

# Workshop on Rhino Policy in Zimbabwe by John Gripper

During my visit to Zimbabwe in January 2009, I was invited by Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to attend a three day workshop which was held at the Wild Geese Lodge in Harare and funded by WWF Africa Rhino Programme. It was to review the Zimbabwe Rhino Policy and Management Strategy for 2009-2013.

Dr Russell Taylor was the facilitator for the workshop. There were representatives from the four Intensive Protection Zones - (Sinamatela, Matusadona, Chipinge and Matopas) and the private rhino Conservancies, National Parks, Wildlife Veterinary Department, NGO's and International Donors. The meeting had been called in response to the high increase in levels of rhino poaching. The stakeholders were asked to revise the 2008 Emergency Rhino Action Plan and prepare a policy and management strategy for the next four years.

The increase in rhino poaching in Zimbabwe has badly affected most of the Conservancies and IPZ's and a similar picture has occurred in South Africa, with especially losses of 37 killed in the Kruger National Parks. It is thought that a total of 87 rhino have been killed by poachers in South Africa during 2008. In both countries the poaching is carried out by professional gangs who are armed with AK 47 rifles and often have inside knowledge of the whereabouts of the rhino and it is thought that the horns are smuggled out of the country by Chinese and Vietnamese dealers.



Matters discussed at the workshop were:-

- The current status of rhinos in Zimbabwe
- The merits of targeted dehorning as an emergency measure
- Identification, ear notching, radio telemetry and monitoring of rhino
- Training of monitors, rangers and guards
- National reward system for informers
- Shortage of food rations for rhino rangers due to economic situation.
- Sale and valuation of rhino within the borders of Zimbabwe
- Coordination and collaboration between all stakeholders and the Police
- Law enforcement and the failure of Courts to convict rhino poachers
- Control of the trade in rhino horn

It is hoped that the exchange of views and a concerted effort from all the stakeholders to implement the Emergency Rhino Action Plan can bring about a reduction of rhino poaching.