

in August; and in the same month, two red-crested cardinals fledged in the free-flight aviary at Detroit Zoo. Other institutions have also experienced breeding activity but have not yet experienced successful fledges.

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Reintroducing black rhinos to Zambia

Five (2.3) black rhinos were reintroduced into Zambia's North Luangwa National Park (NLNP) on 28 May 2003. The status of black rhino in Zambia prior to this reintroduction was 'Presumed Extinct', with the last confirmed sighting of an animal in the early 1990s. In historical times Zambia was one of the species' most important range states, and the Luangwa Valley, with an estimated population of up to 12,000 animals in the early 1970s, was one of its strongholds in the country. The Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) has been supporting the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) in the management and conservation of NLNP since 1986, and this long-term partnership has resulted in effective security and management systems being in place; so the reintroduction was a logical next step in conservation activities in the park. A positive evaluation of the habitat and security of NLNP by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Program for Rhino Conservation (RPRC) in 2001 set the stage, and a formal proposal by ZAWA and NLNP was presented at the IUCN/SSC Rhino Specialist Group meeting in May 2002.

An area in the central part of the park, straddling the Lubonga River, was chosen as the site for the sanctuary in which the rhinos would be released. The site's location was based on historical distribution data for black rhino in NLNP, as well as security considerations. A low-impact, four-strand electrified fence was erected to contain the rhino in this 55-km² area,

while allowing for relative freedom of movement for other animals. Additional ZAWA wildlife police officers were seconded to the area, and received extra training to deal with rhino security.

In an agreement mediated by FZS, South African National Parks donated five animals to the Zambia Wildlife Authority in exchange for two zoo-born black rhino calves from Frankfurt Zoo. The animals destined for Zambia were captured in Marakele National Park and Kruger National Park in March 2003, and flown to the park just over two months later. During their time in the bomas in NLNP, they were outfitted with radio transmitters in their horns, and received a trypanosomiasis inoculation, active for three months, to ease their introduction into a tsetse fly area. Tsetse targets and traps were also deployed at a low density throughout the sanctuary area, and at a high density around the boma site, to initially reduce the tsetse population and allow the rhinos time to develop resistance to the *Trypanosoma* parasite.

The animals were released into the wider sanctuary area from their bomas after a period ranging from two and a half to four weeks, and have settled down well: none have broken through the perimeter fence. Their movements were predominantly monitored by plane for the first six weeks after release to keep disturbance to a minimum, although monitoring by foot patrol will become more important in the coming months. Data on the animals and their movements are being entered into the WildB database, developed by the SADC RPRC program. This reintroduction of five animals is just the first phase of the project, which aims to achieve a minimum of 20 founder animals within NLNP within three years. The project has been a big step forward for conservation in Zambia, as well as being a success for regional cooperation in black rhino conservation.

Elsabe van der Westhuizen in *Re-introduction News* No. 23 (November 2003)