



KARATASI

IT'S A GIRL... NO, WAIT, IT'S FOUR GIRLS!

On February 24th, 2010, the first of four gerenuk calves was born at White Oak Conservation Center. This in itself, although always exciting, was not anything new to the staff at White Oak. What was significant was that the newborns were the end result of over ten years of work and research quietly taking place among the tall pines at the Conservation Center.

In 1998, Dr. Linda Penfold, reproductive physiologist at White Oak Conservation Center, began looking into the prospect of utilizing artificial insemination to impregnate female gerenuk at White Oak. The ultimate goal: lay the groundwork for bringing semen from wild caught male gerenuk into the US to inseminate females with genetically new bloodlines.

Artificial insemination in non-domestic hoofstock is still in its infancy. Although it is a well-established technique in domestic livestock around the world, wild species of antelope do not readily respond to the same measures taken with domestics. Many parameters needed to be tested and tried before Dr. Penfold was able to even attempt the inseminations (see article on page 3).

Gerenuk are a medium-sized antelope found in eastern Africa. The word gerenuk is Somali for 'giraffe neck' because of the animal's long neck. That long neck and the gerenuk's unique ability to stand erect on its back legs are adaptations for browsing on trees above what other antelope can reach and below what giraffes feed on. Gerenuk are listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN and there are 85 individuals in accredited zoos in the US.

In late July of 2009, six female gerenuk were inseminated with semen collected from three males at White Oak. Seven months later, four female calves were born into the herd of 23 animals. The calves, although weighing only seven pounds at birth, and completely dwarfed by the pines they were born among, represent a much larger potential for White Oak and other institutions to allow the exchange of genetic material and introduce new bloodlines into their herds, ultimately helping to maintain the diversity of some of the most endangered species in the world.

For more information on the gerenuk at White Oak Conservation Center, visit our web page at:
<http://www.whiteoakconservation.org/gerenuk.asp>

Gerenuk (Litocranius walleri) are known for their long necks and ability to stand on their hind legs in order to reach the browse they feed on. By using their front legs, they can reach 6 to 8 feet off the ground, and can even pull branches towards their mouth between their split hooves.



Gerenuk give birth to a single calf after a seven month gestation period.

The four calves recently produced by artificial insemination are part of a long history of gerenuk births at White Oak Conservation Center.

There have been 117 gerenuk born at White Oak since 1985.



From the Shed

by John Lukas

Members and Friends,

I want to share with you the effects of the global economic downturn on White Oak Conservation Center and our efforts to develop an appropriate response to funding uncertainties. The depth of the economic crisis has greatly affected our most significant partner, the Howard Gilman Foundation, which has reduced its support of wildlife conservation by 50% for 2010 and if the economy does not improve, the level of funding could be less in 2011.

To overcome the loss in funding for 2010 and beyond, we have taken a decisive set of actions to focus our programs, reduce expenses and increase donations and revenue. We undertook a scientific evaluation of the Conservation Center's animal programs, assessing their contribution to conservation of endangered species and their habitats. Special emphasis was placed on the role of each species in sustaining managed populations, training, research, reintroduction potential and engaging donors.

We have targeted a 35% reduction in expenses by focusing on species and animals of higher conservation value and reducing staffing levels accordingly. We have streamlined all aspects of the operation and are taking the steps necessary to ensure long-term sustainability of the Conservation Center's animal programs.

We have merged operations with our non-profit arm, Gilman International Conservation Foundation, enabling strict control of expenses, consolidation of resources and development of new sources of funding. Now we are positioned to operate the Conservation Center and promote our training, research and international field conservation programs under a single non-profit organization – White Oak Conservation Center, Inc.

We are increasing the number of opportunities and ways for people to access the Conservation Center and White Oak Plantation. We are working hard to increase our membership and bring in more grants and major gifts. Our actions are producing results. By reducing expenses and increasing fundraising results we have accounted for more than 70% of the shortfall we were facing at the beginning of 2010.

To become self-sufficient we need more members and donors for White Oak Conservation Center. Please recommend us as a worthy cause to your friends and acquaintances. A White Oak Conservation Center membership opens up the magic world of animals from remote lands and unique experiences that only White Oak can offer. White Oak Plantation will continue to support WOCC's mission and provide facilities and services, in the White Oak tradition, to WOCC donors, members and guests.

Working together we can overcome this funding challenge and move White Oak Conservation Center into a position of financial independence so that we can continue to provide hope for the survival of some of earth's rarest creatures. Thank you for all your support. Please visit us soon and bring your friends.



Sincerely,

President

White Oak Conservation Center conserves and sustains some of the earth's rarest wild animals through innovative training, research, breeding and field programs that contribute to the survival of wildlife in nature.

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**Check out our new website
and sign up for our
monthly e-newsletter at:**

<http://www.whiteoakconservation.org/>

KARATASI means paper
in Swahili; recognizing the early
catalytic support from
Gilman Paper Company
for wildlife conservation.



As part of GIC's ongoing commitment to capacity building, ICCN Okapi Wildlife Reserve Assistant Warden Gishlain Somba and Patrol Team Leader Dugira Abaka (above left) are attending the Southern African Wildlife College wildlife conservation management courses in 2010. These courses will provide state-of-the-art training in wildlife law enforcement and protected area management, and once completed these gentlemen will return to Epulu and pass along their knowledge to their ranger teammates in annual on-site training exercises. This opportunity is possible through a grant to GIC from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Without Borders program with help from the Southern African Wildlife College.

habituate gorillas and chimpanzees with a Max Planke Institute project in Loango National Park in Gabon.

The GIC Okapi Conservation Project will construct a block of housing in 2010 for the ICCN Zunguluka Patrol Post located on the main road of the eastern border to the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. This patrol post is a critical entry and exit point for all vehicle and pedestrian traffic in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve and the rangers must maintain a 24-hour presence in their attempts to control illegal bushmeat and ivory trafficking. This project was made possible through a GIC grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Without Borders program.

The staff working for the Okapi Conservation Project and ICCN continues to dedicate their lives to the important conservation work at hand. The Ituri Forest remains a stronghold for okapi, elephants, chimpanzees and myriad other species, all dependent on the protection of ICCN. In addition to our support of the wardens and rangers working to protect the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, we continue to invest in the various programs of the GIC Okapi Conservation Project, working with communities in the region to create an understanding and engage them in wildlife conservation activities.

We would like to express our thanks to the global okapi conservation community, who contributed to the Okapi Conservation Project in 2009. Please consider your support for the Okapi Project in 2010!

The Okapi Conservation Project is now on Facebook! Check in to receive regular news, photos and notes from Project staff working in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve. Search for 'Okapi Conservation Project'.



Dr. Rolando Quesada, WOCC veterinary resident for 2009 - 2010 traveled to southern Africa for the international part of his veterinary residency at White Oak Conservation Center. During his three weeks there, he participated in rhino and zebra relocation projects as well as spending two nights capturing Nile crocodiles for tagging and collecting data.

While in Africa, Dr. Quesada kept a journal of his activities; some of which is written below.

To follow Dr. Quesada's complete journey, find him at: <http://whiteoakconservation.blogspot.com/>

May 05, 2010
The helicopter was arrived. Winds are still strong but decision is made to proceed with the captures. All the park rangers and members of the capture team are really nice, a lot of young kids doing their internship for nature conservation program. The aircraft surveys the park, identifies a family group and several animals are darted with etorphine 4 - 7 mg azaperone 40 - 80 mg. They go down quickly, 4 - 5 minutes. The zebra is then transported in a pick-up truck towards the transport trucks, where they are examined and samples collected.

May 13, 2010
For the first time I get to participate in wild white Rhino captures. The chopper flies the area near Shakaza and an adult female is darted with etorphine 2.5 + azaperone 40 mg, partial injection, second dart at 18 min, same combination. Traveled about 1.5 km before recumbency, down in 20 minutes. Samples collected, microchip placed in each horn and SB. Just as a rhino is getting crated, another big rhino comes charging out of the bushes out of nowhere, everybody disperses, and then bolts back in the bushes towards the helicopter. The pilot and capture team members freak out and go chasing the rhino to prevent him from charging the heli, luckily, the rhino just heads off without causing any damage. Both crates are loaded in a truck and the rhinos transported to the bomas, where they are fully reversed and released.

More Babies at White Oak

The gerenuk calves born at White Oak Conservation Center are not the only significant births to have occurred in the last six months. One of the newest additions to the species collection, the Somali wild ass, has now increased its herd size by three bouncing baby foals... all females.

The wild ass is thought to be the origin species for the donkey, which was domesticated over 6000 years ago in North Africa, and the name derives from the latin word for the donkey, *asinus*. The Somali or African wild ass (*Equus africanus somaliensis*) lives in small herds in the hot desert grasslands of the Horn of Africa. One of the smallest of the true wild horses (equids) the Somali wild ass has striking grayish coat coloration with contrasting zebra-like fine, black stripes on their legs.

The Somali wild ass from the Horn of Africa is one of the rarest wild equids in the world with less than 2000 animals thought to exist in widely-scattered herds. Threats from competition with domestic farm animals for sparse desert grass and water resources have resulted in severe declines in numbers of African wild ass. Few protective measures are in place for the wild population and the remaining animals are fragmented and dangerously dwindling.

In 2008, White Oak Conservation Center acquired a herd of Somali wild ass from the St. Louis Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park, the only other facilities in the US to house Somali wild ass.



Somali wild ass foals are born after an eleven month gestation period. The stripes on their legs are present from birth.

By housing and breeding the Somali wild ass, White Oak

Conservation Center's goal is to participate with international efforts to help save this species from extinction. One of our contributions has included the importation of an important stallion from a zoo in Europe to breed with females born in the US, now at White Oak. As one of three institutions in the US breeding this species, we plan to work closely with zoo partners in Conservation Centers for Species Survival to ensure a strong captive program is in place, as an insurance against the extinction of the wild

population of Somali wild ass. Earlier this year, the first of three foals was born into the herd. These fillies represent a new generation of the highly endangered species.

The Conservation Center is also supporting field conservation efforts for the species in Ethiopia including a Ph.D. student who is monitoring wild populations in Ethiopia for his dissertation.



The white rhino herd has increased by one 150 lb. little girl! The calf was born to Kelly, who was also born at White Oak five years ago. The calf represents a second generation of captive bred rhinos, a significant accomplishment in the breeding of rhinos in the US.

A rhino is often the color of the mud it wallowed in that day, so the name "white rhinoceros" is a bit of a misnomer. On a rare day when it is completely clean and dry the white rhino is a light grey color. The origin for the name is thought to be the South African Boer word "widt" meaning "wide" and referring to the size and shape of the grass-eating head and (wide) mouth of the white rhino. This is a distinct feature when compared to the black rhino, which has a hooked lip and browses trees and branches, and also lives in southern Africa.

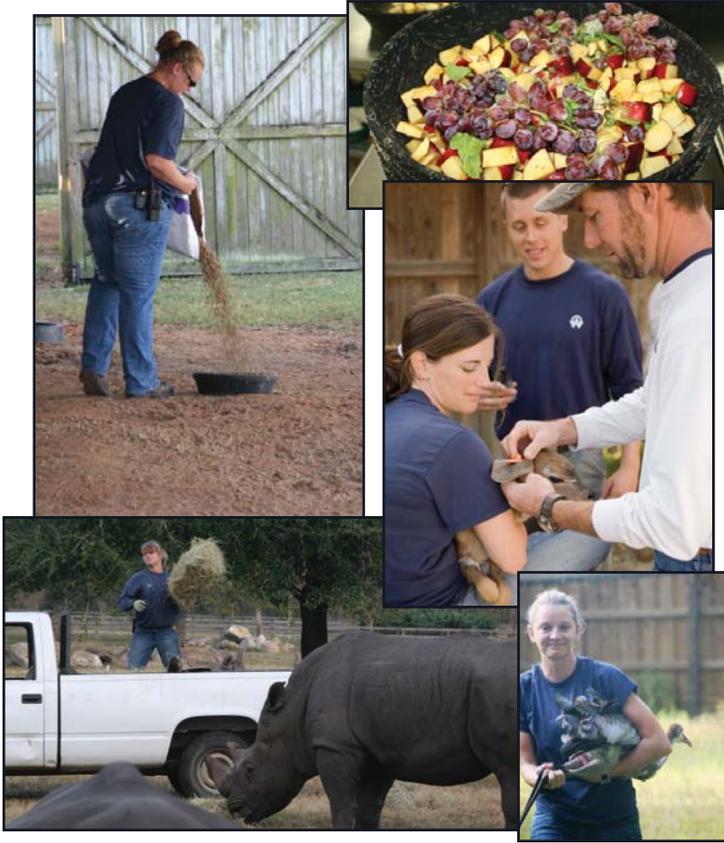
The white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) at the Conservation Center make a considerably positive impression with both our guests and staff. The herd at White Oak thrives on the abundant grass in their spacious enclosure in the mild Florida climate and there have been a number of white rhino calves born here. The matriarch females rule the roost as they move around their enclosure and graze, sun, and wallow in their mud bath. They also perform their daily ritual deposits in a communal dung pile called a midden, which serves as a "signpost" to all other rhinos in the vicinity.

Breeding white rhinos in captivity is particularly challenging as they are social animals requiring open space for the groups of rhinos to thrive. The social aspect is very important for raising calves which live with their family for 3-4 years before joining another herd to begin reproducing on their own. The white rhino environment at White Oak has been conducive to these requirements and multiple generations of rhinos have been produced including 19 births thus far.

The conservation of the white rhino is an incredible success story. Reduced by hunting to 100 animals at the turn of the 20th century, the South African wildlife authorities instituted a campaign to save the species called Operation Rhino. In a few decades of intense management and protection the population of white rhinos rebounded and now numbers over 15,000 animals. Most rhino species around the world are critically endangered due to the demand for the horn in Asian markets, however it is to the great credit of the South African and international rhino conservation community for saving this species.

Want to Feed a Rhino? A Cheetah?

Ever wanted to work with the wildlife at White Oak? Now you can, by being a "Keeper for a Day". This experience offers the opportunity to work alongside the animal keepers and participate in the daily routines and complete work projects. It is a chance to be involved in all aspects of daily animal care.



This opportunity is only available to members. For more information about being a keeper for a day and other behind-the-scenes opportunities, visit our new website at:

<http://www.whiteoakconservation.org>

White Oak Goes Greener

White Oak Conservation Center has been recycling everything from aluminum to batteries to animal waste for many years. The compost facility (below) has been an effective way of converting the by-product of the animal collection into something that is sought after by many gardeners. White Oak has utilized the compost within the property and has also given it to employees and community gardens in the area.



This year we added a new component to our recycling program by creating a Green Team to look in to more ways to be better stewards of White Oak and beyond. This year also saw the beginning a partnership with Paper Retriever® Recycling, a nationwide company with a recycling location in Jacksonville, FL.

Paper Retriever® Recycling recycles newspapers, magazines, catalogs and mail. The company supplies us with a bin and collects the contents when it is full, at no cost.

Many thanks to the Conservation Center's Green Team and White Oak Plantation for pitching in to make a difference.

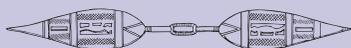


With the addition of this green and yellow bin, the recycling at White Oak has become more comprehensive and the response from the staff has been outstanding.

Thank You!



This spring's CELEBRATION OF WHITE OAK day event was such a success that we held two! Thanks to all of you who came out and helped us celebrate. It was good to see old friends and to make new ones. Your continued support of the programs at White Oak is greatly appreciated. Please plan to visit us soon to see what we've been up to!



White Oak Conservation Center
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White Oak Conservation Center New Arrivals January 2010 - June 2010



*Mississippi sandhill crane chick
hatched in May*



White rhino calf born in May



*Addra calf
(being weighed)
born in May*



Wattled curassow chick hatched in June

Past issues of *Karatasi* are available on our new website at www.whiteoakconservation.org

You can help reduce costs and conserve environmental resources by opting to receive the *Karatasi* by e-mail only.

Please send your requests to StephanieR@wogilman.com. We appreciate your consideration.