

North Luangwa Conservation Programme Newsletter

December 2009



FRANKFURT
ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
NORTH LUANGWA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Black Rhino News...

Despite not receiving rhinos to North Luangwa NP in 2009 lots of work has been going on in order to welcome the final five animals to complete our founder population in May 2010 ...

Following the browse assessment in April 2008 and the site selection for the new sanctuary for the 2010 black rhinos, we have been building and constructing most of the year in readiness for next May. The bush clearing for the fence was only the start. We will erect the new electrified fence in April 2010, but access and monitoring ability have been our key focuses for the new

area this year. We have built three telemetry towers to enable the monitoring scouts improved elevation throughout the gently undulating terrain to obtain rhino transmitter signals. We have built 3 new temporary release bomas within the sanctuary which will also double as management bomas should the need arise. Bridges and drift crossings over streams and gullies are being built – a huge job and enormous thanks to Tadge Wixted for his invaluable advice and to Conservation Foundation for funding. New rhino pickets (outposts) have been built at intervals around the new



Ichuma—May 2009

sanctuary to house fence maintenance and ZAWA scouts for monitoring, law enforcement patrolling and fence maintenance duties.



As we near the end of the year we'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported North Luangwa Conservation Programme in 2009 and we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and rhino-filled New Year!



For more information on the North Luangwa Conservation Programme and the Black Rhino reintroduction project please contact :
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Removing fences...

The current sanctuaries have also had a bit of work done in removing all remaining internal dividing fences leaving one 200 kms sq area for the 20 rhinos held

within. Watching their and other species movements carefully it took quite a few months before anybody crossed the 'lines'. A large herd of over 200

buffalo started moving towards the end of the dry season. Two male rhinos have ventured a short distance into other areas but then returned to their own range. A

new management road traversing the Lubanga River has been opened and improved deployment of the monitoring patrols throughout the sanctuaries.

Black Rhino Management Workshop...

Preliminary permission has been granted by ZAWA to remove an external section of fence to relieve some male pressure in the middle sanctuary and to let Julila (the female living just outside the sanctuary borders) smell out a prospective suitor. Her calf is 3 years old and she must be wondering why no-one is interested!

A pre-condition requires putting new transmitters into several animals and this programme began in Oct 2009 with 8 rhinos. Dr Pete Morkel came in July to try to dart several rhino on foot but the long grass and extreme tracking conditions meant all attempts were fruitless bar one (see below). In Oct, the Parsons Aviation helicopter and pilot were available to

help out and the operation was completed in the early hours of the morning over 5 days.

In the same month, Jo Shaw returned to look at the browse availability and possible elephant dam-

... ECC and MPCC have been reached or are being exceeded and fast action is needed...

age in the original 2003 sanctuary. Back then it must have been hard to believe the fences would still remain in place six years on and we needed to revisit carrying capacities (with several births) as well as look at browse quality and availability and possible vegeta-

tion degradation caused by over-browsing. Initial results show that our concerns are correct and ECC and MPCC have been reached or are being exceeded and fast action is needed to mitigate any future conflict or dips in productivity.

With all this in mind an application was made to USFWS to fund a planning workshop in Jan 2010 to look at what we have achieved so far, what has happened in other places, what knowledge we currently have and need to gain or monitor and where do we go from here. We are very excited by this and hope a new framework will be developed for managing the NLNP black rhino population over the next 5-10 years.

Other rhino news...

Nalubuka... has been a focus for some special care and monitoring in 2009. She made a steady recovery after being darted for *trypanosomiasis* in January 2009, but then seemed to take another turn for the worse around July. During Dr Pete Morkel's visit in that month it was important we immobilised her and replaced her transmitter. She was the one animal we managed to dart then. We have increased her supplementary feeding and her movements since have been more widespread as well as the areas she is visiting being better for rhino browse.

Kondobole... is a male translocated in 2006 to NLNP and was then moved in 2008 to the northern most section of the rhino sanctuaries. It is a difficult area to track and monitor. But in late Oct 2009, while being immobilised it was noted that he had been in a fight and sustained some injuries. Subilo, a large male in the same sanctuary area is presumably his combatant and not to be messed with. As a result of what we assume is his avoidance of Subilo, he is now confined to a part of the sanctuary. As a precautionary measure we have begun supplementary feeding him and are closely monitoring his recovery.

New calf names... have been given to Mapalo's and Natwange's calves born in mid-2008.

Mapalo's little girl is called Shangila which means "be strong" (pictured below) and Natwange's young female has been named Chawama meaning "wonderful".



Rhino move 2010...



Hercules C-130 on finals - NLNP May 2008

Sadly, lack of funding in 2009 meant we were unable to bring the

final five black rhinos to NLNP this year. However, it has meant we have been able to forge ahead with lots of new management infrastructure and consolidate our thinking of the current population.

The funding for the final translocation has now been secured (through USFWS) and the South African agencies (SANParks, East-

ern Cape Parks Board and Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife) are all on board for 2010 to go ahead. Once again, a SAFAIR Hercules C-130 and crew will be used for the operation out of Durban International Airport direct to Lubanga Airstrip in NLNP.

We are looking forward to welcoming our new rhinos to Zambia.

9J-NLP...

This year we saw the arrival of a Cessna 182 aircraft to North Luangwa. Ed Sayer—the NLCP Technical Advisor—is the pilot and has flown nearly 200hrs this year on law enforcement and rhino monitoring patrols, to and from Sectors for meetings with Rangers and other PA duties supporting

A plane is the perfect tool for surveillance and is a huge deterrent to poachers



9J-NLP parked at the Lubanga Airstrip NLNP

patrols, overflying poacher hotspots and checking for elephant carcasses. In 2009, we have detected 12 poached elephants (up from 6 in 2008) throughout the whole area (approximately 11,000 kms sq) including the surrounding

Game Management Areas bordering North Luangwa NP. The recent increase in illegal trophy hunting is a worrying sign of the times and we remain vigilant to threats both for the black rhino population and all the wildlife in NLNP.

ZAWA In-Service Scout Training...

This year, with funding from Conservation Foundation, Save the Rhino International, Save the Rhino Trust Zambia and USFWS we were able to carry out retraining for over 150 ZAWA scouts from NLNP and surrounding GMA camps. Each course covered Parade Ground Drills, Physical Training, Musketry, Navigation, Tactical Patrols, Emergency First Aid and Wildlife Police Officers and the Law. The scouts responded very positively to the courses

and throughout they were being continuously assessed on discipline, motivation, attitude to training and leadership potential. The Chief Training In-

“The refresher training conducted on these courses proved to be highly successful with all our objectives being met“

structor said: “The WPO’s left each course with highly elevated competency and vastly improved confidence levels.

This augurs well for the future and there is no doubt that the continued protection of the growing population of rhinos, the National Park and surrounding areas will be achieved as a result.”



Conservation Education Programme 2009...

The NLCP CEP has been an ongoing programme for over six years and has expanded to now cover 20 schools in 3 districts surrounding the National Park. Each month our Conservation Education Officer, Sylvester Kampamba, visits the schools to deliver an interactive and colourful presentation to recap on lessons learnt and to reinforce the connection between conservation learning, NLCP and black rhinos. The programme over the next year is entirely funded by



The ‘black rhino’ costume made by Luelo Middle Basic School for the Chifunda District Conservation Celebration Day

USFWS, Save the Rhino International and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund. Cathy Dean, the Director of SRI, visited us in Oct 2009 to witness one of the annual Conservation Celebration Days and to help us with future planning and evaluating the impact of the CEP. We’re really looking forward to working together again in 2010 and developing the programme to meet our and the participating schools’ needs.

Frankfurt Zoological Society...

Most FZS projects are characterized by long-term commitment and persistence. We believe that this is the only way to approach our goal: conserving biodiversity on a long-term basis. At the moment, FZS supports about 80 conservation projects worldwide.

The main focus of FZS work is traditionally in East Africa. Over half of our project funds flow into this area. In Europe, FZS focuses on Eastern European countries where the aim is to conserve large and still pristine natural habitats. Additionally, FZS also supports projects in South America and Asia. Large areas including savannahs, tropical forests and wetlands which are biodiversity hot-spots are to be protected.

FZS has been involved in North

Luangwa NP for many years, but formally adopted the programme in 1986.

FZS NLCP is a very broad-based project that is involved in all aspects of the management of North Luangwa National Park. Activities are executed in close cooperation with the Zambian Wildlife Authority (ZAWA). All law enforcement personnel are employees of ZAWA.

In 2009, FZS supported NLCP with over €350,000 for use as core funds in our PA operations in partnership with ZAWA. A few examples of our operations include deploying and providing rations for an average of 66 law enforcement patrols per month, more than 500kms of road were graded and new equipment and uniform was issued to all scouts.

NLCP support to ZAWA includes:

- Supply of all uniform and field equipment to nearly 200 wildlife scouts
- Monthly supply of field rations for long and short patrols
- Vehicle purchasing, maintenance and supply of fuel
- Park communication equipment and maintenance
- Road and airstrip Infrastructure and scout housing development and maintenance
- Monitoring of wildlife numbers and law enforcement effort
- Conservation Education Programme in schools surrounding the Park
- Aerial surveillance for law enforcement and rhino monitoring

NLCP and Black Rhino...

The re-introduction of 5 black rhino into North Luangwa National Park in May 2003 heralded the return of this species to one of its most important historic range states. As late as 1980, Zambia was still listed as the country with the 3rd largest black rhino population with an estimated 2,750 animals. However, throughout the 1980's heavy poaching pressures resulted animals being killed and by the end of the decade very few remained. In 1998 the animals were declared 'nationally extinct'.

It was estimated that North Luangwa National Park harboured between 500 - 2,000 animals before the onset of the poaching wave. During that time the Park received virtually no protection – it was designated as a wilderness area and few wildlife scouts were stationed around the Park or en-

tered it to patrol. As a consequence, its wildlife populations were particularly vulnerable and the last confirmed sighting of a black rhino in North Luangwa was in the mid-1980s.

Although law enforcement efforts in North Luangwa have been improving over the last decade, the demand for rhino horn and ivory remains high. For this reason a free release

situation for the translocated rhino was never considered or recommended. Browse adaptability and rhino body condition assessment is greatly assisted by rhino monitoring teams able to observe each rhino on a regular basis within the sanctuaries. The NLNP sanctuary infrastructure has proved to be very effective in this regard but we hope it won't be too long before the black rhino roam freely throughout NLNP.

And finally...

Wishing you all the very best for a
HAPPY CHRISTMAS and wonderful NEW YEAR
from everyone at
North Luangwa Conservation Programme

