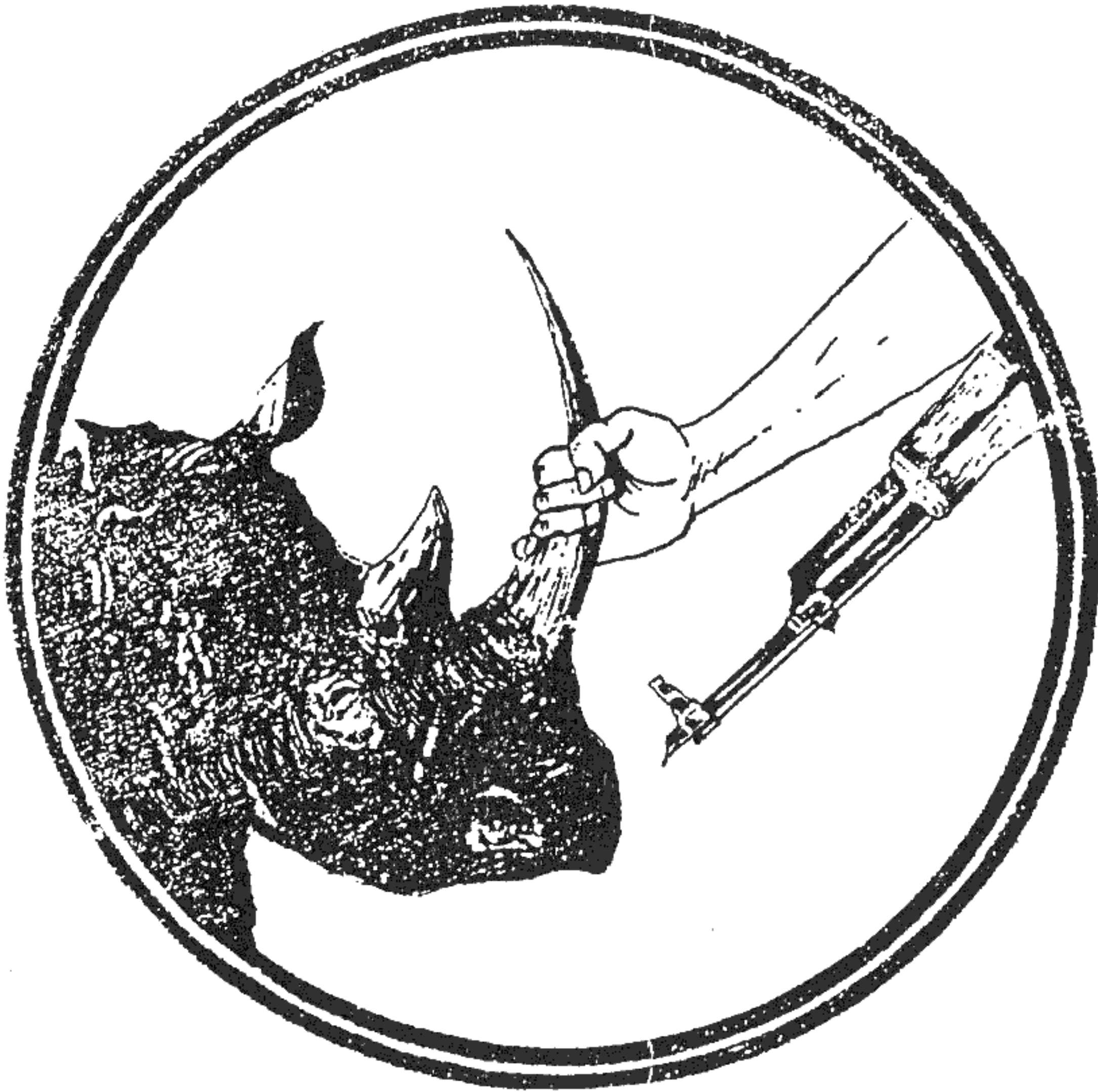


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CONSERVING THE BLACK RHINOCEROS – THE PROBLEMS AND THE SOLUTIONS

THE PROBLEMS OF CONSERVATION ARE VARIOUS.

1. **POACHING** – the major cause for the drastic decline in rhino numbers over the last decade has been poaching. The poachers themselves are mostly local tribesmen who are recruited by wealthy 'shadow figures' with the promise of making much money. They are often highly armed with the latest powerful rifles even machine guns. The escalating price per kilo of horn has made poaching a very lucrative business to the extent that locals are prepared to take unreasonable risks while the 'shadow figures' in the background are rarely caught.
Most of the horn goes to North Yemen where it is fashioned into ceremonial dagger handles. A smaller percentage is exported to Asia for medicinal purposes. Only in the Muslim community of Gujarat in India is the horn used as an aphrodisiac - representing less than 1% of all horn on the world market.
2. **LOSS OF HABITAT** -- in Africa large tracts of land are being cleared for cultivation of crops, to provide grazing for cattle or for firewood. Consequently, the game is forced into small, often isolated pockets with overcrowding becoming a problem. Since these pockets are often surrounded by farmland, straying animals encounter outraged farmers who would rather get rid of the animal than lose their livelihood.
3. **MANAGEMENT** – many of the existing populations are either badly managed or not managed at all. Black rhino have certain habitat requirements which directly affect their survival. For example, having too many elephants might result in the loss of the woodland; a high hyaena population would increase the baby rhino mortality rate to an unacceptable level. Too many rhino in a small area can also be deleterious as the habitat does not have time to regenerate.
Lack of manpower and equipment play a big part in management of the environment; scattered isolated pockets of animals is very inefficient of manpower.
4. **GENETIC POOL** – latest studies have shown that 1,500 animals is the lowest viable number required to continue the survival of a species without defects arising through interbreeding.
Each individual animal has a unique set of genes derived from a mixture of genes received from its parents. Because a population consists of interbreeding individuals, it creates a criss-cross of genes known as a genetic pool. It stands to reason the larger this pool the healthier and stronger the species is with greater powers of adaptation to new environments and the greater its chances of long term evolutionary survival.
Some of the effects of close interbreeding is directly responsible for the demise of a species i.e. low fertility, physical and behavioural abnormalities.

SOLUTIONS

1. a. **POACHING** – This is only the first link in a three link chain. Effective anti-poaching programs require manpower, equipment (vehicles, two-way radios, etc), good relationships between wildlife staff and the local people, and legislation which enforces suitable punishment. Educating the locals of the value of the wildlife and making sure they obtain tangible benefits from it are extremely important for the long term survival of African wildlife.
b. The second link concerns the organisation of poaching and smuggling from out of Africa - the middle men. Thankfully most countries concerned have banned the export of rhino products. However, smuggling still carries on, sometimes although legislation exists, it is not enforced. Corruption is no stranger in Africa. Conservation bodies need to continue to put pressure on the governments of non-co-operative countries, and guilty individuals punished as an example, if the rest are to learn.
c. The third link is the source of the problem – the demand for horn. Many countries have banned the importation of rhino products; however, some don't enforce this and smuggling is very profitable. The amount of horn leaving Africa has decreased because it is now harder to move and sell.
In North Yemen moves are afoot for legislation to be brought down banning the use of rhino horn for ceremonial dagger handles. The substitution of cattle and buffalo horn are being encouraged to maintain the livelihood of the craftsmen.

2. LOSS OF HABITAT – To maintain suitable habitat for this species, suitable areas should be declared protected areas, alternatives to wood for fuel must be investigated and the habitats must be effectively managed to reduce loss of woodland. The Masai in Kenya are embarking on replanting Acacia seedlings so that lost trees are replaced. Such projects should be initiated elsewhere as well.
3. MANAGEMENT – These are no set rules for managing wild animal populations and their habitats, but there are certain fundamental principles that should be adhered to. Many African countries lack expertise in the field of wildlife management. Possibly more training schemes are needed. Funding is nearly always a problem. Kenya has banned hunting for several years, but hunting can be a useful conservation tool to cull and generate income.
4. To reduce the effects and chances of inbreeding depression, individuals should be periodically relocated to different populations where possible. Combining several smaller populations would also be of great benefit. An overall conservation strategy is needed. This should also involve zoos. About 180 black rhino exist in zoos but their numbers are declining and inbreeding is inevitable. What is needed is a breeding program aimed at maintaining genetic diversity so the entire zoo stock should be initiated into obtaining semen from wild individuals to be used to impregnate captive females, reducing the need to remove individuals from the wild and to boost genetic diversity.

The whole issue is rather involved, but the bottom line is that individuals are being slaughtered daily. What is needed is immediate and direct action against poachers. SAVE enables you to play a direct role in saving this magnificent beast from extinction. REMEMBER – EXTINCTION IS FOREVER.

THE MAGIC OF MANA by Maureen de la Harpe

It is noon in the Zambezi Valley, and the aged VW has broken down on a dusty road beside a gnarled grey baobab tree. I also have a hangover from a family wedding the night before. The fact that we are in the middle of nowhere, with the chances of another vehicle passing in the next hour or so extremely remote, plus the fact that we are surrounded by freshly-made steaming mounds of elephant droppings, adds a certain spice to what could be a dreary outlook.

The car belongs to my son Derek, and is not renowned for its reliability. The breakdown itself, like the car and its owner, is not without its humorous side – if one can see the funny side of driving along a bush road when your teenage daughter suddenly shrieks “My seat’s on fire!”

We all disembarked hurriedly, though Derek feigned a nonchalance I’m sure he wasn’t feeling. As he removed the back seat and uncovered a smoking battery underneath, Lara stared in horror: “No way am I going to sit on an exploding battery!”

“You would prefer to hitch a ride?” came Derek’s muffled comment as he tinkered with a tangle of wires, emerging finally to smile airily. “No problem really, just the wiring. But Lara, you’ll have to sit still and not wriggle around or you’ll cause problems. OK? Now, come and give me a push – or do you want to stay here and wait for a lift?”

We pushed. Clouds of white dust enveloped us, mopani flies buzzed around our eyes, but the VW coughed, jerked and then wheezed into uncertain life. Lara perched gingerly on the edge of the back seat, testing the temperature every couple of minutes as we chugged towards our destination.

An hour later the parched bush gave way to softer green vegetation and bigger shadier trees. Moving through the shadows we glimpsed herds of dainty impala, a waterbuck lifting its regal head, wildebeeste tossing their comical beards as they galloped after their companions, the zebra, stocky and trim as stuffed toys.

We had arrived at Mana Pools Games Reserve on the banks of the Zambeze River in the far north of Zimbabwe. Magical Mana – a game sanctuary in a remote untouched corner of the world, one of the few reserves in which the animal inhabitants have so little fear of man that campers are able to get out of their vehicles and walk through the bush. Jealously watched over by the National Parks rangers, Mana Pools is open only between May and October, and visitor numbers are restricted.

Mana – now the sanctuary of the largest remaining herd of black rhino in the world, target of poachers from across the river in Zambia, who come in canoes in search of that most prized of trophies – rhino horn.

We drove to our campsite and unloaded our gear beneath a spreading tree overlooking the shining river, anxious to waste no time in setting off the look for wildlife.

We had a visitor that night. Sitting around the fire, watching the moon rise in the wide African sky and the steaks sizzle in the flames we were sipping Lion ale and listening to the comforting sound of hippo grunting contentedly in the shallows, when we noticed movement from just beyond the circle of light from the gas lamp.

A neat black and white shape was sniffing at the succulent smell of steak emanating from the fire. It was a honey badger, its smooth black fur coat in striking contrast to the white band that ran from the top of its head to its tail.

It was very shy, so Derek put a small piece of meat on the ground some distance away, and we watched it creep cautiously forward until it was able to snatch up the morsel and melt away into the night.

Each night the creature grew a little bolder until, on our last night it came and took food from a tin two metres from our chairs. It also got into the habit of waking us at night as it sipped water in the plastic bath we used for washing the dishes. It always looked as smooth and suave as a gentleman on his way to the opera, and we felt quite honoured at entertaining so distinguished a guest.

After a rewarding viewing on Day 2, during which we saw a herd of elephant enjoying a dust bath, watched magnificent buffalo grazing in a shady glade, laughed at a family of warthogs, and caught a glimpse of black rhino, we were in our sleeping bags early.

We slept in a neat row on stretchers, heads towards the river, feet facing south, sheltered by a tarpaulin strung between two trees. My feet always seemed a long way from my head and consequently very vulnerable – a tempting target for a passing hyena.

We lay and listened to the night sounds – rustles, soft thuds, padding noises, the whistle of a bird, the bark of a jackal, splashes and grunts from the river and the spine-tingling full-throated roar of lion in the distance.

I woke very suddenly about midnight to what sounded like the entire Zimbabwean Army demolishing the camp. Crashing branches, foliage ripped by giant hands, the thump of heavy footsteps and the trampling of long grass – the sounds came from close by, and I saw Lara’s head jerk up out of her sleeping bag: “What’s that?”

“Elephants in the camp,” came Derek’s immediate whisper. “Shush, don’t make a sound.”

We couldn’t actually, though I did open and close my mouth several times. Lara and I clutched hands and lay frozen, listening to the terrifying sounds.

“Would it be a good idea,” I whispered hoarsely, “to go into the shower block until they’ve gone?” I was thinking yearningly of the solid concrete walls as I looked up at the flimsy canvas overhead.

“Wait! I’ll go and have a look,” and Derek melted into the dark while we held our breath.

He was back very soon. “No, you can’t. They’re all around the shower block.”

“How many?”

Continued back page. . .

OUR FIRST CONSIGNMENT TO ZIMBABWE

It was within five months of the establishment of SAVE in Australia that we received an urgent request from the National Parks and Wildlife Management staff in Zimbabwe for the supply of motorcycles, rubber dinghies and 25hp outboard motors, complete with spare parts. These items were a priority for anti-poaching patrols over the wet season.

Fortunately we were in a financial position to meet this request and despatched many search parties. After two weeks of searching QANTAS advised us on Friday, 4th December that there was a plane leaving early Tuesday morning that had some excess cargo space which would be donated to SAVE at a discounted rate, another example of QANTAS' continuing support for the conservation of the black rhino both here and in Zimbabwe. The rush was on!!!

OUTBOARD MOTORS FOR AFRICA

Throughout the month of November, it became regular Saturday evening practice to scan the 'for sale' adverts in the boating section of the Sunday Times. My task was to locate the rare species known as a 25hp short shaft outboard motor. Rare they certainly are and one could even say endangered, as it appears that most are used by surf lifesaving clubs. However, not to be daunted, the matter was pursued because this request had come from Glen Tatham in Zimbabwe as he needed these outboard motors to help with the patrolling of the Zambesi River.

When a job has to be done — it has to be done!

It was unfortunate that the Sunday Times was unable to satisfy a lust for such a rare species and we had to move to the yards where all these beasts accumulate — namely the boat dealers. As it happened, finding outboards in captivity was easier than in the wild.

● received a phone call from Qantas giving us 3 days warning that there was room in their cargo hold for a few items on their weekly flight to Harare. 2 of those days were the weekend! This meant that Monday the 7th December was D-Day — D standing for Dealer.

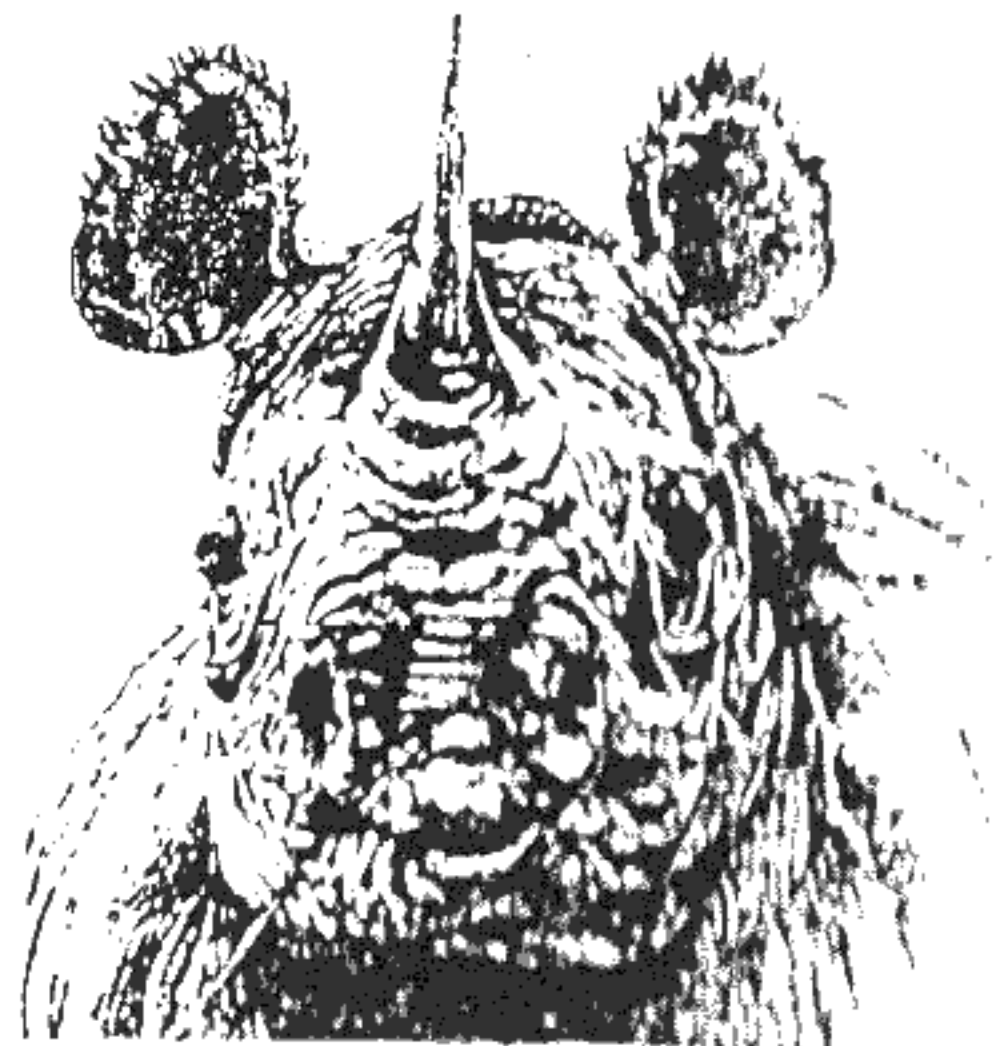
Warwick and I spent 2 hours on the phone ringing all the dealers in Perth trying to locate our rare species. We were lucky to find 2 in captivity — 1 in Osborne Park and 1 in Welshpool. We went to the Osborne Park dealer, Central Marine, and were met by one of Warwick's colleagues from the Royal Perth Yacht Club. Our rare species was duly tested for lung capacity, heart heat and joint mobility and was duly given a certificate of durability.

Our second dealer, Captain Blackbeard, was also most helpful (another of the yachting clan) and because his species was a little older he was able to offer us most attractive terms. In fact, appreciating the worthiness of our cause he let us have his captive beast for \$300 less than he would have liked. In short, both the dealers were very fair with us when they realized their prize possessions were going to such good homes.

We returned to Warwick's town house feeling that a new life was ahead for our outboards and they would be playing a major role in animal conservation in Zimbabwe. This feeling of excitement continued on the Tuesday morning when we all assembled at the Qantas cargo depot to farewell our offerings for pastures greener. We reflected on all the hard work that the organization had done in the past 6 months and indeed a great sense of achievement and pride was felt in our breasts. We were glad to have played a role, minor as it may be, in helping the cause to which we dedicate our spare time.

Nicholas Duncan

All items duly arrived in Zimbabwe and were collected by Glen Tatham from the Customs. The motor bikes and outboard motors were in use within 24 hours of being cleared from Customs as evidence had come to light that another gang of poachers had entered the Valley.



MOTOR CYCLES FOR AFRICA

I initially approached motorcycle clubs to seek their support and advice. In order to present our case to the Motorcycle Dealer's Association, I contacted George Forward of George Forward Motorcycles.

George was immediately sympathetic and helpful to our cause. He indicated that the Australian agricultural bike (AG), having been built for Australian bush conditions would be ideal for Africa. Following a radio appeal, we obtained 1 used AG bike which was immediately stripped down for reconditioning at George Forward's workshop. On the night of Friday 4th December, I returned to Perth from a business trip to the north-west. An urgent message awaited me indicating that our major sponsors, Qantas, were offering reduced freight rates on the next flight to Zimbabwe in 3 days time.

I immediately contacted George and indicated the urgency of the situation. George responded magnificently by offering to put all of his mechanics to work on any motorcycles we could obtain. The next morning I contacted 10 dealers and bought 4 additional motorcycles at the 'right' price, 3 of which were obtained through George himself. A committee meeting on the Sunday confirmed our expenditure and plans were made for the actual shipment.

On Monday the mechanics worked frantically to strip 3 out of the 4 motorcycles and prepare them for shipment. Monday evening was spent arranging the necessary paperwork, washing and packing the bikes and wrapping an assortment of spare parts.

Early Tuesday morning 4 bikes were delivered to Perth airport by George; lined up on the weighing scales along with the spare parts, the outboard motors, and the typewriters, it made a heartening sight. Finally all the equipment was strapped into a Qantas container and with that SAVE's first shipment of Australian equipment was a reality.

Tim Norman



Continued from page 2. . .

"Plenty."

"What about the car then?" quavered Lara. (Exploding batteries seemed friendly and secure).

"No. You're safe as long as you don't move or make a noise. They know where we are."

The elephants were now directly behind us and we felt the ground tremble. Then, suddenly, there came the clear sound of running water – as though a tap had been switched full on.

"Who's washing dishes at a time like this?" I asked dazedly.

"Idiot!" I could feel Derek grinning. "It's the elephants having a wee."

Astounded, we listened to the waterfall of sound until the elephants had relieved themselves and sauntered ever so slowly away to the west. We relaxed and I curled up in a tight little ball so that my feet felt safe from attack.

It was morning. The camp next to ours was occupied by two French couples and a Peugeot station wagon, all of whom had apparently left early to go game viewing.

Although we were careful to clean away all food, cooking pots, utensils and supplies before we drove out each day, no such discipline existed in the French camp, and now a troupe of monkeys had invaded the site. We sat up in our sleeping bags to enjoy the show.

Monkeys leapt from table to chair to ground to tree and back again, carrying scraps of food, paper plates, spoons and cups. One sat on an overhanging branch with a roll of tin foil, tearing it to shreds and shaking the pieces in the air, enchanted by the glitter and shine and satisfying rustling sounds it made.

A second had snatched up a packet of paper napkins and squatted in the fork of the tree, a frown of concern on its face as it meticulously removed the napkins one at a time and flung them in all directions.

Monkeys 3 and 4 sat facing one another on the table: 3 thoughtfully eating the contents of a packet of instant soup mix while 4 sprinkled sugar on its foot.

But the one having the best time had the toilet roll. It sat high in the tree, unravelling long white streamers in a frenzy of excitement, tossing them into the air and chattering with mirth as the ribbons of paper fluttered down to entwine themselves around the branches until the tree looked like an over-decorated Christmas tree.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime moment and the French couples were lucky enough to arrive just in time to capture the chaos on video before the monkeys hurtled out of the tree, hurled themselves off the table and chairs and scampered away behind the shower block.

Footnote:

Today the Zambesi Valley, previously a combat area during the Independence War, is once again a war zone. This time it is the Department of National Parks and Wildlife defending its fast dwindling numbers of black rhino against the poachers' bullets. There are believed to be only about 1000 black rhino left in the Valley.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Arrangements are being made to bring Glen Tatham out to Australia with Babette Alfieri, towards the end of April, to promote the beautiful exotic continent of Africa and the vital importance of organizations like SAVE for the preservation of the unique wildlife that, through familiarity, we have taken for granted in the past.

Plans are being made to make their visit to Perth, the home of SAVE Australia, an occasion to remember. When these have been finalized a circular will be sent out to all members giving them the opportunity to participate in this event.

SAVE AUSTRALIA HAS NOW BEEN INCORPORATED

Towards the end of January, we received notification from Corporate Affairs that the incorporation of SAVE had been satisfactorily completed.

RAFFLE

Moves are still being made to the Lotteries Commission for SAVE to conduct a raffle – the main prize being a Safari trip to Zimbabwe.

Our submission is based on the fact that all monies raised will be spent here in Australia even though it is for the cause of conservation of endangered animal species overseas.

MEETINGS

It has been decided that there is a need for SAVE meetings to become more defined and the 1st Tuesday of each month has been nominated as the regular monthly meeting.

It is intended during these meetings that the latest communications from Zimbabwe be shared, future money raising activities are discussed and planned with various sub committees nominated to share the responsibility of these functions.

Executive meetings will be held when necessary.

OUR IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Here is an opportunity to change from being an armchair conservationist and animal lover to becoming an active helper at Grass Roots level, free of bureaucracy, within your home territory for maximum effect.

CAN YOU HELP US PROCURE ANY OF THESE ITEMS?

- * 175cc Motor bikes with spares -- required urgently!
- * 25hp outboard motors -- required urgently!
- * Manual typewriters.
- * 2-man lightweight waterproof tents.
- * Cessna 185 with Robertson Sto1 Conversion and if possible with an Allison Turbo engine conversion. Compatible internal systems required with spares.
- * Night Optics: Light intensifying telescopes as per type made by Smith and Wesson.
- * Binoculars: Lightweight, robust, medium-size, rubber covered.
- * Mess tins: Rectangular, lightweight aluminium type, used for backpacking, often 3 in a set.
- * Packs: Lightweight, green/khaki H-frame/inner Frame 500.
- * Blankets: Lightweight, warm one-man (blankets obtainable here are heavy and cumbersome) 500.
- * Outboard Motorboat Engines: Evinrude 25hp.
- * Photocopier: Needed in Harare Head Office -- anti-poaching administration.