

# SANCTUARY



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• No 15 1991

LAPALALA WILDERNESS

• CLIVE WALKER TRAILS

• LAPALALA WILDERNESS SCHOOL

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*COVER: Punyane, one of the black rhino females seen on a regular basis in the 10 000 ha management area of Lapalala Wilderness*





# Lapalala Wilderness

## BLACK RHINO UPDATE

It is now almost twelve months since the five black rhinoceros, translocated to Lapalala in August 1990, have been free in the 10 000 hectare management area. All appeared to be well, when on 3 July 1991, game scouts on a routine patrol up a water course in the thickly wooded western sector, discovered the carcass of the black rhino iGoli. Cause of death has not been ascertained, although foul play has definitely been ruled out. The cow was located well into the centre of the sanctuary and represents a major loss to the black rhino breeding programme, especially in the light of the excellent condition the four remaining two bulls and two cows are in.

All four have adapted extremely well and no problems have been encountered whatsoever in terms of their contact with one another. Having spent a considerable time, in fact fifteen and a half weeks in the holding pens due to late rains, they became well settled, and from observations in their contact with one another, appear very relaxed. The smallest cow, Punyane, who was particularly calm during her confinement in the bomas, is seen on a daily basis by staff and guests at Kolobe Lodge. The other three tend to remain in dense bush during the daylight hours, emerging in the evenings to drink.

The most important task is the work carried out by the game scouts, who monitor their movements on a daily basis, and record observations which are meticulously kept by Glynis Brown, Section Ranger. Glynis is responsible for all the black rhino records and scout movements. Late rains in April resulted in the bush remaining dense for the best part of winter and one can appreciate the difficult task of five scouts, who had previously never worked with black rhino, let alone seen one, having to conduct their patrols on foot, which they have done with diligence, albeit with nervousness at times.

Only one of the rhino runs off when it encounters anyone and the rest being used to the presence of humans, make an effort to investigate the source of their disturbance.

One of the major problems with black rhino conservation has been the lack of opportunities on the part of the public to see these animals in the wild. Every effort has been made at Lapalala to encourage this with the strategic placing of water holes and the placing of old boekenhout fence posts, buried into the ground, which are used extensively as rubbing posts by the rhino to remove ticks. Virtually every guest at Kolobe Lodge goes away having seen at least one black rhinoceros.

Returning to the loss of the cow iGoli, every effort will be made to replace this animal, as five are probably the minimum number for a founder population. Lapalala Wilderness is most grateful

to a number of people who have made donations to the Wilderness Trust towards the black rhino programme and here we would like to acknowledge the contribution by Doug and Sue Kirschke and their colleagues for a cash donation, enabling us to purchase two 8 x 40 pairs of binoculars, which prove extremely useful in the scouts' observation of ear-notching on the various rhino for positive identification.

In addition to that, a very generous donation via Waldi Brunner representing Kimoto, was made in the form of bags, towels, hats, pen knives, torches and pens, which were given to each scout, including the scouts that operate out of the Ivory Trail and the scouts that work on the Fish Eagle Trail in the Okavango Delta.

A special word of thanks to all these kind individuals.

Apart from the general condition of the rhinos, one will observe the lesions evident on the rhinos upon their arrival and the present condition of the same rhino ten months after release from the bomas, clearly showing the almost total disappearance of lesions, as clearly seen on the cover picture.

From observations up to the time of writing, conditions appear to be favourable for black rhino here in the Waterberg mountains and apart from the sad loss of a cow, the project has been extremely successful to date.

Clive Walker, a director of Lapalala Wilderness, was appointed to the Rhino Management Group, representing the private landowners, which group meets annually and reports on matters concerning the introduction of black rhinos onto private land. Close contact is maintained with Ollie Coltman, who is the ranger in charge of Sable Ranch, which has a population of 10 black rhinoceros and Mr John Brooker of Broederstroom, who has a bull and a cow of the sub-species Michaeli. In addition to that, the National Zoological Gardens in Potgietersrus has a further pair of black rhinoceros of the sub-species Minor.



*Black rhino calm down extremely well in captivity and here one of the cows is receiving a drink of water from a hosepipe which was used to fill up the mud wallows. The rhino enjoyed these immensely during the heat of the day in their long confinement, which stretched into the hot summer months.*