

ORPHANED RHINO BABY FINDS SANCTUARY IN NAIROBI

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust had a visitor for Christmas at its Nairobi Nursery - a tiny baby Rhino.

This is his story. He was found abandoned in The Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, a 35 acre electrically-fenced enclave in Tsavo West National Park where some of the remaining rhinos within the Tsavo ecosystem, and others moved from human settled areas, are kept under tight security to breed in an attempt to rescue the species from annihilation through poaching.

When the Tsavo National Park first came into being in 1949 it was the bastion of black rhinos, home to 8,000 out of a total Kenya-wide population of some 20,000.

But by the early 1990s, rampant poaching reduced Kenya's black rhino population almost to the brink of extinction and it was during the mid-1980s that 24 square miles just below the Ngulia escarpment was first electrically fenced to house the survivors. When over the years the rhino population within the Sanctuary reached 70 plus, recently some of them were moved out to free range, since a core population was secured within the Sanctuary.

Any disturbance to an established rhino population is very disruptive to such a fiercely territorial species, and could possibly be a reason why the mother of baby Maalim rejected her calf.

He was only a day or two old when he was found by a Ranger of the same name during a routine pa-



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http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/asp/orphan_profile.asp?N=191

trol of the Sanctuary on December 18, a tiny bundle that looked more like a baby warthog than a baby rhino with no sign of a mother anywhere near. He was left for a day to see if his mother would return, but by evening the calf was very weak and vulnerable so Ranger Maalim carried him back to the base and alerted the Senior Warden, who in turn got a message to the Trust that a rhino calf was in urgent need of help.

We were asked to take over the care of the little rhino to save his life and to name him Maalim in honour of the Ranger who rescued him.

The rescue plane, with a Keeper and the correct rhino milk formula on board, left Nairobi in the early morning of the December 19, and Maalim was given his first bottle of milk before flying to Nairobi. By noon he was there, a miniature who weighed just 25 kilos and stood only about 8 inches tall, leaving everyone that caught a glimpse of him enchanted and aghast! He is now fed four hourly, attended by a different Keeper day and night, and is making good progress. ● - DSWT

SHIMBA HILLS NATIONAL RESERVE RESTOCKED

The Kenya Wildlife Service has moved 100 Impalas, 15 Giraffes and 50 kongoni from Tsavo East National Park, Kenya's biggest conservation area, to Shimba Hills National Reserve to increase diversity.

Speaking to Swara Magazine about the move, Simon Gitau, the Area Assistant Director in charge of Coastal region, noted, "We decided to capture and move wildlife from Tsavo East National Park so that we can improve the local Kwale wildlife diversity and improve the area's gene pool, while, at the same time, increasing visitor expectations in this remote and unique coastal forest reserve."

Part of our strategy in restocking this reserve is meant to attract more visitors not just to the Shimba Hills National Reserve but also to the Mwaluganje Elephant

Community Sanctuary which is world-famous for its teeming elephant population," said Mr. Gitau.

Funded by 35,000 USD from the Eden Wildlife Trust, the overdue translocation of wildlife to the reserve is expected to boost dwindling numbers in Shimba Hills and increase the diversity of animals in one of Kenya's only true coastal forest national game reserves.

Located 35 km southwest of Mombasa, Shimba Hills National Reserve is reputedly the only place in Kenya with the magnificent but endangered population of the sable antelope. Other wild animals found in the park include elephants, colobus monkeys, leopard, serval cats and hyenas. ●

- Gichuki Kabukuru



FACT SHEET ON SHIMBA HILLS NATIONAL RESERVE

AREA: 250 km square.

LOCATION: 35 km southwest of Mombasa, off the main south coast road that leads to the Tanzanian border.

GAZETTED: September 1968

WHEN TO VISIT: All year round, most roads consist of all-weather murrum.

ACCESSIBILITY: The reserve has one airstrip 1.9 km long. Regular passenger flights land at nearby Ukunda airstrip on Diani beach or the Moi International Airport in Mombasa.