

Sela Nairobi
1985

The Save the Rhino Project

By D.M. Sindlyo

Director, Wildlife Conservation &
Management Department



C.A.W. GUGGISBERG

Kenya has every reason to be proud of its achievements in the field of wildlife conservation. The country's policy for the conservation and management of the wildlife is contained in Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1975 on *Statement on Future Wildlife Management Policy in Kenya*. The Wildlife (Conservation and Management) Act (1976) provides the necessary authority for the implementation of this policy.

The Government, having thus stated its conservation goals and objectives, has made budgetary provisions for conservation and management programmes every year. Our achievements have therefore been as a result of the Government's commitment to pay for the conservation of these resources, which in turn contribute significantly towards the economic development of this country.

Wildlife, as everyone knows, is the backbone of our tourism industry, which ranks second to agriculture in terms of foreign exchange earnings. Tourism also has an impact in many other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, hotels, transport and employment. Because of the wide role it has played in the development of this country, our wildlife should be of interest and concern to everyone.

Wildlife is a dynamic resource whose conservation and management is heavily influenced by and dependent on many factors. Deterioration or loss of habitat, over-utilization, poaching and climatic changes are some of the major factors to which wildlife is extremely sensitive. We have unfortunately experienced all these in recent years.

While different species will respond and react to these factors in different ways, the black rhino has been pushed to a point of near extinction by a combination of them. We in Kenya, like others elsewhere, have

every reason to be concerned about the dwindling population of the black rhino.

We are doing our best to conserve and protect this species within the limits of the resources at our disposal. To this end we have launched a special project whose prime purpose is to ensure the survival of rhino in this country, but whose successful implementation will depend on the availability of adequate resources. We would therefore welcome, as we have always done, any additional support that may be forthcoming from conservation organisations and other institutions.

We are undertaking this project out of a deep sense of duty and commitment to future generations, to ensure that wildlife species shall not perish during our times.

Our times are, however, beset with all sorts of problems ranging from economic setbacks to environmental pollution and degradation. Our scarce resources are in some cases stretched to the limit while trying to cope with forces of destruction such as poaching.

I believe it would be fair to assume that following the determined efforts being made by various governments to protect the black rhino the availability of rhino horn on the market should be becoming increasingly uncertain. On the basis of this rather optimistic assumption we could also assume that the prices offered on the black-market will be high enough to justify any risk that a poacher may have to take in order to procure the horn. Where security is not adequate and if a poacher sees good prospects for success and subsequent enrichment, we can be sure that he will go for the horn. We therefore consider security to be central in the management and conservation of the black rhino.

Our Save the Rhino Project, about which

a document is now in circulation, is centred on the establishment of four special rhino sanctuaries and four rhino surveillance units, all in national parks and national reserves. The total budget for this four-year project will be in the region of K£ 1,500,000. The project document has details regarding all the major components and their respective budget allocations.

We agree that, in terms of the current need for funds in all sectors of the economy, the project is ambitious. However, it has been designed and presented with the conviction that the time for action is *now*. We will not be given another opportunity.

Finally, we know the contribution the poor rhino has made in our lives, be it of an economic, recreational, scientific or aesthetic nature. Having contributed so much, it is the rhino's time to appeal against its imminent condemnation to extinction. Such condemnation, if ever it comes, will have been made by the human race, just as much as the appeal now made for material support for the Save the Rhino Project is directed to all sympathisers and well-wishers, both here at home and elsewhere.

It is often said that charity starts at home. Accordingly, the financing of this project presents the greatest challenge to date to those among us (individuals and institutions) who have the interests and welfare of wildlife at heart. We have often heard or read strong and emotional appeals made in favour of wildlife. The time for emotions is gone and we now have to be practical in dealing with this problem. We only have *now* for the Black Rhino, so a 'Pound For The Rhino' will go a long way to assist, while a 'Tear for the Rhino' will become the expression for tomorrow unless we all act now.