

# Namibia:

## A year in rhino land

On 1 June I travelled to Namibia to meet the staff of the Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), an organisation that Save the Rhino has supported for over 10 years. It is also where **Michael Hearn**, after whom my Internship is named, was Director of Research.

**Lizzie Whitebread**  
Michael Hearn Intern

I landed at seven in the morning and was met by Simson Uri-Khob, Director of Research and employee of SRT for almost 17 years. It was brilliant to meet him, especially as he picked me up in his shiny new Landcruiser, complete with stickerage. It was great to see it up and running. SRT had only bought it the week previously with £26,000 donated through Save the Rhino by the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation; my first major success in applying to a grant-giving trust.

IMAGES: LIZZIE WHITEBREAD

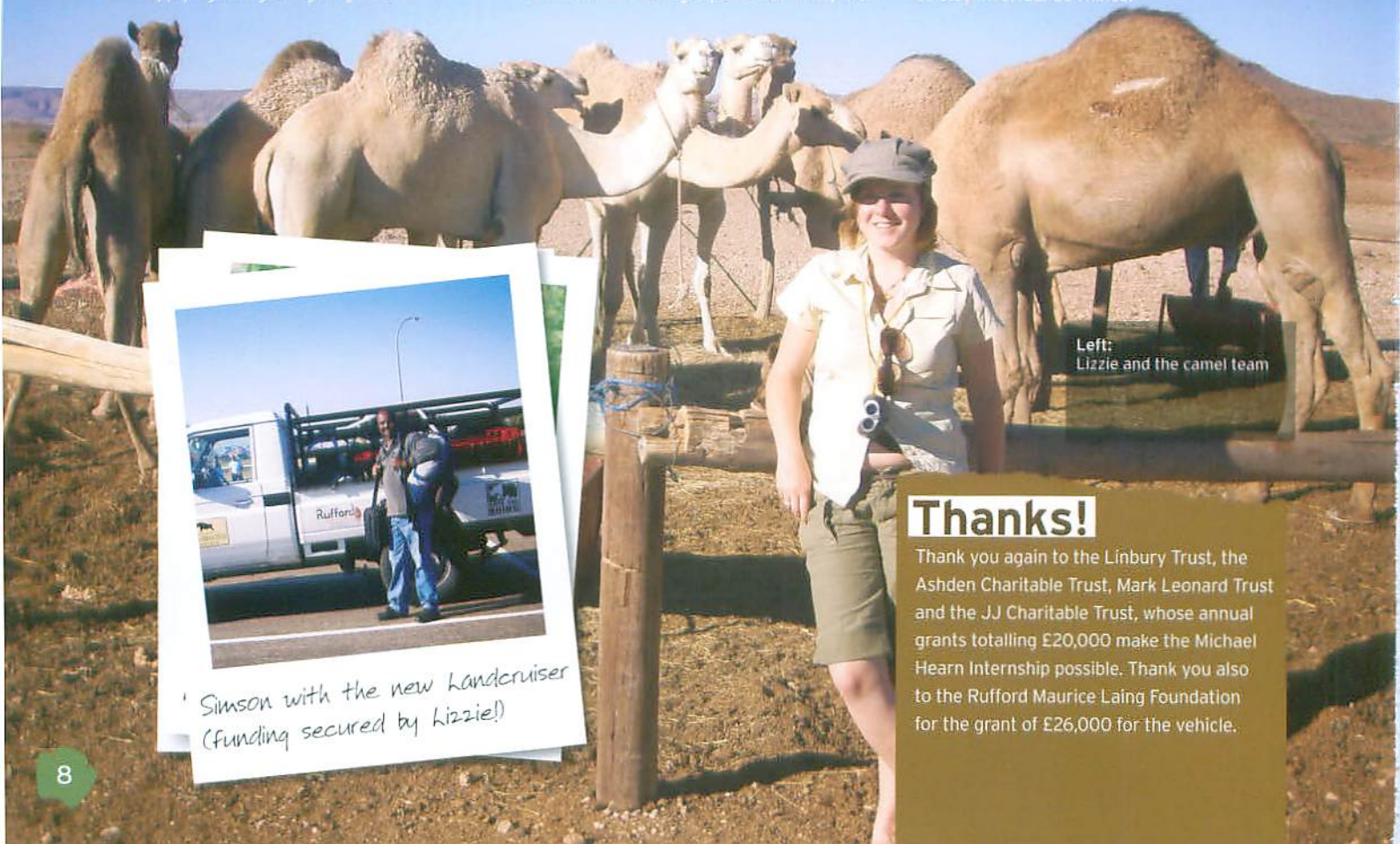
We then drove to Khorixas, where I stayed the night in a gorgeous lodge, before heading off on Sunday to Palmwag, in Namibia's brutally arid Northwestern Kunene region. It's here that SRT conducts its vital anti-poaching and monitoring work in order to understand and protect the area's desert-adapted population of black rhino: the largest free-ranging population of rhino anywhere in the world, which, given that there are only just over a thousand of this subspecies in total, highlights just how precarious the situation is.

After a week I'd seen giraffe, kudu, oryx, a cheetah, a few desert elephants, and hundreds of zebra. But no rhinos! They are elusive creatures - something which has undoubtedly helped them to survive.

My first rhino encounter finally came a few days later. Simson had a call to say that one of the rhinos in the Springbok River area, Petra, was badly hurt. Hyenas had attacked her calf and she'd been injured. We walked for an hour across rocky terrain before we found her. She'd couldn't stand, and it was strange being up so close. Unfortunately she was too badly injured for us to do anything, and Simson and I left so we didn't have to see the MET (Ministry of Environment and Tourism) vet shoot her. Perhaps not what I'd wanted my first wild rhino sighting to be, but nevertheless one of the most amazing experiences of my life.

Most of my days at SRT consisted of a combination of driving around the massive landscape, entering rhino sightings data into the database, and hanging out with the guys from Round River Conservation, who for the last four years have been conducting research into rhino habitat with SRT. I also got to spend a week camping in the middle of nowhere and helping the camel patrol team in their daily rhino tracking expeditions, and Simson even took me to visit Etosha National Park, where we saw around 40 elephants and four rhinos at a waterhole; another experience I'll remember forever. After only a month in Namibia it was time to come home, and I left with such a huge amount of respect for everyone who works at SRT and for the crucial role they play in rhino conservation.

As with Mike, my job at SRT has been the first step along the dirt road to a career in conservation, as I've never been formally educated in the subject. So again, like Mike, I've decided to embark on an MSc in Conservation Science in order to expand my knowledge. By the time this issue of *The Horn* arrives I'll be happily ensconced within the arboretum that is Imperial College's Silwood Park campus in Surrey. I've had a brilliant time this year, both at Rhino HQ and in the field with SRT, and it's been lovely to get to know Mike's family and friends. I'm definitely going to stay involved. Go rhinos!



Left:  
Lizzie and the camel team



'Simson with the new Landcruiser (Funding secured by Lizzie!)

## Thanks!

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