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# Africa Travel

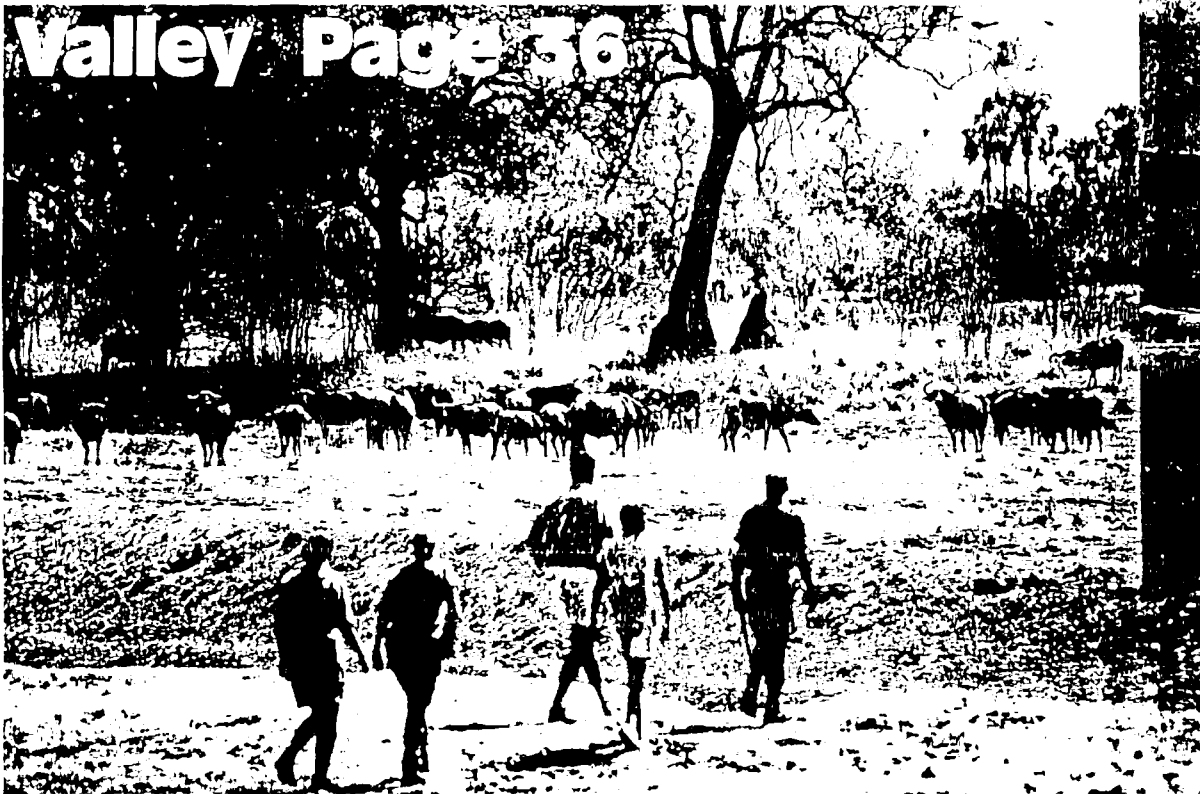
EXPLORING THE MOST EXCITING CONTINENT



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Plus:  
Luangwa  
Rhino Recovery  
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CHRIS MCINTYRE

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# Travel Africa

EXPLORING THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING CONTINENT

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South Africa is an efficient, "second world" society. Its cities are developed and cosmopolitan; its attractions diverse and spectacular. Philip Briggs explores Africa's most popular tourist destination.

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Malay people have been living in the Cape for 300 years, bringing an unusual character to the region. How are they finding life in their new home? Report by Johan Liebenberg.

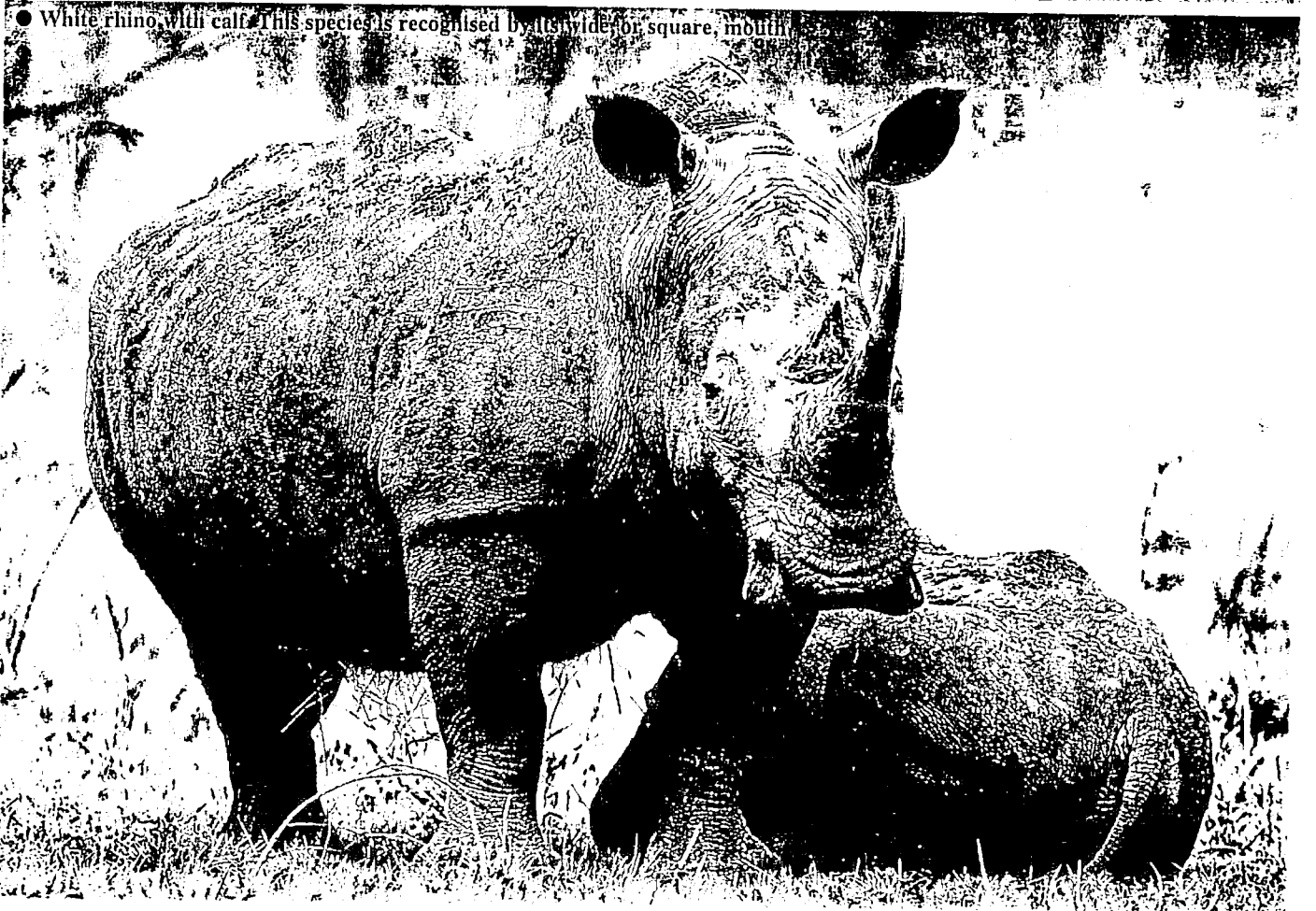
### Zimbabwe

That so much of Great Zimbabwe is so well preserved is testament to the strength of its construction. Len Rix explains why this ancient settlement should be included on every tourist's itinerary.

Black rhino, most easily identified by its "hook" shaped lip.



White rhino with calf. This species is recognised by its wide, or square, mouth.



# SAVING THE RHINO

*In the last 30 years Africa's rhino populations have plummeted, bringing the animal to the brink of extinction. However, worldwide conservation efforts are showing some success and rhino numbers are gradually increasing. In perhaps the most comprehensive and up-to-date overview of Africa's rhino situation to be published, Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne look at the reasons for this reversal.*

In recent decades no other large mammal in the world has undergone such a dramatic decline in numbers as the black rhino. Rhinos were slaughtered in their thousands in the 1970's and early 1980's. Civil wars and a breakdown in law and order in many African countries, along with increased numbers of sophisticated firearms, contributed to the onslaught. Inefficient wildlife departments, suffering from low budgets and riddled with mismanagement and corruption, along with easily-bribed customs officials, contributed further to the poaching.

From perhaps 65,000 black rhinos in 1970, numbers plummeted in Africa to 2,475 by 1992. Virtually all the northern white rhinos in central Africa — about 2,500 of them — were destroyed over this period, leaving only a small remnant group in Garamba National Park, Zaire. An increase in white rhinos in South Africa helped to balance this loss. South Africa's white rhinos were the only ones that fared well with the population rising from 1,900 in 1970 to about 5,300 by 1992. Africa's rhinos overall were at an all-time low in 1992, the two species totalling only 8,295 on the continent.

Poaching for the rhino's two horns was the sole purpose of this massacre, with wholesale prices for the horn soaring from US\$30 a kilogramme in 1970 to US\$600 a

kilogramme by 1979. Rhino horn was used mainly in eastern Asia as an ingredient in Oriental medicine, primarily to reduce fever (not as an aphrodisiac, as many in the western world believe), and in the Middle East, especially North Yemen, for dagger handles.

After the oil boom in the Middle East in the 1970's, Yemenis, with their new found wealth, were able to afford daggers with prestigious rhino horn handles. This country alone was importing half the rhino horn on the world market by the late 1970's. By the mid-1980's Yemen's economy was declining, but an economic boom was occurring in eastern Asia, where Taiwan, China, South Korea and Hong Kong had become the major importers of rhino horn. By 1990 horn from Africa was selling retail for US\$44,221 a kilogramme in Taiwan, the highest price in the world, and some traders were buying all they could for investment.

A concerted effort in the 1990's by governments, non-government organisations (NGO's) and conservationists to save the few remaining rhino populations in Africa intensified, and as the decade draws to a close, is showing signs of increasing success. According to IUCN (World Conservation Union), the continent's rhino reached an all time high for the decade at 11,014 in 1997. The very large popula- ▶

## THE BLACK AND WHITE

How do you tell if it's a black or a white rhino? Both species are two-horned and have grey skin. Both males are largely solitary and territorial, and a mother-child pairing could be from either species. But the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) is a bit bigger and heavier than the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*). Asking yourself 5 questions may help to differentiate them, however:

### 1. Where is it?

If the beast is in well-watered, wooded, gently undulating savanna then it's likely to be a white rhino. Black rhino have a wider range of habitat, including the desert. They favour more bushy areas, particularly thick acacia, where they can rest shaded in the heat of the day.

### 2. What is it eating?

If it's grazing short grass it's most likely to be a white rhino. Black rhinos are browsers and enjoy acacia leaves, herbs and legumes but occasionally they will eat grass as well.

### 3. How does it shape up?

White rhinos have a distinct, raised neck lump, elongated and rectangular ears and a wide square-lipped mouth. "White" is a corruption of the Dutch word *weit*, meaning 'wide', used to describe its mouth. Black rhinos appear shorter in the neck, have no hump, round trumpet-like ears and a triangular hook-shaped lip with which to grasp and strip twigs.

### 4. How does it move?

White rhinos graze head down, move slowly and when disturbed trot off a short distance, with the calf in front, before stopping to turn and look back. The black rhino grazes head up and when startled runs further, with calf trailing, only stopping when in the cover of bush. If the rhino charges, particularly out of mating season, it is most probably a black bull.

### 5. What signs does it leave?

The dung of the white rhino is fairly fine textured and dark, rather like horse droppings. It is often deposited in middens (dung piles) which may be several yards in diameter. Black rhino dung balls are smaller, a lighter orange-tinged colour and contain coarse, undigested, woody material, often also found in middens. Both species have three hooked toes but the footprint (spoor) of white rhino is sharply indented whilst that of the black is rounded at the back. The spoor of the white rhino appears at the end of each story in this issue.

tions that were easy targets have almost all gone from the vast, inadequately protected areas, such as Luangwa Valley in Zambia, Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania and Tsavo National Park in Kenya.

By 1997, 97% of the black and 98% of the white rhinos were to be found in only four countries. IUCN figures for 1997 show that South Africa has the biggest population: 8,904 (1,083 black and 7,821 white rhinos), while Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe have in total 1,925 rhinos (1,480 black and 445 white). These four countries have been responsible for saving Africa's two rhino species from probable extinction.

What are the reasons for a turnaround? How and why are the last rhinos being saved from poachers' bullets, poison arrows and spears? There are six main explanations for this:

### 1. Falling Consumer Demand

First, consumer demand for rhino horn has fallen. In Yemen, the price of rhino horn has remained the same since 1985 (US\$1,000 a kilogramme wholesale), despite its increasing rareness. This has been largely due to Yemen's sharply declining economy and the growing use of alternative products for dagger handles, espe-

cially water buffalo horn (from the domestic water buffalo in India).

In Taiwan and China, prices for rhino horn have been dropping since 1990. This has been mostly due to the enforcement of their domestic trade ban and improved law enforcement generally in China and Taiwan, brought about by international pressure, especially from the US Government, UNEP, and various NGOs. China and Taiwan also amassed large stockpiles of rhino horn in the 1970's and 1980's, so most traders are not taking risks importing more horn. Hong Kong and South Korea have also reduced their trade by implementing laws banning rhino horn.

In addition, doctors and pharmacists in eastern Asia's traditional medicine shops have accepted the growing scarcity of rhino horn. They are encouraging their customers more and more to use alternative products such as antelope horn, water buffalo horn and plants, now that rhino horn is so expensive and difficult to obtain.

### 2. Improved Law Enforcement

Second, law enforcement increased in the 1990's in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Kenya. In Namibia the maximum sentence for killing a rhino was set at

\$200,000 Namibian (about US\$32,000) and possibly 20 years in prison. In South Africa penalties in certain provinces used to be low, but now they are high everywhere in the country with a maximum imprisonment of 10 years and a fine of 100,000 rands (US\$16,000).

Government officials have become more vigilant over rhino protection in southern and East Africa. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, for instance, resident Koreans and Chinese have their belongings checked thoroughly, as these nationals are known to have smuggled rhino horn on many occasions.

### 3. Expanded Intelligence Networks

Third, intelligence networks have been significantly expanded in all four countries. In South Africa a special section of the Police was formed in 1989, called the Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU). It was designed specifically to reduce illegal wildlife trade. In 1992, the ESPU impounded 84 rhino horns. By 1998 the Unit had expanded to 42 staff, and undercover work now takes place all over the country.

Before South Africa's independence, certain traders in illicit wildlife products

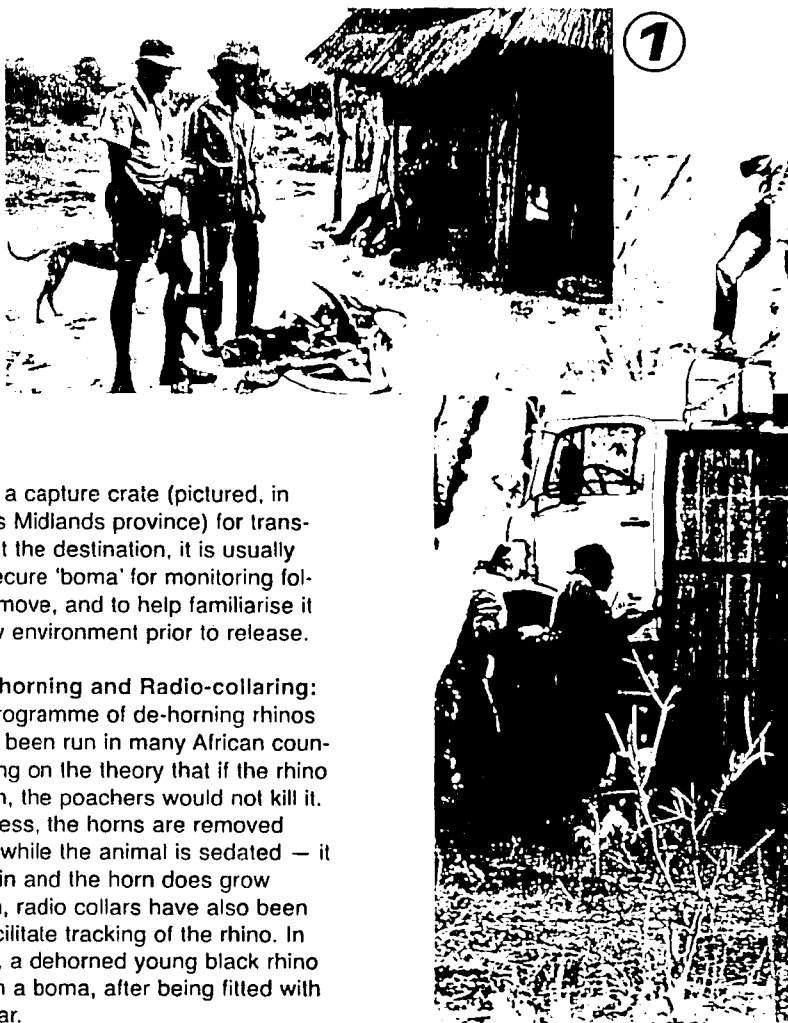
# The Work Being Done in the Field

**1** **Security:** Extensive resources are required to counter poaching activities. Most success has been achieved by armed units deployed in areas near rhino populations. Such guards have been employed privately or by government. Here, Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management staff are pictured after arresting a poacher and finding a slash of rhino horns buried under a hut, in Zimbabwe's Sengwa district.

**2** **Translocation:** It has become common practice in rhino conservation efforts to translocate animals into more secure areas, usually either private conservancies or government parks (sometimes called Intensive Protection Zones). Such exercises require wildlife veterinarians to dart the animal, which is then

loaded into a capture crate (pictured, in Zimbabwe's Midlands province) for transportation. At the destination, it is usually kept in a secure "boma" for monitoring following the move, and to help familiarise it with its new environment prior to release.

**3** **De-horning and Radio-collaring:** A programme of de-horning rhinos has been run in many African countries, working on the theory that if the rhino has no horn, the poachers would not kill it. In this process, the horns are removed with a saw while the animal is sedated — it feels no pain and the horn does grow back. Often, radio collars have also been fitted, to facilitate tracking of the rhino. In this picture, a dehorned young black rhino is shown, in a boma, after being fitted with a radio collar.





were not arrested for political reasons. With the new government, these traders have had to stop selling rhino horn.

The former syndicates in Zimbabwe and Zambia have mostly gone out of business, probably because they have lost their contacts in South Africa who were the main exporters of rhino horn to eastern Asia.

Intelligence networks in Namibia have been operating with great success. There has been very close co-operation between the Nature Conservation Department, Police and Customs. Furthermore, the police pay large sums of money to informers. As a result, a higher percentage of poachers and traders are arrested in Namibia than in any country in Africa. This is the best deterrent to would-be poachers.

#### 4. Private Ownership

A fourth and major factor enabling rhinos to grow in numbers has been the increasing role of private ownership and custodianship of rhinos.

The numbers of rhinos on private property have been continually growing in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Kenya. Governments realised, with their own budgets falling in the 1980's, and with the few remaining rhinos more threatened

than ever, that it was advantageous to allow wealthy individuals to invest their money in rhino sanctuaries.

In Kenya, for example, officials acknowledged the success of privately owned Solio Sanctuary where black rhinos had increased from the 23 which were put into the Reserve between 1970 and 1980 to over 80 in 1988, along with over 40 white rhinos within 68km<sup>2</sup>. This proved rhinos could do well with adequate protection — in fact Solio had 25% of Kenya's black and white rhinos in 1992. Some of these animals were gradually translocated to other areas to help start populations on private and public land.

In Kenya there are now six private sanctuaries holding 26% of the country's black rhinos and 77% of the whites. The landowners in Kenya own their white rhinos and are custodians to the black rhinos, which remain government property.

Since 1990 in South Africa, black rhinos can be privately owned, as has been the case for many years for white rhinos. By December 1997, there were 1,494 white rhinos on private land, and so far about 60 black rhinos on at least seven private reserves. Namibia's government also start-

ed to sell black rhinos to the private sector in the early 1990's, while landowners have owned white rhinos for some years.

From 1986 black rhinos in Zimbabwe have been moved from government land to private commercial ranches and other private institutions in the country. In the 1990's rhino conservancies have been established in Zimbabwe where two or more private ranches manage some rhinos together. Over 60% of the country's black and white rhinos are now on private land, of which the black rhinos are under custodianship and the white rhinos are privately owned.

#### 5. Greater Government Interest

African governments have taken a far greater interest in rhino conservation since the population crash of the 1970's and 1980's. For better protection, some of the remaining rhinos on government land, especially isolated animals, have been moved into safer, usually smaller, areas. This, along with improved rhino protection in general by government staff, is a fifth and vital reason for Africa's rising numbers of rhinos today.

Government-protected rhino areas now have a relatively high concentration of ▶



ALL PICTURES THIS PAGE MICHAEL D KOCK

manpower and adequate anti-poaching equipment, and they usually have natural barriers or fences, which are sometimes electric.

In Kenya the first government rhino sanctuary was developed in 1987 at Nakuru National Park. This was entirely enclosed by an electric fence. There is now an electric-fenced sanctuary within Tsavo West National Park and the national parks of Nairobi and the Aberdares are partially electric-fenced. Tsavo East National Park has a newly translocated black rhino population which is free ranging; aerial and ground patrols frequently take place, providing the necessary protection.

In South Africa most protected areas with rhinos have been fenced for many years. This policy helped the southern white rhino number to build up from less than a hundred in 1920 (after heavy hunting) to thousands today.

In the early 1990's Zimbabwe developed areas called IPZs (intensive protection zones) for their rhinos on government land. Of the four IPZs in Zimbabwe, only Matobo has fencing, while Matusadona has Lake Kariba acting as a natural barrier on one side but not on the others. Protection is good, and poachers, aware of the improved patrolling and intelligence, keep away.

This is equally so in Namibia, where although the majority of government rhinos are in fenced Parks (mostly in Etosha National Park) others still roam the vast, north-western region. Game guards continue to improve monitoring and protection strategies, allowing the rhinos to multiply.

#### 6. High Finance

Adequate finances are essential for effective rhino management and for keeping up the morale of staff. In the mid-1990's rhinos have had reasonable funding, especially on private land. This is the sixth and final reason for the successful turn-about in rhino numbers.

In South Africa's KwaZulu Natal, for instance (with rhinos in Hluhluwe-

Umfolosi National Park and Itala, Ndumu and Mkuzi Game Reserves), government budgets averaged around US\$1,000/km<sup>2</sup> in 1997. This figure is more than 20 times



● Dagger with rhino horn handle.

higher than in Tanzania and Zambia where almost all the rhinos have been eliminated. Non-government organisations have played a very important role in funding anti-poaching work, and continue to do so.

As a result of all these efforts, rhino poaching has declined very sharply in Africa since the early 1990's. In Zimbabwe there has been no poaching at all from 1995 to April 1998 (IUCN figures) and in Namibia not a single rhino has been illegally killed between February 1996 and April 1998. In South Africa, only ten rhino were

poached in 1995, six in 1996 and four in 1997 — a very low number compared with the thousands of rhinos in the country.

In Kenya, officially there had been no rhino poaching from 1991 to mid-1997. Then, however, two rhinos were poached in the Masai Mara and in early 1998 poachers broke through the electric fences of two of Kenya's private rhino sanctuaries, killing two white rhinos and a black rhino. Since then, intelligence and security have been reinforced and there has been no further rhino poaching.

We now know what needs to be done to save rhinos in Africa. There are several reasons why rhino poaching has decreased. Perhaps the most important are: reduced trade in and demand for rhino horn in Asia; more efficient law enforcement in the four African countries with sizeable rhino populations; more extensive intelligence networks; a growing percentage of rhinos in private sanctuaries, and more effective protection of rhinos on public land, frequently with more rhinos concentrated into smaller, fenced areas.

All these strategies must continue to be implemented. The rhino anti-poaching effects are based on a commitment from the governments of Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa, and from the private sector and NGOs. It is imperative that rhino budgets are not cut, in order that these measures can be maintained effectively, allowing rhino numbers to build up substantially once more.

Esmond Martin is a geographer and a member of the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group focussing in the trade in rhino products worldwide. He has had articles published in *National Geographic*, *BBC Wildlife* and *Oryx*. Lucy Vigne, a zoologist, researches and writes on the illegal wildlife trade. She has recently been working in India on rhino conservation. Both authors live in Kenya.

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