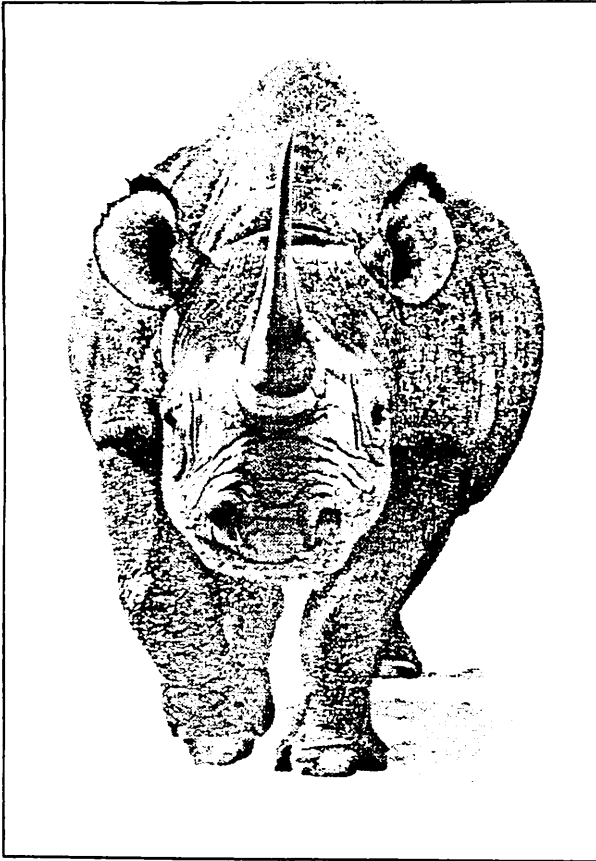


# SAVE FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA (INC) NEWSLETTER

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Nick Price

## INCREASE IN RHINO NUMBERS

**GOOD NEWS** seems rare these days in the world of conservation, so it is heartening to be able to report a success story, especially when it concerns what appeared, until very recently, to be a lost cause. During the 1970s and 1980s, rhinos were slaughtered in their tens of thousands the length and breadth of Africa, disappearing completely in most of their range. It really looked as if they were doomed to extinction. Nonetheless, thanks to a combination of individual devotion and government action, rhino numbers are slowly recovering.

The cause of the poaching frenzy of the previous two decades is the huge demand for rhino horn in Yemen and the Far East. One reason for current optimism about the rhino's future is that the trade in rhino horn appears, finally, to be coming under control. Increasingly, we are seeing that trade is a key factor in conservation, either because it is endangering certain species or because it can, if adequately controlled, be used as a beneficial tool for protecting them. The international body entrusted with monitoring and controlling international trade in threatened and endangered species is

CITES. Last June the parties to CITES met in Zimbabwe.

*The above-courtesy Swara-Sept/Oct'97.*

We are proud to be part of this success story and after 11 years of hard work the **SAVE FOUNDATION** is finally seeing the fruits of its labour.

In the past year, the rhino birth rate has been around the 7% mark, with the greatest percentage increase coming in Bubiana Conservancy. This is proving to be a very worthy project and it won't be long before some of the younger rhinos are returned back to the wild, to

the national parks from whence their parents came. That's why the whole conservancy project was created - to remove rhinos from troubled areas to allow them to breed whilst protected, with the ultimate aim of their return to national land. The other successful projects are Save Valley, the Midlands, Gourlays, Chiredzi River and Chipingali. Our good friends at Imire Game Park have also had a very successful last two years, with four births and two of these calves are now at the rehabilitation centre at Tashinga with the other two to follow shortly. It's exciting to see what is happening here and their whole series of volunteers have been "fostering" these rhino calves as they grow up and learn to be "wild rhinos", prior to their release. The **SAVE FOUNDATION** will be sponsoring vet fees associated with this project together with the dried milk powder that is a necessary part of the young rhino's diet.

Your Executive for 1997/98 was:

President - *Nicholas Duncan*  
Vice President - *Marion Bowers*  
Secretary - *Ken McDonald*  
Treasurer - *Kevin Judge*  
General Duties - *Guy Tristram*



*The future.*

**Sadly**, after leading a very successful Safari '97, Marion had to resign from the Executive for personal reasons. She will be greatly missed, as she has shown a great commitment to Zimbabwe and the rhino cause, having made at least 10 visits to Africa. Her knowledge and instincts will be hard to replace and I take this opportunity to publicly thank Marion for all her effort and hard work over the last eight years.

**Guy** Tristram has been seconded in to the position of Vice President and there is now a vacancy on the Executive. Elections will take place at this year's AGM on 1 July and interested people are encouraged to phone me to discuss the expectations of being a member of the Executive.

**To** the other three Executive members, Ken, Kevin and Guy, I extend my appreciation for all that they have done during the past year, especially their valued input at our lengthy Executive meetings! It is heartening to have different view points expressed at these meetings and I trust that they will all continue to offer their commitment for the next financial year.

**The** audited financial statements for 1996/97 showed an income of approximately \$82,000 (mainly the Bryce Courtenay dinner/auction, donations, memberships and sales) and expenses of roughly \$62,000 (see items under 'Projects Supported' - elsewhere on this page), leaving a surplus of \$20,000.

#### **Land Acquisitions Act.-**

**Most** readers will have read of various economic and political unrests in recent times in Zimbabwe. Reproduced here is an article by John Gripper, Chairman of the Sebakwe Black Rhino Trust, and recently published in the March edition of Sebakwe News.

**Under** the Land Acquisition Act on 28 November 1997, a list of 1,472 farms was published out of a total of 4,500 farms in Zimbabwe. This has taken place against the background of severe economic and financial crisis in the country. There was doubt as to whether any compensation for the land would be paid by the Government if a farm was taken for compulsory acquisition. There are insufficient government funds to pay for the farms.

White farmers mostly own the farms on the list. They cover 11 million acres and represent 40% of the country's agricultural output, employing 147,000 workers. The farmers were given 28 days to lodge an appeal against designation of their farm under the Act. The original criteria for designation set out in the 'land reform' programme were:-

1. Ownership of multiple farms.
2. Absentee landlords.
3. Foreign owned farms.
4. Under-utilised farms.

**However**, in drawing up the original list for designation, these criteria had often not been followed. The farms that were to be taken over were for resettlement or were to be handed over to indigenous farmers. Many farms in the various conservancies have been listed. There is great concern that, if these farms change hands, the new owners may not be supportive of the objectives of the rhino conservancy.

**There** are now suggestions that President Mugabe has been forced to abandon the mass take over of these privately owned farms. This follows pressure from the European Union and the World Bank, who are providing much needed loans to Zimbabwe.

**The** land reform may now be resolved by the transfer of a smaller number of farms which are already available. It is hoped that this will be carried out in a transparent manner and in accordance with the rules of law and the constitution. This should ensure that productivity and security of employment will not be affected."

#### **Projects Supported 1997/1998.**

- Kit for patrol staff in Sinamatella, Matopos, Matusadona.
- Kit for Umtschibi capture unit.
- Kit for mobile maintenance unit.
- Kit for Bubiana guards.
- 100 x mosquito nets.
- 30 rhino tracking collars.
- Repairs to Unimog capture vehicle.
- Kit for Greg Rasmussen and Painted Dog Research Project.
- Grant to Alistair Pole for Wild Dog Project.
- Helicopter GPS from Bob Jeffery.
- Bedford truck spares to Chirisa National Park.
- Spares for Matusadona Warden's Landrover

- 110 x secondhand Landrover tyres kindly donated by Cyril Groombridge Landrovers of Sussex
- 2 x Motorola radios for Imire Game Park.
- 25 x Motorola radios for National Parks.
- 130 x spare Motorola batteries and re-charging equipment.
- Laser printer for Operations room.
- Travel expenses and drug costs for Dr Chris Foggin, honorary vet for National Parks.

#### **National Parks Rhino Workshop Extracted from Sebakwe News**

**A** special three-day workshop organised by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management was held at the Sebakwe Club in the Midlands from 22 to 25 January 1998.

**National Parks** Headquarters staff were joined by representatives of the private conservancies, Intensive Protection Zones and captive breeding centres.

#### **Matters discussed included:-**

1. Collaring and ear notching of rhino for identification.
2. Need to move some male rhino for genetic diversity.
3. Carrying and use of weapons by the scouts and guards.
4. Targets for annual growth rates for rhino populations.
5. Import of black rhino from South Africa.
6. Increased manpower for field security.
7. Relocation of fragmented groups of white rhino.
8. Establishment of breeding groups on new land areas.
9. Improvement of local community relations for rhino management.

**The** proposed establishment of National and Provincial Rhino Management Planning Committees was approved by delegates. This will improve the co-ordination of resources, speed-up management decisions and assist in meta-population management recommendations.

**Please** attend our AGM and film night on 1 July.

**Check** out our web site, thanks to Mark Nielsen, <http://www.iinet.au/~save>

**Nicholas S. Duncan**