor, National Parks office and safari guide, before ending up in charge of the Zambezi Society.

And there were just as many hazards as 'haps.' One early trip to Mana Pools, with Dick acting as film cameraman, saw tents trashed by elephants as they searched for oranges. As Dick explains:

*"Some bright tourist who had left his telephoto lens at home had recently rolled a couple of oranges at a passing elephant, to see if it could be tempted within range for a close-up portrait... Unfortunately, the idea caught on, with both elephants and tourists. Every wannabee wildlife photographer had started doing it. The Mana campsite had begun to look like a psychedelic bowling green in a thunderstorm, with oranges rolling all over the place, elephants chasing after them like kittens after balls of wool, and a constant flicker of flashbulbs."*

Gerald Durrell's widow Lee, writing in the foreword, likens Dick's writing to Gerry's. There's the same obvious love of the landscape and of the creatures in it, a wry take on officialdom and bureaucracy, and he's not shy about laughing at his own mistakes.

For the reader, who cannot but be aware of the decline of Zimbabwe's National Parks, there's an inevitable sadness. Reading about the numerous rhino that used to inhabit Mana Pools, where now there are none, makes me wish that I'd visited in those glory days. But Dick's enough of an optimist to end the book not looking back, but forwards.

### Interested?

Dick Pitman: "A Wild Life: Adventures of an accidental conservationist in Africa." Paperback. Summersdale Publishers, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-84024-571-4 RRP £7.99

Available from Save the Rhino at our secure online shop, [www.savetherhino.org](http://www.savetherhino.org). And see page 4 for current news on conservation in Matusadona National Park.

## Black rhino in the Midlands: emergency measures

**John Gripper**  
Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust

The Midlands Black Rhino Conservancy in Zimbabwe was formed in 1988 by a group of farmers and is based near Kwe Kwe, a small town on the main road between Harare and Bulawayo.

The Conservancy contains a breeding group of black rhino and employs a Conservator, five armed rhino guards and rhino monitors who act as a rapid response team. In addition each of the farmers has their own farm guards who also monitor and protect the rhino.

In the last three years local poaching has increased and there has been widespread snaring of wildlife for meat. The snares are made from wire stolen from the perimeter fences which have to be constantly repaired. Since October 2004 we have had 20 black rhino killed by poachers and as a result had to increase our security as well as an emergency measure of dehorning all the adult rhino.

I visited the Conservancy early in July 2007 and am pleased to report that, as a result of emergency measures we took earlier this year and the appointment of Norman English as conservator, there have been no further cases of the shooting of black rhino by poachers in the Conservancy since last December.



### Grant

In July we agreed on a number of new measures to improve our protection of the black rhino. We received €15,000 from the EAZA Rhino Campaign in June, and soon hope to use these funds to increase the number of guards within the Conservancy, as well as purchase vital new supplies, monitoring equipment and vehicular support for them. Pending another update in September, another €15,000 being held on our behalf by the Campaign may be used for more guard support and rhino darting ops - we may need to dehorn or translocate some of the rhinos within the Conservancy.