

NEWSLETTER – April 2009

Volume 22 Number 2

Patrons: The Lord McAlpine of West Green, David Gower OBE, Bryce Courtenay AM, Nick Price

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We welcome the new Unity Government and wish it well in its endeavours to bring back peace and prosperity to the people of Zimbabwe.

In the last 15 months, rhino poaching has escalated to a level not seen since the late eighties and nineties. Between 1993 and 2002 there were hardly any reported rhino poaching incidents and then in January 2003 the rhino deaths started in Sinamatella. They continued there for the next few years and also in Matusadona and more recently in Matobo, as well as the Midlands conservancy. But now, it has been throughout the lowveld conservancies for the past 15 months. A few gangs are moving around the area and the authorities haven't managed to put them behind bars. Up to 120 black and white rhinos could have been illegally shot in the past 15 months!! The field staff are doing their damndest to track and catch the poachers but they mostly escape into the bush. However, congratulations are due to a number of scouts who have made arrests of armed poachers.

Verity Bowman, Executive Director of Marwell Zimbabwe Trust, one of our fellow conservation NGO's in Zimbabwe, Chris Davison, our newly appointed Coordinator in Zimbabwe and I attended the National Rhino Workshop in Harare for three days in January, together with more than 40 other delegates from the public and private sectors. We were fully appraised of the current situation with rhino management in Zimbabwe and we are now awaiting implementation of some new management strategies.



The same trend of heavy rhino poaching is being seen in South Africa where a syndicate of 12 Asian and local poachers was arrested in January.

A packed house of 151 guests attended an illustrated presentation by Sharon Pincott on her work with the Presidential Elephants of Hwange. What a fascinating evening it turned out to be, raising \$5,500 for Sharon's fuel and vehicle ex-

penses for 2009. Sharon is now back in southern Africa promoting her latest book, "The Elephants and I", available from this office for \$45 - highly recommended.

Our funds have run low after a very big year of expenditure in 2008 and we will be revving up the bank balance with "An Entertaining Evening with Merv Hughes" at the Hyatt Regency Perth on 6 May.

An invitation to renew your membership is enclosed with this newsletter and we hope to have a 100% hit rate! Thanks to our members who enrolled a friend with the last edition of the newsletter. Unfortunately, our appeal to save orphan rhinos didn't come up to expectations and funds are still needed for the daily milk powder, vitamin supplements and glucose to feed the ever increasing number of orphans.



I acknowledge that you have been over burdened with funding appeals in the last month and it's simply because there is so much to be done by so few! Thanks to those of you who have responded so generously, as always. By world standards we are a tuppenny halfpenny organisation, but as a donor to Zimbabwe conservation we are very active and important—game water supplies, orphan rhinos, anti-poaching units, field equipment and vehicles, veterinary supplies, wages and so on!

The Zimbabwe economy has now US dollarised and this is leading to far greater prices and expenses than have been customary in the past, mainly, it seems due to the Zimbabweans difficulty in understanding and appreciating the real value of the US Dollar in today's market place. With the falling Australian Dollar of the past six months all our funding projects have cost considerably more.

So please continue to support us in whatever ways you feel you can as we come to the close of our 22nd year of offering assistance to the wildlife of Zimbabwe, especially the black rhinos.

Nicholas S. Duncan

NEW SAVE CO-ORDINATOR

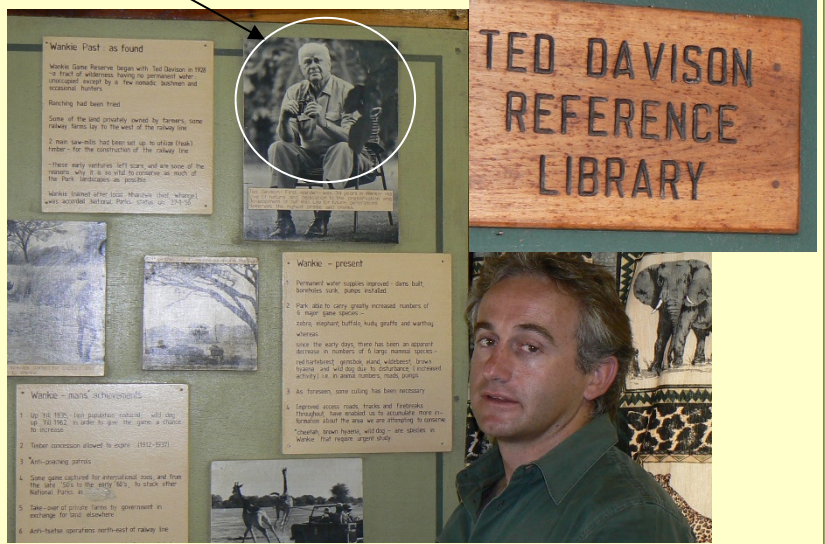
Last November Chris Davison became the SAVE Co-ordinator in Zimbabwe. In January he joined four of the committee—Nicholas Duncan, Nia Carras, Kim Hoddy, Miriam Bauman—and Bob Piachniarski (member and mechanic extraordinaire), to visit several projects SAVE supports. This provided him the opportunity to meet the key people he will be dealing with in the future.

Chris is proving to be vitally important in helping to manage the weekly activities of some of our projects where previously we had hoped for things to take care of themselves, but often didn't.

Married with two young children, Chris lives on a dairy farm at Esigodini, not far from Bulawayo. He is the grandson of Ted Davison, the founder of Hwange National Park.



Bob and Chris inspecting one of the many vehicles donated by SAVE, this one at Matusadona IPZ.



Autopsy on an Impala during the Physical and Chemical Capture of Wildlife Course

CHRIS THE SAVIOUR

Where would the wildlife of Zimbabwe be without Chris Foggin? For the last 39 years Chris has dedicated his life to preserving wild animals. Chris is one of nine staff at the Wildlife Veterinary Unit which began in Harare in 1989. Only three are paid by the government so wages for the other six have to be found as well as running costs for vehicles. Income is also generated from work done by the WVU which helps with the wages of an administration manager, accounts/stores person, typist/receptionist and general laboratory assistants. Vet Margie Peacocke assists with admin, holds the fort when Chris is out of the office and carries out some wildlife and diagnostic work (only three mornings per week, unfortunately, according to Chris!).

As Head of the WVU, Chris' responsibilities are varied and many and include—

- wildlife disease surveillance—this includes veterinary and regulatory work on farmed crocs and ostriches to ensure continuation of exports
- responsibility for the annual Physical and Chemical Capture of Wildlife Course in February

and the monitoring of drug use on wildlife by lay persons and vets and ensures all drugs licence applications are up to date

- keeping of buffalo on private land as this species has great disease implications for live-stock (foot-and-mouth disease, etc.)
- welfare of rhinos—>1000 rhinos darted since year 2000 for various management purposes, including dehorning (which usually occurs between May and October) at a cost of US\$800—\$1,000 per rhino
- chairmanship of the Conservation and Veterinary Sub-committee of Zimbabwe Trans-frontier Conservation Area (TFCA) Programme

Chris travels about 25,000 km per year. He has been a vet since December 1970 and did a PhD, part-time 1980-1990, on Rabies in Zimbabwe. He loves field work, especially rhino operations, as well as pathology and disease investigation. SAVE has provided equipment and consumables for more than 10 years. When we met with Chris at the WVU in January he expressed his gratitude to the SAVE Foundation for all their help.



Ear notching a sub-adult white rhino.

A RECENT HISTORY OF ZIMBABWE RHINO MANAGEMENT

When SAVE FOUNDATION first began back in June 1987, there were approximately 2,500 black rhinos roaming around Zimbabwe, mainly in the Zambezi valley and areas adjacent to Lake Kariba. The reason for our inception was the major decimation in rhino numbers further north in Africa, down from 65,000 in 1972 to a mere 3,500 in 1987! Of these the vast proportion were in Zimbabwe, as just mentioned. Then Zimbabwe came under attack with the systematic slaying of its rhino population over the next six years, descending down to the low 300s by 1993!! At this time, a Rhino Management Strategy became a serious topic for the Authorities. To this end, four Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs) were formed. Sinamatella in Hwange, Matusadona on the shores of Lake Kariba, Chipinge in the eastern highlands and Matobo just outside Bulawayo. At the same time various conservancies were established on private land throughout the country, particularly Save Valley, Bubiana, the Midlands, Chiredzi River, Gourlays Block and more recently Buby River. There were also two intensive breeding centres—Imire Game Ranch and Chipingali Wildlife Orphanage.

More recently white rhinos have been transferred from Matobo to the Main Camp—Makalolo area of Hwange to start a new nucleus in that area.

For ten years these various rhino populations flourished and their numbers nearly doubled. As part of the management programme most rhinos were originally collared for monitoring and horn implanted in more recent times. The IPZs came under threat in 2003 and the conservancies in more recent years, bringing the numbers back from the 500s to the 400s. All rhinos have now been moved from Gourlays to Buby River and Chipingali's rhinos have either been translocated to Victoria Falls or shot. Numbers are very low in the Midlands, Chiredzi River, Imire and Matusadona.

Gonorezhou National Park in the extreme south east of Zimbabwe, bordering on South Africa and Mozambique, is being developed with financial support from Frankfurt Zoological Society, and will be a rhino and wildlife stronghold in the future. We recently coordinated the supply of 2.5 tons of field equipment for this project along with a further 1.5 tons for other areas. Our thanks to Martinair and DHL for their assistance with the freight.

In late May, seven of the committee will be visiting Bubiana and the Lowveld to observe some translocations and dehornings from the areas that are being attacked most by the poachers.

We again commend all the scouts and rangers who are working under extreme pressure and conditions of financial hardship in order to preserve rhino numbers throughout the country. We also acknowledge the great work being done by rhino management, both in the public and private sectors, as they come under increasing attack from ruthless poaching syndicates, well motivated to make hay while the sun shines. From us all in Australia we extend our thanks and support to you all in Zimbabwe.

Congratulations to all the people who have been involved in the successful monitoring of poaching activities throughout Zimbabwe, in particular those pictured (top to bottom) from Lake Chivero, Dete, Sinamatella and Victoria Falls.



ORPHAN RHINO UPDATE - Natasha Anderson

With Carla and Lisa Marie about to depart into the big wild world we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have cared for the two girls—both hands on and by contributing to their significant feed requirements.



Even though they have a paddock full of browse, the 'Big Girls' (Carla & Lisa Marie) always feed on browse left over from the young orphans' night supply.

We have had an excellent rainy season so browse availability is good and the two are expected not to wander far from what has been their home for almost a full year now. An orphan bull, Jack, was released in 2006 near to where the girls are and is still often seen in the area. He is now five years old and likely to appreciate the introduction of two young girls to his home range.

The Gang—'Sassi', 'Millie' and 'Blondie' (aka 'Tenashe'), are growing at a great rate and are now very comfortable with their daily routine. After morning milk bottles the gate to the paddock is opened and they all charge out at speed. After they are over the initial excitement of being free again they settle down to sleeping and browsing like normal rhinos. Getting them back into the yard in the evening takes quite a bit of calling and cajoling. Everyone has their own set spot and knows to get into position before the bottles are shown. Post bottle time is a relaxed affair involving more snoozing before a pre-dark dash of play tunneling through the evening browse supply and generally being childish—which of course they are!

Mum and children, post bottle rhino crash. Katrina Leathem has done an amazing job with the three young calves. Three times in three months with only a day's notice she took on the orphans and the stressful process of getting them to take a bottle.



CAMELS GO RHINO MONITORING



The SAVE FOUNDATION donated \$50,000 to Save the Rhino Trust, Namibia, in early 2008 to assist with the monitoring of desert adapted black rhinos on land communally owned by the Damara Himber and Herero tribes. Because the rhino range is so large and mostly desert, (about 20,000 sq kms), camel teams are used for monitoring.



22ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the
SAVE FOUNDATION of Australia (Inc.)

will be held on

**Wednesday 1 July at 7 pm in the Education
Centre, Perth Zoo, Labouchere Rd, South Perth**

Nomination forms for positions on the Executive, and proxy forms, are available from Kim - 9272 4666.

Nominations should be lodged at 229 Oxford Street by
7.00 pm on 24 June 2009

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available.



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