

UPDATE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF RHINOS IN NATAL

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Abstract - Natal has more than 30% of Africa's rhinos. Rhinos in Natal are being targeted by poachers. Nature conservation staff are totally committed to protecting the rhino, however, and are continuously assessing their current methods of protection, evaluating and adopting new methods.

HISTORICAL SITUATION

The black rhino trend in Africa has been a catastrophic 96% decline in numbers from 65 000 animals in 1970 to 2 500 in 1993.

- In Zimbabwe in 1980 there were 2 500 black rhino and 500 white rhino. In 1991 these numbers declined to 1 400 black rhino and an unknown number of white rhino. In 1993 these further declined to 425 black rhino and 100 white rhino.
- In Hwange (Wankie) - In 1980 there were 70 white rhino. In 1991 these had declined to two white rhino.
- 178 poachers were killed in the Zimbabwe rhino war, whilst four game guards were killed and seven wounded.
- In Botswana, between 1974 and 1981, 71 white rhino were reintroduced to Chobe and 19 to Moremi Game Reserves from the Natal Parks Board reserves.
- By 1992 these populations should have grown to ca 216 animals.
- The Rhino & Elephant Foundation *et al* census conducted during September 1992 found only 19 animals.
- The Natal Parks Board-assisted capture operation in Botswana during February 1993 found only four rhino left, one of which was wounded.
- South Africa in 1970 had 4% of Africa's rhino; by 1993 this had changed to 72%.
- In 1993 the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park had 28% of Africa's rhinos.
- More than 60 000 rhino have been poached in 20 years.
- Black and white rhino populations in Africa in 1992, per country, were as follows:

	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
South Africa	819	5 297
Namibia	489	91
Zimbabwe	425	249
Kenya	414	74
Tanzania	127	-
Angola	50	-
Mocambique	50	-
Zambia	40	-
Cameroon	35	-
Rwanda	15	-
Swaziland	6	46
Botswana	5	27
Zaire	-	31
Sudan	-	5
TOTAL	2 475	5 820

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At the African Rhino Specialist Group meeting during 1992 the "key" black rhino populations were classed as follows¹ :

A1 Cameroon
 Damaraland
 Etosha
 Hluhluwe-Umfolozi
 Kruger

A2 Itala
 Midlands (P)
 Mkuzi
 Nairobi
 Selous
 Solio (P)

A3 Hwange

The "key" white rhino populations in 1992 were as follows¹ :

A1 Garamba
 Hluhluwe-Umfolozi
 Kruger
 Itala
 Mkuzi
 Pilanesberg
 Sabi Sand (P)

A2 Loskop
 Manyeleti
 Ndumu
 Solio (P)
 Timbavati (P)

A3 Hwange

White rhino distribution in Natal in 1920 was restricted to a remnant population of *ca* 30 animals in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park, whilst black rhino in Natal were restricted to the Pongola area, Mkuzi area and Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park and its southern buffer zone. Numbers of how many there were are not accurate.

In 1993, white rhino were distributed widely through the province, whilst black rhino had increased in numbers with reintroduced populations thriving at Ndumu, Weenen, Itala and on the Eastern Shores.

CURRENT POPULATIONS IN KWAZULU-NATAL PARKS

	White Rhino	Black Rhino
Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park	1 600	320
Mkuzi	92	77
Eastern Shores	-	20
Weenen	42	13
Itala	56	15
Spioenkop	23	-
Chelmsford	4	-
Ndumu	50	35
Tembe Elephant Park	32	-

POACHING SITUATION

The poaching situation has increased fairly dramatically in the past five years. In Mkuzi Game Reserve arrests for poaching incidents have risen from ca 20 cases in 1988 to 200 cases in 1993, whilst in the same reserve snares recovered increased from ca 100 in 1988 to ca 2 600 in 1993. Whilst the snares are set for antelope, rhinos are caught. The numbers of rhinos poached in Natal Parks Board reserves over the past five years are as follows :-

1990	Umfolozi	6 white plus 1 black rhino	
	Hluhluwe	Nil	
	Mkuzi	Nil	
	Itala	Nil	
	Weenen	Nil	
	Mfabeni	Nil	TOTAL 7
1991	Umfolozi	3 white rhino	
	Hluhluwe	Nil	
	Mkuzi	Nil	
	Itala	Nil	
	Weenen	Nil	
	Mfabeni	Nil	TOTAL 3
1992	Umfolozi	2 white rhino	
	Hluhluwe	1 white rhino	
	Mkuzi	1 white rhino	
	Itala	Nil	
	Weenen	Nil	
	Mfabeni	Nil	TOTAL 4
1993	Umfolozi	2 white rhino	
	Hluhluwe	1 white rhino	
	Mkuzi	Nil	
	Itala	Nil	
	Weenen	Nil	
	Mfabeni	Nil	TOTAL 3
1994	Umfolozi	Nil	
	Hluhluwe	2 white rhino	
	Mkuzi	Nil	
	Itala	Nil	
	Weenen	Nil	
	Mfabeni	Nil	
	Spioenkop	1 white rhino	TOTAL 3
			20

The actual poaching areas in the parks are concentrated near populated areas adjacent to the park and especially so in Umfolozi.

SECURITY

Basic security requirements for parks have been identified as follows :

1. Adequately fenced park.
2. Adequate numbers of staff.
3. Suitably trained staff.

4. Adequately armed and equipped staff.
5. Suitably motivated staff.
6. Functional informer system.
7. Effective reactionary force.
8. Effective investigative system.

Small areas / parks have to rely heavily on information and intelligence to detect poachers before they commit the deed and escape.

The current Natal Parks Board anti-poaching methods are as follows :

- Adequate fencing
- Picket guard camps
- Mobile Anti-Poaching Unit
- Reduction of rhino densities in problem areas
- Paging radios
- Directed patrols
- Section Ranger patrol participation
- Observation posts using 60 power spotting scopes
- Night sight equipment
- Informer system
- Undercover investigative staff
- Neighbour relations programme

The Game Guard basic training course curriculum includes the following :

1. Law enforcement
 - Arrest procedures
 - Nature Conservation Laws
 - Immediate action drills for ambushes
2. Radio procedure
3. First Aid / Buddy Aid
4. Weapon handling
5. Drill and discipline
6. Patrol techniques
7. Basic Nature Conservation
8. Technical training - fencing / vehicle / pump maintenance
9. Neighbour / Community relations

It is vital that sufficient, full-time, dedicated law enforcement staff are deployed in the parks. The following staff strengths are recommended :

- Minimum of one man / 1 500 ha
- Minimum of three men to ensure two are active at any one time, e.g. :
 - 3 Guards for 3 000 ha
 - 4 Guards for 3 100 - 4 500 ha
 - 5 Guards for 4 600 - 6 000 ha
 - 6 Guards for 6 000 - 7 500 ha

Staff operating only within the park boundaries are not enough, and an informer system operating outside the park is vital as "to be forewarned is to be forearmed". The operation of an informer

network is a specialised task requiring very careful handling. Some of the more salient points are as follows :

1. Establishing Informer Network
 - Recruitment of informers is extremely difficult
 - The best and most reliable informers are the voluntary informers
2. Motivation of Informers
 - Only one way - financial compensation
 - Pay quickly after they provide the information
 - Pay for information irrespective of whether arrest is made
 - Judge each case on its merits
3. Handling the Informer
 - **NEVER** disclose your informer's identity - **NEVER**
 - One person should only handle two or three informers
4. Use of Informers
 - To gather information from gossip
 - To infiltrate poaching gangs
 - To carry a transmitter once in a gang

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

Modern police-type investigative methods and technical assistance are necessary to keep abreast of the potential threat. Close liaison with other agencies engaged in intelligence gathering is necessary.

COMMITMENT TO NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITIES

Information and general support from neighbours is more readily given if parks are seen to be relevant and, in order to achieve this, the Natal Parks Board has launched an extensive series of programmes to make conservation in general and protected areas in particular more relevant to neighbouring communities. These are :

1. To encourage participation in protected area management and planning by creating Neighbour's Forums to :
 - (a) create trust;
 - (b) discuss boundary and land issues;
 - (c) create wildlife resource harvesting programmes;
 - (d) provide controlled free access;
 - (e) formalise and honour commitments.
2. To foster economic and social development thus contributing to an improved quality of life by :
 - (a) addressing basic social needs of neighbouring communities;
 - (b) encouraging preferential employment;
 - (c) involving local entrepreneurs;
 - (d) developing wildlife resource areas on periphery of protected areas;
 - (e) undertaking appropriate training of staff.
3. To enhance environmental awareness by :
 - (a) developing environmental education and interpretation programmes;

- (b) creating an appropriate problem animal policy;
- (c) undertaking training of staff;
- (d) creating a Neighbourhood Trust to fund such actions.

Neighbouring communities are encouraged to create forums with the park staff and external funding is obtained from institutions such as the Independent Development Trust to fund projects such as community markets, school buildings, water schemes and market gardens. The Board acts as a facilitator in these projects.

Due to the fairly high requirement for manpower in protected areas, the resultant salary outflow from the parks is large. From Natal parks alone R37 million was earned by staff from communities neighbouring the protected areas.

Neighbours benefit from the harvesting of natural resources such as wood, thatch, 'muti' plants, sand, meat, bait and fodder. During 1992/3 some R2,25 million in retail value was collected in the Natal Parks by neighbours.

"RHINO BASKET" OF THE WORLD ?

The Natal Parks Board has been capturing white rhino since 1962 and distributing them throughout the world for captive breeding programmes in zoos and, in Africa, to their former natural range in both parks and onto private land.

To date some 3 465 white rhino have been distributed world-wide.

The capture of rhino is an efficient, quick operation that has also been extended to a totally airborne operation to remove animals from a wilderness area without impinging on the 'no vehicle tracks' ethic.

It is vital we stand together in Southern Africa to ensure the long term survival of rhino.

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