

Cover photo:  
A black rhino with a red-billed oxpecker.  
Alan Binks

# Swara

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The Impala antelope is the symbol of the East African Wild Life Society. Swara (sometimes pronounced Swala) is the Swahili word for antelope.

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## Representatives Worldwide:

# Comment

by Chryssee and Esmond Bradley Martin

**I**T HAD BEEN HOPED THAT AFTER THE POACHING onslaught of the past decade, the remaining large rhino populations would ensure the survival of this animal in tropical Africa. But future prospects for rhino conservation are bleaker than ever now that the Central African Republic's rhinos have been practically eliminated, Zambia's severely reduced and Tanzania's are under a new threat, so those countries which have relatively small rhino populations left must do everything they can to ensure safety for them.

Kenya has only about 500 rhinos now, and ranchers who have been allowed to fence in part of their land as private rhino sanctuaries have proved that with proper management rhinos can be secure in this country. The government is now setting up its own fenced sanctuaries within some national parks.

Giving protection to rhinos behind well fenced and well patrolled enclosures and attacking the root cause of poaching—the rhino horn trade—are discussed in an article in this issue of *Swara*. However, if these two methods are to work, full co-operation from members of the public is imperative.

Talking about rhino poaching, deploring the tragedy, is not enough. Stand up and do something positive about it! The anti-poaching campaigns in Africa and the efforts now being undertaken to stop the trade in rhino products in Asia need your help in a multitude of ways.

First, you must show that you are concerned and encourage others to care about the fate of rhinos. By putting forth the rhino as a familiar image, you will increase interest in this animal. For example, if you are an artist, design rhino motifs; if you are in advertising, incorporate a rhino in a slogan, e.g. 'Sudsy Soap is as powerful as a Rhino'. Encourage your friends in their businesses to promote the rhino, too. Most traditional pharmacies in Southeast Asia sell western medicines side by side with age-old herbal remedies and animal products. If a drug company were to design a package of aspirins with a rhino drawing on it and the implication that the pills are as good as rhino horn for reducing fever, curing headache and combatting 'flu, not only would these sell extremely well, they would dissuade potential rhino horn customers.

Use your imagination to think of ways your particular skills and aptitudes can help rhino conservation. If people were to show as much interest in rhinos as they have in unicorns (just think of the number of books and drawings of them!), those who are working to preserve the rhino from extinction would be encouraged to persevere in all their efforts.

Do not sit back and leave everything to the authorities in charge. They need your moral support, at least. Visit your national parks and reserves often; become familiar with the rhinos in them; spend time observing and learning more about them. Show your interest in rhinos when you meet wardens and rangers. Let them know you are concerned about rhinos. Praise their good efforts and offer constructive criticism.

If you contribute financially to a wildlife organisation, find out how your money has been spent and whether or not it has actually helped rhino conservation. Keep the conservationists on their toes! Help them in their efforts to stop the trade, too.

Write to the governments of those countries that have recently banned rhino horn imports, applauding this action, but note that if it is not properly enforced within a certain timespan you will boycott goods from them. One of the largest markets for rhino products is Singapore, and there it is still legal to import and re-export them. Write to that government, expressing your dismay that this trade is allowed to continue. North Yemen has officially stopped rhino horn imports but these are still coming into the country and its market is the single largest in the world. Write to the President, urging stricter controls at the capital's airport, Sana'a, for checking against smuggled rhino horn.

The authorities in government need to know that they have public support for rhino conservation. Only by showing an active interest in their work will you be able to help improve future prospects for rhinos in the wild.

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